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# **Investigating Saudi Arabian Teachers' and Students' Perspectives on Teaching English by Using the CLT Approach.**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

**School of Education**

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## ABSTRACT

The need for English language as a resource for communication has increased significantly around the world for the reason of its status as the language of globalisation, worldwide communication, business, media, and research. The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has taken into consideration this need and initiated important policies to improve English teaching as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The goals of the TEFL curriculum are to emphasise the four basic language skills of English and to encourage students' communicative competence. However, despite these initiatives, there has only been a slight improvement in the field of TEFL in KSA. Classroom teaching practice in some of the Saudi contexts and the English language curricula at the tertiary levels are inflexible and traditional learning and teacher-centred teaching methods are used. Research is needed to better understand to what extent and whether English language teachers in higher education have their own reasons for not teaching English for communicative purposes or why they may be unable to implement methods, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

This study aimed to investigate Saudi university teachers' and students' perceptions of CLT approaches in teaching and learning English. It also explored perceived challenges faced by the Saudi English teachers and students in their classes that might prevent them from teaching and learning for communicative purposes. In order to meet these aims, data gained from interviews with teachers, student questionnaires, textbook analysis and classroom observations were analysed, using a triangulation approach, and classified into various themes, to discover the participants' perceptions regarding CLT. The main findings revealed that the present methodological practices of Saudi EFL teachers can be considered as corresponding to a post method approach where teachers can modify pedagogical strategies according to learners' perceived needs. Although the teachers claimed in the interviews that they used traditional teaching teacher-centred methods, the findings from the other data sources suggest that the teachers were actually using CLT approaches in many of their classes. Moreover, the study identified a variety of challenges that teachers and students associated with CLT. On an individual level, it appeared that Saudi teachers and students had some difficulties accepting some of the main characteristics of CLT and were not very confident to use it, as they perceived it, in their teaching and learning practice. In addition, the data suggested that there were two key limitations that challenge Saudi teachers and students in terms of teaching and learning. Firstly, there are situational features, (such as teaching style and communicative activities, the examination system and classroom setting), and, secondly, socio-cultural features, (for example, the influence of culture and the widely accepted traditional teaching and learning methods in the Saudi context) that seem to be at odds with teaching English interactively.

The study concludes with recommendations that aim to support the development of the present situation of TEFL in Saudi Arabia. For instance, systematically implementing the CLT approach in English classrooms in Saudi schools and universities requires building a highly collaborative system that includes all key parties, such as training programme providers, teaching materials and the examination system.

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## AUTHOR'S 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.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Nouf Abdulrahman Almohideb

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>KSA</b>	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
<b>MOE</b>	The Ministry of Education (in KSA)
<b>ARAMCO</b>	Arabian American Oil Company
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>CLT</b>	Communicative Language Teaching
<b>TBLT</b>	Task-Based Language teaching
<b>GTM</b>	Grammar Translation Method
<b>ALM</b>	Audio-Lingual Method
<b>CL</b>	Collaborative Learning
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>ELT</b>	English Language teaching
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>SLA</b>	Second language acquisition
<b>L1</b>	First Language
<b>L2</b>	Second Language
<b>TL</b>	Target Language
<b>ZPD</b>	The Zone of Proximal Development
<b>MKO</b>	The More Knowledgeable Other

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

According to Phillipson (1997), English language holds the position as the most widely learnt foreign language in the spheres of science, technology, medicine, research, transnational business, diplomacy and international organizations, mass media, youth culture and sport, and international education systems. More than 85% of international organisations in the world use English as their official language, and approximately 90% of published journal papers are written in English (Crystal, 1997). Consequently, the English language offers a bridge of communication to the world and is a medium for internationalisation. It is clear that English has become an international and global language, and thus it could be considered vital for people living in non-English-speaking countries to learn English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL).

In Saudi Arabia, English is one of the most commonly taught foreign languages. In response to international trends such as those cited above, it has become a compulsory subject in elementary, intermediate and secondary schools and universities (Rahman, 2011). However, until quite recently, little importance was given to the teaching and learning of English in the Saudi education system. Previously, there was very little emphasis on learning to use English to a high level of proficiency; rather they were superficially learning enough in order to pass a written exam (Alsmari and Khan, 2014). Proficiency indicates the capacity to carry out an action or function. It represents the students' ability to use language for real-life reasons in order to accomplish real-life linguistic tasks across a comprehensive range of areas and settings, and this differs from a studying for a written exam that measures students' knowledge of specific information. However, the status of English in the Kingdom has become more prominent.

The method generally used before 2001 to teach English in Saudi Arabia has been the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) (Almarshad 2009). This method includes the direct teaching of grammar, the translation of literary texts and memorization and preparation for summative exams. Reflecting this focus, passive learning and traditional, teacher-centred teaching approaches are used. Teachers also depend on traditional methods such as the use of Arabic when teaching English language to students, and this starts from primary school and continues through to higher education (Alhawsawi, 2013; Almutairi, 2008; Fareh, 2010). According to Fareh (2010), conducting a class primarily in Arabic minimises the learners' experience of hearing English; therefore, the outcomes of the learning cannot be sufficiently accomplished. Additionally, learners have no opportunity to practise or

communicate in English during lessons when Arabic is the language of instruction (Alhawsawi, 2013; Rabab'ah, 2005). Research has shown that these teaching methodologies, which are applied in Saudi Arabia, fail to achieve the desired aims with regard to effectively teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). According to Alrabai (2014), one of the chief causes of Saudi learners' poor proficiency in English is the dependence on traditional teaching methodologies that support a teacher-centred method. In 2001, in order to improve students' communicative English performance, the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) made changes to its English education policy (Alhawsawi, 2013). Consequently, in 2001 new approaches to teaching English were encouraged through policies in Saudi Arabia and in 2012 English was introduced as a compulsory subject from the fourth year in elementary school through to university level. As a result, proficiency in English is now necessary for admission to university degrees and programmes (Al-Asmari and Khan, 2014). As a result, the Saudi Ministry of Education now encourages teachers to use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches and an interactive methodology in teaching English (Alhawsawi, 2013). CLT is an approach to language teaching that encourages learners to interact with one another in the target language, to communicate in the target language inside and outside of class, changes the teacher role from 'sage on the stage' to a facilitator, and focuses on effective communication rather than grammatical competence. As a part of the CLT approach in Saudi Arabia, English is to be used as the primary classroom language. CLT and an interactive methodology aim to develop learners' communicative competence through regular exposure to the target language, which provides opportunities for students to use it as much as possible. The GTM perspective views English language learning as a knowledge receiving process, whereas the CLT views English language learning as skills development (Penner, 1995). When used by the teacher in the classroom, CLT should provide authentic language input as well as comprehensible output, creative language output, real-life language practice, and plenty of listening and speaking practice (Fotos, 2001; Penner, 1995; Sun and Cheng, 2002). This might make learning English more interesting for the learners and develop their skills in using English when interacting with other people.

However, despite the new policy to focus on CLT approaches in English classes, recent research suggests that English teaching and learning in Saudi education continues to be teacher-centred rather than student-centred, which prevents learners from developing satisfactory language competence (Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rajab, 2013). In Saudi academic culture, teachers control the learning process, and learners rely



on their teachers as the basic source of knowledge (Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014). According to Fareh (2010), English teachers spend the majority of the lesson talking and seldom give learners a chance to speak or ask questions; hence, classes are frequently quiet, as learners adopt a passive role in the learning process (Alkubaidi, 2014; Al-Johani, 2009). Al Rabai (2014) claims that teachers' dominance of English classes causes learners to be receptors, memorisers and reproducers, and encourages them to participate ineffectively in the learning process. The use of this traditional methodology in language instruction has led to a lack of opportunity for learners to interact and participate in class, or even to engage in a minimum of English practice.

In summary, in its redesigning of the curriculum and syllabi for English language, the Saudi Ministry of Education has encouraged the use of a communicative syllabus and interactive methods by focussing on fostering actual communication rather than a structured syllabus that emphasises the teaching of grammar and translation. These new syllabi focus on interactive activities that are intended to be promoted through the use of innovative teaching methods such as CLT. Nevertheless, as the aforementioned studies have suggested, English language teachers in the Saudi context often continue to use traditional teaching methods that do not support the current efforts to enlighten EFL (teaching English as a foreign language). This shows an inconsistency between the government's attempts to develop EFL in schools and the English language teachers' practice in their classes. This inconsistency, however, reveals that English language teachers might have their own reasons for failing to implement CLT and interactive activities fully in their classes. In light of this context, the current study aims to investigate the use of CLT and interactive methods in higher education English classes in Saudi Arabia. This introductory chapter will discuss the background to the research, statement of the research problem, the research questions, significance of the research and an outline of the thesis.

## 1.2 Background to the Research

English grammar is the basis of the four language skills that are required when learning English as a foreign or second language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Celce-Murcia, 1990). According to Musumeci (1997), grammar contains five components. First, phonetics is related to the production and perception of sounds. Second, phonology refers to the way in which sounds are joined together. Third, morphology refers to the study of forms or how components are combined to create words. Fourth, syntax refers to the way in which words are put together into sentences. Semantics, or meaning, is the last

component of the set. By definition, all languages are characterized by these five components; therefore, languages do not occur without grammar.

Thus, in order to convey meaning effectively when learning a foreign language, it is often seen as essential to master the grammar as this is the fundamental base on which to build the other four skills of the language (Celce-Murcia, 1990). The problem for Saudi higher education students is that, even though they have been learning English since the fourth year of elementary school and have knowledge of English grammar, they still have difficulty applying their knowledge to the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) related to communicating with others in English (Alhawsawi, 2013). This is due to the fact that GTM has been the main method of teaching before 2001, without any practical application of the language for communication purposes (Alhawsawi, 2013). As opposed to the CLT methods that are recommended in the syllabus, GTM methods, which are commonly used, typically result in low learning outcomes with regard to the written and oral production of English (Ellis, 1993). This method tends to make students passive and dependent on memorization as their sole learning approach. This teacher-centred method of instruction contributes little to a learner-centred learning environment (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014).

The cultural context of Saudi Arabia may help to explain why GTM methods may still be used when teaching English as a second or foreign language, despite an emphasis on CLT approaches in the new policies since 2001. The Saudi cultural context usually highlights principles that emphasise the role of the teacher in the learning process (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014). Teachers are seen as the authority in the classroom and as experts who transmit their knowledge to the learners. Subsequently, learners are simply knowledge receivers who listen to and respect the teachers' commands. Alternatively, the CLT approach endorses real life communication, meaningful interaction, debate, and pair and group work (Alhawsawi, 2013). As a result, the CLT approach to language teaching might conflict with certain essentials of Saudi cultural practice, whereby in the formal relationship between the learner and the teacher, the teacher is dominant (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014).

As already stated, in spite of the policy regarding the use of CLT, the GTM continues to be used in schools and universities in Saudi. However, it is worth noting that grammar is also important within the CLT approach (Celce-Murcia, 1990). In spite of the fact that CLT focuses more on productive skills, grammar is an imperative component of this education strategy since it is seen as a device or asset regarding the comprehension and creation of oral and written discourse (Celce-Murcia, 1990). As Larsen-Freeman (2000) points out,

linguistic accuracy forms part of communicative competence as it is required to understand a person's meaning or to communicate linguistically. Thus, it is worth investigating the challenges that this cultural context and the formal nature of teachers poses for teachers and learners. This study addresses the need to investigate the perspectives of Saudi teachers and students on the teaching of English and the extent to which the CLT approach is used with regard to each of the oral and productive skills (listening, speaking and writing) and the teaching of grammar.

As noted above, Saudi's Ministry of Education (MOE) has made changes to its English-education policy in order to increase Saudi students' communicative competence (Al-Asmari, and Khan, 2014) since CLT appeared to be an effective way of promoting students' communicative capacity. Therefore, further investigation is needed to better understand the factors that contribute to the current situation regarding EFL in Saudi Arabia. Teachers' approaches to teaching English are an important issue that need exploration because teachers and their teaching methods are the key link between the students, the syllabus and the teaching setting (Fareh, 2010). Gulanz et al. (2015) claim that the role of the teacher is significant in any teaching-learning situation as it is a key factor in terms of improving the classroom environment.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

In spite of the apparent acceptance of the CLT approach globally in the last 30 years or so, there have been contradictory opinions on its suitability, in addition to questions about the possibility of implementing CLT in EFL settings (Liaw, 2006). A number of English language teachers have emphasized the importance of the local context and conditions of the particular EFL setting that, for example, favour traditional methods of language teaching, such as an organised and controlled classroom. In such a setting, the students are quiet, and the teacher retains full control of the classroom and its activities and helps the students by solving problems and giving advice (Bax, 2003; Incecay and Incecay, 2009). This may stand in contrast to the type of classroom environment that results from CLT approaches that give students some control of the classroom and encourage students to interact with one another in the target language.

Despite these cultural norms, some teachers are very keen to adopt CLT in the Saudi context, but are not confident about implementing the CLT approach (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014). Research has revealed that implementing the CLT approach in Saudi is challenging, as there are several obstacles to overcome before this approach can be implemented effectively (Alhawsawi, 2013; Almutairi, 2008; Fareh, 2010; Alsmari and Khan, 2014). Al-

Seghayer (2011) emphasized that Saudi English teachers lack the appropriate theoretical background in teaching methods due to the lack of sufficient training of Saudi English teachers in the English departments. Moreover, teachers and students have been found to favour the use of Arabic as the primary language of the English classroom, a practice that was introduced many decades ago. Students commonly express a positive attitude toward teachers communicating with them in Arabic as this helps with understanding English vocabulary and grammar (Fareh, 2010). In summary, research is needed to help better understand whether there are gaps between a government policy that is focused on CLT with regard to syllabus design and curriculum, and the methodological practice of Saudi English teachers, who, as recent research suggests, still rely on GMT approaches.

#### 1.4 Purpose of the Study

According to Alhajailan (2006), the main purpose of teaching and learning English in Saudi Arabia should be for the use of English in meaningful communication consisting of oral interaction with people (speaking and listening), reading and writing. Although policies in Saudi Arabia emphasise the CLT approach, a number of challenges exist in the Saudi context that may hinder the CLT approach to teaching EFL stemming from the educational system, the syllabi, the teaching setting or the culture (Alseghayer 2011).

Consequently, in order to investigate the development and use of the CLT approach for teaching English in the Saudi context, the purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' and students' perspectives on the teaching and learning of English during the first year of university. The students in the university chose to join the English department for many reasons, for example, to become English teachers, or to seek work as translators in a company or a bank, or as part of a more general degree. The students in this study came from different backgrounds, with different life and learning experiences. Depending on the school they attended, the participants began learning English from the first, fourth, or sixth year of primary school,. Some students attended government schools, which means that they started studying English from sixth grade, while others attended private schools and had started to study English from their first or fourth year of primary school and some, having attended international schools, had studied English from their first year of primary school.

As a result of the variation in years of study for the students, there are differences in their levels of English. Even if it seems that the differences in the number of years for which the students had been learning English before they reached university are slight, this can pose a challenge for EFL teachers in the classroom, as the teachers need to take into account the

variability across the students' proficiency levels in the classroom. Each additional year of language education might help the students to have acquired more of the target language (TL), feel more confident about using it, and so have a higher level of proficiency (Hess, 2002). Students with one or two years' fewer in language education than their peers may face more challenges to use the TL, such as many of the Saudi female students in this study. For that reason, teachers needed to plan to address these differences in order to meet the requirements of all of their learners. If teachers disregard these variances, some learners are likely to struggle with learning the language (Tomlinson, 2014).

It is possible, therefore, that the differences between students' proficiency would affect the less proficient students' participation in the class and make them feel reluctant to participate. Research shows that learners' participation in their lessons is critical to their learning level (Carini et al., 2006).

Students with fewer years of language experience need help in this respect, and it may not be easy for the students to use the TL without their teacher's help if they face such difficulties. However, the students who have studied English for longer than the others also need support from the teacher (Tomlinson, 2014). In order to interest the higher-level students and maintain their attention, it is recommended that different types of activities should be used during the lesson in order to create a positive working environment, which is all part of promoting learning (Hess, 2002).

I chose first year university students since grammar and the other four skills are taught only in the first and second year. Moreover, I wished to explore the students' and teachers' perceptions of the CLT approach. It should be noted that in Saudi Arabia, English grammar, speaking/listening, writing, and reading are taught as separate English classes, as they will not be in many other countries around the world. (Farooq, 2015). I chose to concentrate on the teaching of grammar and the productive skills (speaking and writing), as these skills require students to be more active and to produce the oral and written symbols that represent the spoken language. I also chose to include listening in my study as this is taught along with speaking as one subject at university. Reading is not included because it is not a productive skill and it is found in all the other subjects. Finally, I observed the extent to which the CLT approach is incorporated in the classroom, particularly in relation to the role of interaction as part of the learning process in Saudi classrooms.

### 1.5 Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

- i) To what extent is the CLT approach used in developing each of the oral and written skills (listening, speaking and writing) and teaching grammar?
- ii) What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the opportunities and the limitations associated with implementing the CLT approach in teaching oral and written skills (listening, speaking and writing) and grammar?

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is guided by sociocultural learning theory, a theoretical framework that has its origins in the work of Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist. His statement that “through others we become ourselves” (1998, p.170) can be seen as the quintessence of sociocultural learning theory, which assumes that learning is a social process. However, those who work in educational environments in Saudi Arabia have traditionally not approached learning as an interactive social process and have instead relied on more teacher-centred approaches. This study therefore aims to provide a better understanding of the main difficulties that English teachers in the Saudi context may face when trying to use interactive methods and the CLT approach in their teaching. Such an investigation might help to identify the existing gaps between government policy with regard to syllabus design and curriculum, which are CLT-focused, and the methodological practice of Saudi English teachers, who, as recent research suggests, still rely on GMT approaches.

This study will make both academic and practical contributions. The main academic contribution to knowledge is providing new empirical research on CLT approaches in English university classrooms in Saudi Arabia, since to date there is only very limited research on the use of the CLT approach and interactive activities in English language teaching in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the study aims to offer a number of practical recommendations that may help to bridge any gaps that exist between policy and practice. The research findings may be of use to the educational authority responsible for the planning and designing of the curriculum in Saudi universities and help them to make better-informed decisions to improve their plans. The research findings may also provide the Saudi Ministry of Education with a considered understanding of English language learning and teaching at the university level. The findings may also deliver beneficial insights that may be used in schools in order to better bridge the gap between primary, secondary and higher education. As a final point, the findings from the research may offer an insight into the broader challenges regarding the implementation of the CLT approach in a wider range of EFL contexts.

### 1.7 Outline of the Thesis

As presented above, Chapter 1 focused on the rationale behind the topic choice, the background to the research and statement of the problem, the purpose of the research, the research questions, and the significance of the research and the contributions of the research.

A more in-depth overview of the specifics of the Saudi context is the focus of Chapter 2. This chapter consists of five sections. The first section aims to provide background information about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where this study was conducted. The second section provides a historical overview of the education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The third section discusses the general education system in Saudi Arabia, starting from preschool through to secondary school. In the fourth section, the role of Saudi teachers is illustrated. The historical context and its importance to education in the present day are then demonstrated in the fifth section. An overview of teaching English language in Saudi Arabia and the challenges associated with it are also discussed throughout this chapter.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature relating to the implementation of the CLT approach in the context of EFL in general and in the Saudi context in particular. This chapter reviews the existing research and theories relating to some of the issues that are relevant to teaching English grammar within higher education, with special reference to the particular challenges encountered in Saudi Arabia. Firstly, sociocultural learning theory will be presented, followed by a discussion of collaborative learning and how collaborative learning encourages teachers to use different methods and philosophies to create interactive environments. Next, a range of pedagogies within EFL teaching will be illustrated, such as the grammar-translation method (GTM), the audio-lingual method (ALM) and communicative language teaching (CLT), and post method teaching in the target language classroom. The literature relating to all of these pedagogies informs this study, particularly since there is little research on the specific context of Saudi EFL education. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the existing literature and the implications for the current study.

Chapter 4 introduces the research methodology that underpins the study. The chapter presents the research methods that were used. The chapter discusses the research paradigms that were adopted, the importance of mixed methods and triangulation and why these were used, the target population of the study and sampling methods. This chapter describes the multiple methods that were used for data collection and the ethical considerations associated with the study: 1) Observations of classes designed to teach

English grammar, listening, speaking and writing, at a university in Saudi Arabia; 2) Semi-structured interviews with teachers in order to gather their views on the use of the CLT approach in learning and teaching English, 3) Questionnaires to investigate the students' opinions on the way they were taught English and 4) Analysis of the grammar textbook, to gain information about the way that grammar was introduced and practised, together with the contexts within which the activities were designed to take place.

Chapters 5 and 6 introduce the key findings of the study. Teachers' and students' perceptions of the CLT approach and the difficulties that they face when this approach is implemented are discussed. The findings explain how the study will focus on teachers' perceptions in one chapter, mainly relying on the interviews and supported by the other methods that were used in the data collection. It will focus on the students' perception in chapter 6, mainly relying on the questionnaire data and supported by data collected using the other methods. In this study, it was found that the teachers 'and students' prior experience have, to a large extent, led to the challenges faced with regards to the implementation of CLT and its main principles

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the findings and discusses the teachers' and students' contradictory perceptions and actions related to the interactive methodology. It also discusses the situational and socio-cultural features of the classroom. Finally, it provides the conclusion, which includes a summary of the main findings, the key recommendations, the limitations of the research and some suggestions for further research.



## CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT IN SAUDI ARABIA

### 2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 gives an overall picture of the context wherein the study took place. This chapter discusses the history and relevance of the English language in Saudi Arabia. It looks at the stages in which English language teaching and learning were introduced in the country and how it was presented to the Saudi education system over the past several decades. It describes the education system in the Saudi context and the introduction of education policy that is relevant to English language teaching in the country. The chapter also discusses relevant cultural and religious factors that play a role in education in Saudi Arabia, for example, how the education system is gender-segregated in line with the Islamic and cultural beliefs in the country (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013).

Consequently, this chapter begins with a section on background information about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), where this study was conducted. Next, it provides a historical overview of the education system in the KSA and its importance. This chapter then presents the general education system in Saudi Arabia, starting from preschool, primary, intermediate secondary school and higher education. In the fourth section, the role of Saudi teachers is illustrated. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of teaching English language in Saudi Arabia and the challenges associated with teaching English. The rationale of this chapter is to give the reader a sufficient understanding of the setting where the study was conducted, hence the reader will be able to see how the research questions for the study arise.

### 2.2 Historical Background of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 by King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud and has been described as a relatively new nation with strong Islamic and Arab traditions (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013). Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East and covers approximately 80% of the whole Arabian Peninsula (Alsharari, 2010). The population was recorded to be 32.6 million in 2018 (Saudi Arabia Population, 2012).

The official language of the country is Arabic, and Islam is the official religion. Saudi Arabia, wherein this study will be conducted, consists of 13 administrative provinces, involving more than 5,000 cities and villages. The main cities include Riyadh, the capital, situated in the central eastern part of the country; Jeddah, the main port on the Red Sea; and Dammam, the main port on the Arabian Gulf. Saudi Arabia is bounded by eight countries: to the north Iraq, Jordan, and Kuwait; to the west the Red Sea; to the east

Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and the Sultanate of Oman; and to the south Yemen.

Oil was discovered in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the late 1930s, but the oil industry and prices did not start to increase until the 1970s (Alkharashi, 2012). Since then, the country has accumulated huge wealth, and the government has launched enormous spending on projects in education and healthcare (Alkharashi, 2012). It should be noted that the economy of Saudi Arabia has been heavily dependent on the crude oil industry as its main source of income (Madini, 2005; Al-Rasheed, 2010). This has resulted in Saudi Arabia being considered one of the most important oil-producing nations in the world. Notably, a portion of the oil is exported to English-speaking countries, which has made English an important language for international trade. As a result, for communication to be established, languages need to be learned. In addition to the influence of the oil industry, the English language may have first arrived in Saudi Arabia via Hejaz, the area made famous by the fact that thousands of pilgrims enter it to visit Mecca. In order to communicate with travellers, the local people learned English. Nowadays the use of English is important also as the means of communication with international companies now trading with the KSA (Prokop, 2003).

Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud, in 2016, developed the Saudi Vision 2030 as a plan for decreasing the Saudi Arabian dependency on oil. Vision 2030 was designed to promote Saudi Arabia's continuing development using the three major areas in which the kingdom holds different competitive advantages (Vision 2030 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). This plan proposes that Saudi's position will enable it to build on leading role as the heart of Arab and Islamic worlds. At the same time, the plan is to use its investment power to create a more varied and viable economy. Finally, its strategic location will build the country's role as an essential driver of international trade, since Saudi Arabia connects the three continents of Africa, Asia and Europe together. The Saudi Vision 2030 is thus built around three themes for Saudi Arabia: 1) continue to play a significant role in the Middle East due to the country's Islamic and cultural Arab authority; 2) promote a supportable and increasingly diverse economy via Saudi Arabia's investment influence, and 3) 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 Saudi Arabia as an ambitious nation, a flourishing economy and a vibrant society. Vision 2030's ambition is for the long term (Vision 2030 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). It goes further than replenishing the sources of income that have become weaker or preserving what has been already achieved. It is determined to build a thriving country, in which all

citizens can fulfil their dreams, hopes and ambitions. Consequently, the plan proposes that Saudi Arabia will not rest until the nation is a leader in providing opportunities for all via education, training, and high quality services, such as employment initiatives, health, housing and entertainment (Vision 2030 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). KSA's educational policy, including policy around the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language, supports these national aspirations. The next section will discuss the history of the education system in Saudi Arabia.

### 2.3 The History of the Education System in Saudi Arabia

The education system, as it stands today, can be attributed to the Directorate of Education, which established a formal system in 1930 (Alsharif, 2011). King Abdul-Aziz created the Directorate of Education prior to the union of the whole country and the announcement of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. The early establishment of this organisation indicated the King's emphasis on education, even if the country was new and had to deal with diverse local and international situations (Al-Harthi, 2014). The Directorate of Education was responsible for introducing new schools and education offices across the country. The first public schools were established in 1930, but only male learners were officially enrolled at these (Alsharif, 2011; Wiseman, 2010). Female students were officially registered for education in 1960 but were segregated from boys in separate schools (Al-Zarah, 2008), and the first women college in Saudi Arabia was established by the General Presidency for the Education of Girls in 1970. However, in this study, the teachers who participated were not from the first generation of women to be instructors in higher education.

The education system in Saudi Arabia has changed incredibly since its origin in 1930. Prior to that date, education was usually within the sphere of mosques, wherein students were taught to write and read Arabic (Al-Liheibi, 2008; Alsharif, 2011). Education was not widely accessible when Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932. At that time, Saudi Arabia adapted its educational system from the Arab countries, such as Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon. Initially, the highest degree was a high school diploma. A new policy from the Saudi Ministry of Education in 1932 stated, "Most of the Arab teachers who teach in Saudi hold a secondary school graduate certification" (AlSalloom, 1995, p. 77). In 1932, the Saudi Directorate of Education established the first Saudi Teacher Institution to meet the increasing need for teachers in schools. In 1935, King Abdul-Aziz also decided to send Saudi students to study in Egypt. By 1951, there were 169 Saudi students studying in Egypt to become teachers. In addition, because of the shortage of trained Saudi teachers,

Egyptian assistance was requested from three sources: (1) Egypt's Ministry of Education; (2) the General Directorate of the Al-Azhar Institution, which is an Islamic institution in Egypt; and (3) through personal contacts (AlSalloom, 1995).

Between the 1970s and 1990s, the number of students in the educational system for the lower level of education increased impressively. The educational standards also rose and the quality of education improved (Almutairi, 2008). The education system of Saudi Arabia covers a total of five sectors: kindergarten (children under 6 years), primary (6-11 years), intermediate (12-14 years), secondary (15-18 years) (Khafaji, 2004) and university level (19-24 years, depending on the majors and type of education concerned). After completing secondary school by attaining marks above 60%, a student can join a higher learning institution (Alshumaimeri, 2003). From the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia has devoted special attention to higher education, which is sponsored by both the government and private sector. Higher education in Saudi Arabia prospered after the establishment of the Ministry of Higher Education in 1975.

Currently, education in Saudi Arabia remains segregated based on the gender of both the learner and the teacher (Al-Zarah, 2008). This means that there are no co-educational organisations, marking Saudi Arabia as one of the few countries to support a single-sex school system. The segregation of students may be attributed to the Islamic beliefs, although single-sex schooling is also related to cultural, social and traditional values (Wiseman, 2010). However, although education in Saudi Arabia is segregated in terms of gender, both genders access the same quality of educational facilities (Al-Johani, 2009). For example, the stages of schooling are identical for both genders (e.g., primary, intermediate and secondary), and the curriculum for each subject is almost the same, with small variations in order to meet the requirements of each gender. In some circumstances, women are allowed to be taught by male teachers, for instance, through media broadcasting, using closed-circuit television or to attend some exclusive classes that require the use of male professors, such as in the field of medicine (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014). In the current study, I will gather data from the women's department of a Saudi university, since the regulations do not allow me to visit the men's section. In the next section, the Saudi Education system will be discussed in further detail.

#### 2.4 The Education System in Saudi Arabia

The Ministry of Education controls the education system in Saudi Arabia. There are three types of schools in Saudi Arabia: public schools, private schools and international schools. There are 30,625 schools in Saudi Arabia in total, out of which 26,248 (86%) are public

and 4,377 (14%) are private and international schools. Between the years 2013 to 2017, the number of private schools grew by 13%, while the number of public schools grew by 1%. The Ministry of Education governs public schools, while Saudi individuals lead private schools. A portion of the international schools in Saudi Arabia is governed by embassies, while others are privately organised and host multiple curricula under a single roof. Contrasting with Saudi public schools, where boys and girls are segregated, international schools are usually co-educational. For the majority, international schools are not selective concerning nationality; though in some cases, embassy-run institutions do give preference to their particular nationalities. The American and British schools both follow this principle. Private schools follow the same curriculum as the public schools, apart from some subjects such as English, which is taught from the first year of primary school in private schools. Private schools must use the same textbooks used in public schools and issued by the Ministry of Education, and need to follow the ministry's policies and rules with regard to all educational issues, such as subjects, curriculum, grading and final examinations (Alabdelwahab, 2002). Even though instructors have a certain amount of freedom in all types of schools to choose the kind of tests that are set during the semesters, they must follow the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education with regard to the final examinations (Alabdelwahab, 2002). Therefore, the same English curriculum and same final examinations in English are required regardless of whether students are in public or private schools.

The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia is responsible for the systems related to all educational issues as well as for higher education. One of the most important educational aims for the Saudi education system is the continuation of its Islamic Educational heritage. The objectives of the Saudi educational policy are: to guarantee that education becomes more effective; to ensure that the religious, economic and social requirements of the country are met; to eliminate illiteracy among Saudi adults; to create highly trained individuals, both scientifically and intellectually, so that they can achieve their full potential in order to benefit their country and the progress of their nation; and to play a positive role in the field of scientific research in order to donate to the global progress in arts, science and inventions (Alabdelwahab, 2002).

Alabdelwahab (2002) summarises the arrangement of schools in Saudi Arabia as follows:

- 1- Kindergarten stage:** is mostly in the private sector, but there are a few public kindergartens; children aged three to five years can be registered at this level and receive informal education, although it is not compulsory to attend.

- 2- Primary schools:** include six stages which are compulsory for all students. Learners from the age of six years can be registered for these schools, and it is expected that they will complete this stage by the age of 11. In public primary schools, the English language is introduced to the students from the fourth stage (9 years old) of primary school and they take two 45-minute classes per week. There are no final examinations at this stage for any subject. Learners are evaluated continuously during each semester and proceed to the following stage according to their overall performance as determined by their teacher.
- 3- Intermediate schools:** consist of three stages that are compulsory for all the students to complete. Learners can be registered at schools from the age of 12 years and are expected to complete this level by the age of 15. English is taught to the students as one of the compulsory subjects. They attend four 45-minute classes of English per week and, at the end of each stage, they take an exam in all subjects. If they pass the exam, they can then proceed to the following stage.
- 4- Secondary schools:** contain three stages. Students can be enrolled in secondary school at the age of 16, and it is compulsory. It is expected that they will complete their secondary schooling by the age of 18. Learners at this level continue to study English and take four classes of 45 minutes per week. At the end of each stage, they take an exam in all the subjects and, if they pass, can then progress to the following stage. Passing the examination for the last grade means that the students are qualified to go to university.
- 5- Preparation for further education:** After secondary school, if students had passed their exams and are accepted by a university, a preparation year is required to be completed by all students, the focus of which is English language. The purpose of the English language in the preparatory year programmes is to support the additional development of the English proficiency of Saudi learners moving into the university system, looking to develop their level of English understanding and spoken skills. This is accomplished via the strategic assignment of certified international native English-speaking teachers. In all Saudi universities, these teachers join an international staff at the university where they will help in the improvement of curriculum and learner mentorship, and try to improve the English language abilities of Saudi learners. If the students pass this year, they can join their preferred department at university.

All Saudi schools and the universities across all regions of the country receive the same textbooks for all of the subjects. Hence, the education system in Saudi Arabia is

centralised. The Ministry of Education designs the textbooks for all subjects, including English. Although the teachers create the exam questions themselves, these must be based on the textbooks only, and they are not allowed to include any questions that are not included in the textbooks (Al-Degether, 2009). Therefore, Saudi teachers are limited to using the textbook provided and following the educational regulations. The following section will discuss the role of teachers in the Saudi education system.

## 2.5 The Role of Teachers in the KSA's Education System

The Saudi government, in 2006, created the saying that “Every Child Needs a Teacher” to promote the work of teachers and confirm the message that teachers are essential for educating society (Al Shaer, 2007). The common role of Saudi teachers is to teach students according to the curriculum laid down by the government, a curriculum that reproduces cultural beliefs, values and the way of life. It is a teacher-centred method and it is the teachers' responsibility to fulfil the objectives of the curriculum and prepare students for the next higher level of education, confirming that their students have acquired the essential level of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Teachers are required to use the textbooks created by the Curriculum Department of the Ministry of Education. Homework projects are usually delivered in the form of questions that the teacher sets for the students after each lesson and are based on the content of the textbook. Moreover, the teachers are responsible for planning the examination questions and setting exam papers for their students that are also in accordance with the curriculum provided by the government and which represent the cultural beliefs, values, way of life and students' comprehension levels (Ministry of Education, 2008; Oyaid, 2009). For example, the topics used in the exams by the teachers should reflect the religious values and cultural customs and beliefs that may influence the students' educational process. In summary, there is a national curriculum, the system is quite structured and there is not much flexibility to deviate from the national curriculum, and teachers are tasked with the responsibility of delivering the curriculum to students.

Since education in Saudi Arabia is teacher-centred rather than learner-centred, the approach tends to be focused on delivering content to individuals, which may have implications for understanding how teachers teach English in this study. The educational goals of Saudi Arabia also concentrate on the individual more than group work (Oyaid, 2009). However, in the different levels of learning, it is difficult to develop an understanding individually, so they should interact and communicate with each other in order to create new and shared information.

In my study, I wanted to find out how teachers at the university level work within this system to get the best outcomes for their students. It is believed that one of the important indicators of the significance of education in every setting is the teacher's role (Wang 2002). Thus, the role of the teacher is an important issue in the educational literature. In order to understand the role of the teachers in the Saudi context, it may be valuable to consider it from two perspectives as recommended by Wang (2002). These perspectives include the professional status of teaching that may present the outsider's view of the amount of respect that the community gives to teaching as a profession, and the professional understanding of what it means to be a teacher that may reflect the insider's view about what it is like to be a teacher in a given setting. In Saudi Arabia, the general public opinion is one of gratitude to the teachers for their hard work in reducing illiteracy and educating people.

Schools can help students to enhance their English skills and help them be part of their community. Therefore, there is a claim that interaction helps students to discover the world in order to develop their own personal construction of it (Mercer and Littleton, 2007). Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that learning is reinforced by social interaction with peers and teachers and via real world experiences. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of psychology emphasises the interaction between the individual and society, and the outcome of social communication, language, and culture on learning. As a consequence, it can be argued that students alone cannot rebuild knowledge. They need collaboration and guidance from their teachers, which helps them to feel more self-confident and control their own learning. According to social constructivist theory, teachers act as facilitators for learners (Waterman, 2006). The teacher intervenes to help and encourage learners to articulate their understanding. This process helps the students to reflect on their learning and could help them to associate new understandings within their existing knowledge (Waterman, 2006). Accordingly, this perspective suggests that the role of the teacher would be to support students use learning strategies in order to construct their own knowledge (Turuk, 2010). Encouraging teacher-student discourse could present an opportunity for teachers to help to develop their students' learning skills (Baumfield and Oberski, 1998). Dialogue in learning could support instructors to develop a clear picture of what their students require, so they can offer to help to close the gap. Moreover, it could improve the students' ability to use their own knowledge in different contexts. Considering that the KSA education system is known for being centralized around the MOE and teachers are generally excluded from the decision-making process. Thus, the role of the English Language Teachers is needed to



teach English as a foreign language to Saudi Students and develop their skills in using the English language.

## 2.6 Historical Background of Foreign Language Teaching in Saudi Arabia

As noted previously, the official language in Saudi Arabia is Arabic. Over time, support for teaching and learning foreign languages began to develop in Saudi Arabia. This was due to the growth and development of the Saudi economy, which occurred following the prospecting for oil in 1933, the main driving force behind the economic upturn (Al-Ghamdi and Al-Saddat, 2002). Thus, Saudi Arabia required an education system with institutions that could provide Saudi citizens with the necessary skills to travel to the West to further their education and to deal effectively with foreigners coming to work in Saudi's oil industries.

### 2.6.1 The Importance of English Language Teaching in Saudi Arabia

After the discovery of oil in 1933, Saudi Arabia was in need of a range of foreign-owned companies for their expertise in the oil business and the relations with these international companies remain crucial for the economic success of the Saudi nation (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014). There was a dependency on foreigners in Saudi Arabia, in many industries and companies; for instance, Al-Braik (2007) claims that, in 1978, around 90% of the staff of all of the educational institutions in the KSA, such as food factories, hospitals and shopping malls, were foreigners from English speaking countries.

Becoming fluent in English is an important skill for Saudi Arabians who wish to pursue certain careers in the country. There are many important and effective foreign-run companies, for example, the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), established in 1933, which have considerably influenced the Saudi economy. In fact, up until 1988, this company was majority-owned by American participants and was generally working in accord with the demands of the US population. The Saudi government now currently owns it. However, the majority of its employees are foreigners and advice that is sought in relation to technical matters is sourced in the USA (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014), which makes the use of English as a foreign language (EFL) very important in this field and for Saudi Arabian students who wish to enter careers in this area. EFL is also closely linked to the establishment of a military presence in Saudi Arabia as the KSA receives considerable quantities of arms and military advisors from the USA, dating back to 1948 (Cordesman, 2003). Therefore, EFL is considered important in the military field. Furthermore, EFL is used as the training language for many occupational areas in Saudi Arabia; for example, Saudi Airlines and the Saudi Telecommunication Company (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014).

The importance of EFL is acknowledged among Saudi citizens and is seen as a necessity for accessing higher education, international communication and business development. A sufficient level of English proficiency in the English language is needed to get into higher education in Saudi Arabian universities, and then it is needed to access careers after higher education as well, which is why English is also taught in higher education. Many scholarships are offered by the Saudi government for studying abroad in different English-speaking countries, such as Canada, the United Kingdom and the USA. A number of Saudi parents also send their children to English-language speaking countries in order to develop their level of English language (Al Shemary, 2008; Rahman, 2011).

#### 2.6.2 English Language Teaching in Saudi Arabia

Since the KSA's discovery of oil in 1933, EFL has been used in business settings, but it was only introduced as an educational subject in primary, intermediate, secondary and higher education by the government in 1950 (Al-Shammary, 1984). Saudi Education Policy describes 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 for their communities and participate in the spreading of Islam and serving humanity" (Al Hajailan, 2003, p. 23). This policy confirms the significance of teaching and learning EFL in Saudi Arabia, and identifies the language as an international communication tool with important influence in the political, economic and scientific fields. English is the only foreign language taught in schools as a compulsory subject in Saudi's education system.

Al Hajailan (2003) states that two curriculum documents were formed in order to support the primary objective of teaching EFL. The first contains two structures, the first of which was introduced in 1987 and aimed to offer an introductory foundation to all of the textbooks related to teaching EFL. The second structure 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 create the EFL curricula in the light of the university's successful EFL programme for Saudi graduates seeking employment in ARAMCO.

Elyas (2008) argues that these early curriculum documents failed to meet the government's chief objective of developing EFL language ability among all Saudi students including women. There was debate over whether KFUPM could efficiently create an effective EFL curriculum for Saudi students when women are not permitted to enter or be part of the

university and how this curriculum could be shared with the other universities. There were questions as to how the KFUPM staff could understand the requirements of female EFL students when women were not allowed to offer suggestions about developing the curriculum. Therefore, some Saudi teachers called for the improvement of the EFL curricula in order to raise the standard of English among all Saudi students, including women. It was proposed by Elyas (2008) that if teachers helped in improving the syllabi, and women added in comments regarding topics of interest and relevance, then it would help the students to perform better, which in turn, grants teachers a better degree of involvement in the education practice and eventually improves EFL education. Therefore, the implementation would vary according to the students' needs in a specific class.

In the sphere of public education, from elementary to secondary school, the majority of English teachers are Saudis. The minimum qualification required for instructors to teach English in schools is a bachelor's degree in English, but no further training or experience is essential (Alfahadi, 2014). Some instructors have graduated from the School of Education or Art at local Saudi universities, which offer a four-year bachelor's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Likewise, teaching assistants teaching at the university have a bachelor's degree in English and are able to teach the first and second year only. They are able to teach only the subjects of the four skills of English such as writing, reading, listening and speaking that are compulsory for the students and are broken into different classes.

The Ministry of Education has specified the general objectives of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in schools of Saudi Arabia (Al Zayid, 2012; Rahman and Alhaisoni, 2013). The first objective is to allow learners to acquire basic language skills (i.e., writing, reading, listening and speaking). The second is to permit learners to acquire the significant linguistic competence needed in diverse life circumstances. The third objective is to enable learners to achieve the linguistic competence desired in different professions. Fourth, the program aims to allow students to adopt positive attitudes toward the learning of English language. The fifth program objective is to raise the learners' knowledge concerning the importance of English as a medium of international communication. The sixth is to increase the learners' consciousness about the religious, economic, cultural and social issues of their society and prepare them to take part in finding solutions to these. The seventh objective is to encourage learners' linguistic competence that will allow them, in the future, to clarify and present Islamic-related information. The program's eighth objective is to develop learners' linguistic skill, which will permit them to engage with citizens from nations that speak the English language,

which nurtures the idea of collaboration, respect and understanding the differences between the cultures of different countries. Finally, the program aims to allow learners to take part in the transmission of scientific and technological advances of other countries to Saudi Arabia (Al Zayid, 2012; Rahman and Alhaisoni, 2013). Some of these objectives do not influence the textbooks provided by the university, for example these textbooks do not reflect the students' culture and religion so the teachers need to work hard to try to link the topics to the students' religion and culture. In the class, teachers come across the challenge of how to make learning clear and easier for their students (Rahman and Alhaisoni, 2013). In the sphere of higher education, Saudi universities tend to use English as the medium for teaching on certain scientific courses, such as medicine and engineering (English is essential and the language of these fields), despite the fact that Arabic is used on non-scientific courses (e.g., humanities courses). Nevertheless, other courses, wherein English is not the language of teaching, involve students completing EFL coursework as an extra compulsory unit. For instance, a learner with a bachelor's degree in Arabic, must have completed an English unit (commonly English for Academic Purposes) as part of his/her course. This extra English unit is intended to increase the students' capability in English and allow them to use the language as a tool for knowledge in addition to Arabic. On the other hand, two noticeable scientific universities, King Fahad Petroleum and Mineral University (KFPMU) and King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) use English as the only language of teaching for all of the courses they offer. The teachers that are required to teach English in Saudi Arabia especially for the main subject such as English literature and linguistics subjects should be qualified instructors who have significant qualifications (MA and Ph.D.) in English.

### 2.6.3. Challenges Related to Learning English in Saudi Arabia

Despite a clear investment such as the scholarships and training courses provided in English teaching and learning and awareness of its importance for the development of the country, recently, the Saudi Arabian government and educationalists have expressed serious concerns about the low level of attainment in English among learners in schools and universities. Even though the Saudi government has devoted huge efforts to developing English teaching and learning, learners' English skills remain unacceptable (Al-Johani, 2009; Fareh, 2010; Khan, 2011). Researchers (e.g., Alhawsawi, 2013; Al-Johani, 2009; Rajab, 2013) have suggested that, even if learners spend nine years studying English in school, most of them graduate with a low level of English capability. When they reach university, they carry these limitations with them and struggle in their English

classes and courses. AlSobaihi (2005), for example, claims that the majority of Saudi Arabian high school and college graduates have low proficiency in EFL skills. According to AlSobaihi, factors including this low ability in the English language include teacher-centred instruction, teachers' reliance on traditional teaching methodologies, students' lack of motivation and encouragement from the teacher, lack of real-world practice and the misconception among some of society members that English may affect the native language, customs and culture. In order to provide an insight into possible reasons for the poor performance of Saudi students in learning English, a number of factors from the literature are discussed below: the teachers' reliance on traditional teaching methodologies, such as the use of Arabic to teach English, the students' reliance on memorisation as a primary learning approach, the students' lack of inspiration and encouragement from the teacher, lack of practice, the learners' notion that English may not be relevant to their academic and social life, and the impression among some members of Saudi society that English may affect the native language, customs and culture.

Firstly, English teaching and learning within Saudi education is argued to be mainly teacher-centred rather than student-centred, which discourages learners from developing satisfactory language skills (Ahmed, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rajab, 2013). In Saudi academic culture, instructors control the learning procedure, and learners rely on them as the central resource of knowledge (Alkubaidi, 2014). According to Fareh (2010), English tutors spend the majority of the lesson speaking and infrequently give learners a chance to speak or ask questions; consequently, classes are usually quiet, as learners play a passive role in the learning procedure (Alkubaidi, 2014). In addition, Al-Johani (2009) specified that during English classes teachers spend most of the time demonstrating and explaining the objects of the new lesson orally or through writing on the board, while the learners are passive listeners whose responsibility is to record what has been taught and to memorise the content of the lesson. This is in contrast to research demonstrating the importance of student-centred learning which supports language learning.

Another difficulty that hinders learners' English skills in Saudi Arabia is the teachers' reliance on using Arabic to teach the English language (Alhawsawi, 2013; Fareh, 2010). According to Fareh (2010), teaching a class primarily in Arabic reduces the learners' exposure to English and so the learning goals are not fulfilled. Furthermore, students have no chance to practise and communicate in English during lessons when Arabic is the medium of teaching (Alhawsawi, 2013). According to Alhawsawi (2013), the teachers' use of Arabic can be due to their lack of knowledge and self-confidence regarding using English, or it could simply be based on a desire to make their job easier. Unfortunately,

translating from English to Arabic discourages learners from developing their communicative ability (Alfahadi, 2014). Teaching a foreign language by relying on the home language is a traditional method and can be an ineffective approach for both the teachers and students (Almutairi, 2008). The dominant role of the teacher in the classroom and the use of Arabic to teach English have arguably caused in learners a dependence on unsuitable learning approaches, such as memorisation and rote learning (Alkubaidi, 2014; Almutairi, 2008; Fareh, 2010; Rajab, 2013) without understanding the meaning and the way in which the language is formed (Alkubaidi, 2014; Rajab, 2013). By memorising the textbook on which the exam will be based, students can pass and achieve high marks without actually learning the language (Alkubaidi, 2014).

It has also been claimed that both school and university students in Saudi Arabia lack motivation and encouragement from their teachers, which delays their development in terms of increasing their English proficiency (Al-Johani, 2009; Almutairi, 2008; Fareh, 2010; Khan, 2011). According to Fareh (2010), when it comes to English learning, students are unmotivated and do not want to learn, possibly as a result of the teaching methods which do not involve them actively. Al-Johani (2009) indicated that, in most English classes he observed, the teachers discouraged the learners, as they did not offer them any examples from real-life situations when explaining, did not encourage or praise the learners' participation and original thoughts, had a tendency to correct mistakes immediately, and offered continuous criticism concerning their learning attempts. This could have occurred because teachers were used to the traditional teaching methods, in which the teacher is seen as a powerful figure, or it could be because of the lack of the appropriate training for teachers who teach EFL.

In addition to the challenges that learners face in learning institutions, they lack a natural social setting where they can practise the English language (Alqahtani, 2011; Khan, 2011). English is considered a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, and it is not usually used in everyday life (Alrabai, 2014). In Saudi Arabia, most Saudis communicate in their native language, Arabic, with their family, peers, friends and classmates, while English is used only as an academic subject, which results in the students having few chances to speak English in daily interactions (Khan, 2011). In order for learners to learn the language successfully, they should hear and practise it in everyday circumstances (Alqahtani, 2011). The irregular use of English in their everyday life has led some learners to assume that it is useless in their academic and social life, especially if they are not going to study courses for which English is the language of teaching (Alqahtani, 2011; Khan, 2011). This in turn

can also have an impact on their motivation in the classroom if they do not see the language as personally relevant.

Finally, it is worth noting that a society can either endorse or discourage the effective learning of English. Some members of society in Saudi Arabia hold the misconception that learning the English language may affect the learning of Arabic, particularly at a younger age, or may change Saudi culture and customs (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014). In addition to this misconception about the influence of English on Arabic use, some groups in society fear that the spread of English use in the country might weaken the local culture, customs and identity (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014). Language is not only a group of words and verses; rather, it comes with culture, traditions and identity. According to Alsagayer (2014), language and culture are intricately interwoven with each other. Thus, teachers should be able to link the Saudi culture to the target language culture in order to help the students to understand the target language. According to Richards and Lockhart (1994), it has been observed that the introduction of the English language has not remarkably influenced Saudi Arabia's culture. However, the social setting of second language learning affects a learner's belief and attitude regarding the language and affects a learner's motivation to learn. "There are often cultural differences between the belief systems of learners from different cultural backgrounds" (Richards and Lockhart, p.56). Moreover, Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) propose that the cultural background is one of the influences that could have communicative impact on the students' beliefs. Although this is a misconception, a negative view of English held by some in society could reduce students' motivation to learn EFL.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the setting of the study. This chapter began with a discussion of the history of Saudi Arabia, the importance of English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, and described the education system in Saudi Arabia. It also presented the history of teaching the English language in Saudi Arabia and the policy objectives for teaching English. As noted, English has become gradually more significant in Saudi Arabia because of globalisation and the requirement for Saudi Arabia to participate in international markets. In spite of this, the level of English language skill has been called into question, arguably due to English teaching remaining largely teacher-centred and traditional. English is still taught at the school and University levels inside the inflexible framework of the approved curriculum. This chapter also discussed the teaching and learning of English in

Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the challenges that students face when learning this language. The next chapter will present the literature review of this study.



## CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Introduction

This research aimed to investigate teachers' and students' perspectives on the teaching of English grammar at level one at a university in Saudi Arabia. The questions being explored in this study are:

- i) To what extent is the CLT approach used in developing each of the oral and written skills (listening, speaking and writing) and teaching grammar?
- ii) What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the opportunities and the limitations associated with implementing the CLT approach in teaching oral and written skills (listening, speaking and writing) and grammar?

The previous chapter discussed the EFL curriculum in Saudi Arabia and the regulations regarding the Saudi EFL Education policy. The main thrust of the EFL policy in Saudi Arabia is to achieve the best possible standard of teaching and learning. As described previously, the EFL textbook and curriculum provided by the university constitute compulsory material that teachers must use in their classes.

The teaching and learning of EFL in Saudi Arabia have undergone important changes over the course of the last 80 years. During this period, the emphasis on the aims of learning English has changed, from reading literary transcripts and developing intellectual skills to developing practical language skills and using language for meaningful communication (Alhajailan, 2006; Alseghayer, 2011). To achieve these aims, the field of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia has also undergone fundamental changes with respect to teaching content and methodologies (Alhajailan, 2006).

This chapter reviews the research and theoretical literature related to some of the issues that are relevant to teaching English as a Foreign Language in the field of Higher Education, with special reference to the particular challenges encountered in Saudi Arabia. An overview of the historical development of the English language teaching methods in Saudi Arabia will be provided, starting with the grammar-translation method (GTM), which is one of the main teaching approaches in Middle-Eastern English language teaching (Alseghayer, 2011). The second method to be discussed is the audio-lingual method (ALM), which was developed in reaction to the grammar translation method's insufficient emphasis on listening and speaking (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004). The third method is communicative language teaching (CLT), which is a flexible approach that lays emphasis on the significance of communication skills in language learning. I examined CLT in depth, considering the related concept of communicative competence, the underlying

principles of CLT, and the teachers and learners' roles in the communicative language classroom and activities. An explanation of Sociocultural Theory and its importance in this study will be presented in this chapter. This theory focuses on the role of culture in students' development and indicates that students' learning is very much a social process. There will then follow a discussion of previous studies associated with the implementation of CLT in various EFL settings. The literature reviewed in these diverse settings informs this study, particularly because there is little research on the specific context of Saudi EFL education that focuses on CLT and interaction, with the aim of leading to communicative competence. The chapter will also discuss the post method pedagogical approach, and the features of effective EFL teaching and suitable pedagogies for teaching EFL. Note that throughout this literature review and study, the terms 'teacher' and 'instructor' will be used interchangeably. The chapter concludes by presenting a summary of the main points offered by the existing literature and the implications of these for the current study.

### 3.2 Historical Development of Language Teaching Approaches in Saudi Arabia

Language teaching has a long history, and the arguments about teaching methods have changed over the last hundred years (Freeman, 2004). In the case of Saudi Arabia, the methods used to teach English have mainly centred on the audio-lingual method (ALM) and the grammar translation method (GTM). Al-Mohanna (2010) specified that Saudi EFL instructors follow the ALM's chief principle, that is, an emphasis on stimulus processing and response, where teachers are inclined to involve learners in extensive drills of grammatical structures and the extensive repetition of phrases.

The other teaching method, which is usually used to teach English in Saudi Arabia, is the grammar translation method (GTM). Al-Seghayer (2011) claimed that this method inspires teachers to emphasize comprehensive explanations of grammatical rules. This means that learners are expected to memorize vocabulary lists, grammatical structures and exceptions, and then translate entire texts, word for word, as the essential focus of their teaching. Saudi English teachers use a number of traditional teaching approaches such as reading passages and repetition providing comprehensive language information, and the systematic use of translated chunks of language, that consume much of the teachers' time and efforts to maintain ( Al-Hazmi, 2006; Al-Seghayer, 2011).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, most Saudi English teachers tend to use the course textbook and blackboard, and fail to use additional teaching materials in the English classroom (Darandari and Murphy, 2013). Consequently, it could be argued that the use of these two traditional teaching materials fails to produce students who are capable of taking part in a

basic conversation or understanding a simple oral command or written message. Darandari and Murphy (2013) advocate the adoption of a student-centred, interactive approach that focuses on students' development of language for communication as well as their success in examinations.

The teaching of English as a foreign language has massively changed in the last few years (Ellis, 2008). Currently, English language teaching approaches concentrate on the significance of giving students opportunities to communicate (Ellis, 2008). Thus, teachers should think of new ways of promoting classroom communication that will allow the learners to enjoy their English language classes, since currently GMT is the most widely prevalent method used in KSA (Ellis, 2008).

### 3.2.1 The Grammar- Translation Method (GTM)

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) of foreign language teaching is one of the most traditional methods for teaching a foreign language, dating back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Celce-Murcia, 2001). It was originally an approach that attempted to facilitate language learning in order to access works of philosophy and literature written in the foreign language. The two main principles of the GTM are a focus on teaching grammar through reading and writing skills, and the texts used to exploit the grammar rules are unrelated to the students' experience or daily life. Moreover, in teaching meaning and practising the exercises, the teachers focus on translating from the target language into the mother tongue and back (Celce-Murcia, 2001). In this approach, the teacher is not obliged to use the target language at all. Vocabulary is used only as a way to demonstrate the grammar rules (Richards and Rodgers 2001). Learners learn new vocabulary themselves by using bilingual word lists. Thus, bilingual dictionaries became an important tool.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that the GTM has been appreciated and remains accepted in many countries around the world, including Saudi Arabia, as Al-Seghayer (2011) claimed. This particularly occurs in countries where language instructors are not fluent and the classes are very large, as is the case in Saudi Arabia (Al-Seghayer, 2011). In spite of its perceived advantages, there are many issues related to the Grammar-Translation Method. One of the main complications is that it focuses on language analysis as an alternative to language use. It also focuses primarily on reading and writing skills, which do not help to develop an ability to communicate orally in the target language (Schmidt, 1994).

Many studies have been conducted on the Grammar-Translation method and have contributed considerably to the development of the discipline of language teaching. Different studies have attempted to prove that translation is one of the most effective pedagogies applicable to L2 teachers. Dagilienė's (2012) study found that translation is a valuable instrument on an English language course that strengthens the skills of second language students. Chang's (2011) study claimed that the Grammar-Translation method is better than the Communicative Approach with regard to developing accuracy, but that the latter is better for developing fluency. He determined that the perfect approach could be formed by combining these two methods during teaching. Mondal (2012) agrees with Chang (2011), concluding that GTM is a suitable method even though he agrees that its combination with the Communicative Approach will generate a new fruitful methodology to fill the gaps on which these studies focused. Accordingly, Al Refaai's (2013) findings from Saudi Arabia showed that translation enriches the correct performance of language. He argues that it is a desirable method for both teachers and students, and that using the L1 together with the L2 fulfils the requirements of both the learners' skills development and examination purposes. Thus, this method is still used by some Saudi teachers in their EFL classes, as mentioned by Al-Seghayer (2011), even though this approach does not help the students to express their own ideas or allow them to communicate with each other in the classroom (Nunan, 2004).

### 3.2.2 The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)

After World War II, the U.S. saw an imperative need for its citizens to be capable of communicating in the language of its associates as well as its enemies. This led to a radical change in the current view of language teaching (Abu-Melhim, 2009). Special intensive language programs were developed by the U.S. army, which came to be known as the Audiolingual Method (Abu-Melhim, 2009). According to Al-Seghayer (2011), the Audio-lingual Method (ALM) is also commonly used for teaching English in Saudi Arabia. The ALM is a traditional method that highlights the procedure of stimulus and response.

Some of the principal values of language learning in the ALM are stated by Abu-Melhim (2009). One of these principles is that the second language learning should be similar to that for first language acquisition. This conforms to the natural order of language learning; that is, listening, speaking, reading and, finally, writing. It is believed that learners first learn to speak what they have listened to, then read what they have spoken, and write what they have read. Consequently, the ALM emphasizes listening and speaking skills in order

to ease the development of reading and writing skills, besides increasing communicative fluency (Abu-Melhim, 2009).

A further principle of ALM is that a second language is best learned through habit formation. A habit is formed when an action is repeated and is subsequently produced in reaction to certain stimuli, almost in the absence of conscious activity (Britto, 2009). This is achieved by the repetitive pattern practices that are part of the ALM. Translation of the target language into the native language is considered harmful, as it will delay the acquisition of the second language (Brown, 2001). Such translations are believed to impede the control of the second language (Abu-Melhim, 2009).

However, Byram (2000) claimed that the audio-lingual method does not permit students to transmit what they have learned in class into real interactions outside the classroom, or to display communicative competence, which Hymes (1971) described as “the overall underlying knowledge and ability for language use which the speaker-listener possesses” (p. 13). Richards (2005) ascertains that communication-based learning offers the language learner an improved chance to learn compared with a grammar-based method. Therefore, it is proposed that language learning or teaching not only depend on grammatical forms or repetitive drills as found in GTM and ALM, but also on sociocultural understanding.

### 3.2.3 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

In the last thirty years, communicative language teaching (CLT) has been proposed as the most developed method for teaching English as a second or foreign language (ibid). Communicative Language Teaching originated in Europe in the 1960s as a replacement for the earlier structural method. Widdowson (1990, p.159) defined the Communicative Approach as follows:

...it concentrates on getting learners to do things with language, to express concepts and to carry out communicative acts of various kinds. The content of a language course is now defined not in terms of forms, words and sentence patterns, but in terms of concepts, or notions, which such forms are used to express, and the communicative functions which they are used to perform.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) relates to both the procedures and goals in teaching and learning. The fundamental theoretical idea underlying communicative language teaching is communicative competence, a term that was introduced into second or foreign language learning in the early 1970s (Habermas 1970; Hymes 1971; Jakobovits 1970). Communicative competence is defined in terms of the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning and emphasis on the cooperation between the psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA) to account for its

development (Savignon, 1991). CLT is based on a theory of language as a system of communication of meaning, the primary function of language being interaction and communication (Littlewood, 2004). Littlewood (2004) also stresses the importance of meaning in CLT, which is what motivates learners to master the target language. There is a subordination of form to function.

The theory of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) begins from a theory of language as communication. The aim of language teaching is to improve communicative skills (Richard and Rodgers, 2001). Although considerable discussion now refers to ‘task-based language teaching’ (TBLT) rather than CLT, this does not indicate a shift in method but merely develops and continues the communicative approaches to language teaching and learning. As several researchers have noted (e.g. Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2005), TBLT focuses on the use of authentic language and on asking students to perform meaningful tasks using the target language. Such tasks can include conducting an interview or calling customer service for help. Assessment is based on the task outcome rather than on the accuracy of the prescribed language forms. This makes TBLT especially popular for developing target language fluency and student confidence (Nunan, 2004). TBLT is best regarded not as a different approach but as a development contained within CLT, where communicative tasks “serve not only as major components of the methodology but also as units around which a course may be organized” (Littlewood, 2004, p. 324). This rise in CLT is unsurprising, because almost every country has encountered an increasing requirement for people who can communicate with speakers of other languages, particularly via ‘English as a lingua franca’ (see, for example, Sewell, 2013). The trend toward supporting CLT is documented in international surveys such as those by Butler (2011), and by Ho and Wong (2004). According to the Education policy of the KSA, communicative competence is the goal of learning English.

As mentioned, an essential concept in CLT is communicative competence that emphasises a knowledge of “what to say and how to say it appropriately based on the situation, the participants, and their roles and intentions” (Ozsevik 2010, p. 27). In such conditions, a teacher’s role in the teaching space is of the utmost significance. Teachers should be a “model for correct speech and writing” and help “produce plenty of error free sentences” (Richards 2005, p. 5). In addition, they should create a setting in which learners feel comfortable about working in a group or pair. The teacher’s role is as a facilitator, guide and co-learner (Richards 2005). If the teachers facilitate the students then it might help the students in Saudi Arabia, which may lack communication skills because of the insufficient

curriculum, ineffective materials (textbooks) and the tasks used in those resources of ELT (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014; Al-Seghayer, 2011).

#### *3.2.3.1 Communicative Competence*

Canale and Swain (1980) identified four components of communicative competence. The first is grammatical competence, or a knowledge of the grammatical rules of a language and how to use them. The second one is sociolinguistic competence, which refers to knowing which words to choose for any given social interaction and situation to get the preferred outcome. It is the total to which sounds are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts. The third component is discourse competence, relating to how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to reach a combined spoken or written text to understand and express oneself in a given language. The fourth component is strategic competence, composed of the verbal and non-verbal communication approaches that could help one when there are difficulties or a language skills weakness in the process of communication. Canale (1983) claims that grammatical competence "focuses directly on the knowledge and skill required for understanding and expressing accurately the literal meaning of utterances" (p. 7). Sociolinguistic competence corresponds to the student's ability to use the language appropriately in different social settings Canale (1983). Therefore, according to Canale (1983), sociolinguistic competence represents the students' ability to go further than the correct literal meaning of expressions and identify the intent of such expressions in specific social situations. Canale adds, "sociolinguistic competence is crucial in interpreting utterances for their 'social meaning'" (p. 8).

Discourse competence connects to the student's capacity to associate grammatical forms and meaning in a suitable order for various purposes (Canale, 1983). Canale (1983) claims that discourse competence highlights that students also need to be aware of the discourse forms of the language they are learning.

Savignon (1997) has written widely on communicative competence, supporting the model of communicative competence consisting of Canale and Swain's (1980) four components of competence. Savignon (1997) defined communicative competence as "functional language proficiency; the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning involving interaction between two or more persons belonging to the same (or different) speech community" (p. 272). Savignon (2002) proposed that communicative language teaching, "refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning" (p.1). In terms of goals, but particularly procedures, there are weak and strong versions of the CLT approach: the weak

version involves learning about the language in sequence to use the knowledge for communicative reasons, while the strong version includes learning via communication, i.e. the facilitating of chances for the student to practise using the language in meaningful communication (Savignon, 1997). Possibly, in part in line with these variations, the implementation of the CLT approach differs from one institution to another in EFL settings and there is some misunderstanding of what CLT is (Li, 1998).

In contrast to the traditional approaches that were critiqued for their emphasis on accuracy over fluency, the CLT approach has encountered criticism for its emphasis on communication and the maximum use of the target language in the classroom over the teaching of grammar, which is mainly ignored. In spite of this, some researchers disagree: Larsen-Freeman (2000) pointed out that CLT needs learners to take certain roles within a social and educational setting and Littlewood (2007) indicated that elements of CLT could be defined as a systematic consideration of the functional as well as structural features of language, then relating these in an additional communicative perspective. Littlewood (2007) believes that CLT permits students to link linguistic procedures with relevant knowledge in order to understand and use that knowledge to generate specific practical meanings. Richards and Rodgers (2001) also affirm that one of the features of CLT is that it pays attention to the structure of language that reproduces its functional and communicative usages. Regardless of the interpretation of the CLT approach, it has received acceptance internationally based on EFL teaching around the world (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Richards (2005) discussed the principles of CLT in their papers, while Brown (2001) defined six features related to the main principles of CLT, as mentioned below:

1. Language classes' aims are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence. These aims, thus, need to interlink the structural features of language with the practical ones.
2. Language methods are intended to involve students in the practical, reliable use of language for meaningful reasons. The target language is an instrument for classroom communication, not just the object of study. For the reason that if the students carry on to use their native languages, they are not able to interact in the target language.
3. Fluency and accuracy remain corresponding principles that motivate communicative methods. Sometimes, accuracy comes at the later stage. It is assumed that when the students learn to use the language properly accuracy comes spontaneously.



4. Learners in a communicative classroom will eventually have to use language, effectively and sympathetically, in unprepared settings outside the class. Class responsibilities need to prepare learners with the skills that are essential for interactions in these settings.
5. Learners are given chances to identify their own learning procedures through considering their own styles of learning and suitable approaches for independent learning.
6. The role of the instructor is to act as a facilitator and leader rather than as a source of all knowledge. Learners are thus stimulated to improve their communication ability by engaging in genuine linguistic communication with others (Brown, 2001, p. 43). From the above-mentioned principles, it appears that the students are the fundamental focus in the CLT approach and it is their interaction requirements that provide the main basis for designing the curriculum (Savignon, 1991).

Related to the principles presented by Brown, Yang and Cheung (2003) further claim that CLT highlights the use of focused and meaningful activities, such as the use of authentic elements, and the use of more tools besides the textbook activities. CLT advocates limiting the use of mechanical drills in pair or group work activities. As a reminder, within CLT the aim of language learning is to be able to know how to use this language for a variety of diverse purposes and functions. Significant questions include how to differentiate the use of language regarding situation and audience, how to produce and understand different text kinds and how to provide communication in spite of the limitations in the student's knowledge of the foreign language (Richards, 2005).

In addition to the features of CLT discussed above, some other features, such as fluency and accuracy, error correction and the role of interaction and the negotiation of meaning will be discussed to offer a deeper understanding of the theoretical background of CLT.

Fluency is one important principle of CLT. Fluency is the ability to express oneself easily and to be understood by others easily which happens when the student takes part in meaningful communication and it can be supported through creating class activities where students discuss dialogues, use interactive approaches and adapt language appropriately to cope with misunderstandings (Farooq, 2015). Alternatively, activities that focus on accuracy aim for students to produce correct linguistic utterances. Richards (2005) has outlined variances between activities focusing on fluency and those focusing on accuracy. Activities focusing on fluency aim to reproduce natural use of a language, emphasise interaction, involve significant language use, create language that is spontaneous by nature and try to link the language use to the target language context. However, Richards argues that the activities that focus on accuracy reinforce the use of classroom-based language, with an emphasis on creating the accurate linguistic utterances, use the language out of

setting, put into practice small examples of language, do not need ‘meaningful’ interaction and keep the choice of language under control.

Error correction is another feature relevant to CLT. Previous methods of language teaching highlighted errors and concerned themselves with correction whereas the communicative approach assigns more prominence to communication. From the time when CLT came into being, errors have been considered as regular phenomena in the procedure of learning English. Practising excessive error correction is, however, regarded as a way of discouraging students from speaking and using the target language (Crichton et al., 2017). As Larsen-Freeman (2006), states, students could have inadequate linguistic knowledge and might be considered good at communication even if there are errors of form in their utterances. Moreover, instead of the teachers’ correction of mistakes, it is important to push the students to produce correct forms themselves after some corrective indication with a result that they can form meaningful associations using their common sense and knowledge about language (Bailey, 2001). When accomplishing this error correction themselves, recalling the self-corrected error will be much easier for students (Bailey, 2001) and thus should lead to better long-term learning. As pointed out by Larsen-Freeman (2006), supporting learners to deliver the language rather than correcting them directly is assumed to be more positive in terms of their interlanguage progress because language production combines the cognitive relationships in the mind and students will be provided with plenty of time and opportunities for self-correction when interacting.

Interaction is another principle inherent in CLT and refers to when two or more people communicate with or react to each other. For example, students can interact by asking questions and teacher or other students answering them and by interacting in a meaningful conversation. Interaction facilitates students’ language learning because conversational and linguistic variations that happen in discourse offer students essential understandable linguistic input. Krashen (1989) argues for the significance of social contextual features as conversational strategies in acquiring more input for the student that ultimately link to the notion of an affective filter that is said to control what contribution develops through to the understanding of language learning (Long, 1997). Lightbown and Spada (2006) propose that what defines input as understandable is improved interaction, or negotiation of meaning. In Krashen’s (1989) input hypothesis, comprehensible input itself remains the chief fundamental variable, while Long (1997) asserts that a critical part in the language learning procedure is the modified input that students produce after negotiation of meaning and the way where other speakers interact in conversations. Long (1997) explored the

conversations between a native speaker and non-native speaker and proposed his interaction hypothesis.

Negotiation of meaning, according to Long, is the process of discussing an issue with someone in order to reach an agreement with them regarding what is meant by a speaker's utterance(s). Negotiation of meaning leads to modified interaction that contains different adjustments that native speakers or other speakers make in sequence to reduce their input to make it comprehensible to students. At the discourse stage, adjustments consist of responses such as simplification, comprehension checks, explanation requirements, self-repetition or interpretation, repetition, development of students' statement and topic changes (Brown, 2007). As a result, activities where practice in using language in an actual communicative setting become the emphasis, where real information is exchanged, and where the language used is not totally predictable.

In the interaction hypothesis, Long (1997) claims that negotiation for meaning, and particularly negotiation work that generates interactional variations by the native speakers or more proficient speakers, simplifies learning for the reason that it links input, internal student abilities and output in creative language. The interactional variations make input understandable, and comprehensible input leads to learning (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). Long (1997) considers that when meaning is negotiated, input comprehensibility is frequently improved, and students have a tendency to focus on the significant linguistic structures.

The shift in emphasis to the student determine the roles played by the teachers and students.

#### *3.2.3.2 Teachers' and Students' Roles in the CLT Classroom*

The CLT approach also has implications for what roles teachers and students have within the English language learning classroom. Richards and Rodgers (2001) highlighted that the main purpose of language is communication and interaction. Therefore, in the CLT class, students can be encouraged to use the target language (TL) with an emphasis on fluency instead of accuracy, and to increase their language use for communication in different circumstances, which will lead to different roles for students from those found in the more traditional second language classes. In CLT, students take an active role in the learning procedure, communicating and interacting regularly, instead of being inactive in the classroom (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Corresponding to Richards and Rodgers' suggestions

(2001), students need to be aware of the links between the self, the learning procedures and the purpose of learning, which include cooperation in the class procedures and actions.

The different role for students similarly includes a change in the role of the teachers. Prieto (2008) states that a language teacher plays two roles in CLT. The first role can be defined as the facilitator, helping students to be involved in the communication procedure via connecting with different activities in the class. The other role is to act as a dependent member inside the learning/teaching group and devote themselves to this practice with the attitude of being a component of the class rather than the main player (Prieto, 2008). Accordingly, the teacher has the duty of structuring classes in a way that inspires students. They should focus on both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Deliberating subjects of genuine interest for students is a valuable instrument for preserving and expanding student motivation.

#### *3.2.3.3 Activities in the CLT Classes*

The principal reason for employing CLT is to allow students to use the TL under different conditions interactively; Larsen-Freeman (2000) claimed that under this approach, “almost everything ... is done with a communicative intent” (p. 129). The aim in CLT is to improve the knowledge of linguistic procedures and purposes of the language to use them in diverse circumstances. For example, the students may be required to understand different features of the applied and structural settings and try to select suitable terms to use in particular circumstances (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2005).

As the main aim of this study is to investigate the teachers’ and students’ perceptions about CLT in teaching and learning English in Saudi Arabia, it is important to focus on the Saudi teaching context. As Saudi is a foreign language setting, a review of the current literature that relates to CLT use in EFL settings is essential. The next section of this literature review provides a description of Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory, and presents aspects of CLT relevant to this theory.

#### *3.2.3.4 Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory*

This part of the chapter defines the prominent theories and research linked to CLT in second language teaching contexts to set the scene to explore the possible implementation of the CLT approach in the Saudi EFL classroom.

Social learning theories help us to understand how people learn in social contexts, as they learn from each other, and informs us how we, as teachers, can construct active learning communities. Sociocultural theory developed from the work of the psychologist Vygotsky

(1978), who believed that parents, peers, and the culture at large were responsible for increasing individuals' higher order functions. According to Vygotsky, learning is based on interaction with other people. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that, as learners repeat a task under the teacher's supervision or that of a more knowledgeable other (MKO), their ability improves more through discussion and cooperation compared to working on their own. Accordingly, interaction occurs as the task is accomplished collectively. Interactive learning actively involves the students in struggling with the material. Classes are changed into debates, and students and teachers become partners in the journey of knowledge acquisition.

CLT, taken from a socio-cultural perspective, places special importance on the role of social and cultural settings and environments (Poehner 2008) and also on communication with other language users, for example peers and teachers, that improves the students' performance and production of language, purposes that could not be achieved by students working on their own (Heins et al. 2007; Lantolf 2000). In addition, Norris and Ortega (2003) claim that language learning, in addition to any other type of learning, must include social communication.

Sociocultural theory emphasizes not only how adults and peers affect individual learning, however, but also how cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how instruction and learning take place (Shaffer, 2009). Therefore, the wider setting of life outside the class has an important influence on what takes place during the communication between the students and teachers. It is also assumed that students do not learn a language in a class; actually, they learn it more outside the class, but such opportunities are infrequently found in the Saudi context (Khan, 2011). Accordingly, the teachers must plan classroom activities based on authentic language resources, reflecting Saudi's cultural features. In the Saudi setting EFL programs lack certain structures of local culture and do not correspond very well to the sociocultural spirit of the target language, as mentioned in Chapter 2 (TL) (Liton, 2012). Thus, it is of great significance to bridge the gaps, and strengthen the cultural links between the students' L1 and L2 to achieve the preferred pedagogical aims.

Socially different and educationally complex in nature, the L2 class is a place that combines the 'local' and 'global' together. In Saudi Arabia, teachers often refer to social issues in their classes. To prevent any adverse consequences arising from this, non-Arab teachers generally and Western teachers in particular avoid discussions of religion, politics and gender issues in their classes; for example, Yeh (2010) comments on the differences between different cultures and concludes that teaching cannot be divorced from the social

settings and that the implementation of new methodologies necessitates alterations according to the social and cultural circumstances.

From a sociocultural view, inexperienced language teachers must obtain the suitable expected knowledge that will improve not only their teaching ability but also similarly the types of practice predictable of them in an educational context, both inside and outside the teaching setting (Richards, 2010).

Teaching includes understanding the dynamics and relations inside the classroom and the rules and actions specific to particular situations. In this study, the teachers are Saudis, with a good understanding of the context, but their teaching preparation is influenced by the boundaries enforced by the official authorities. The teachers are not autonomous with regard to choosing their teaching methods. In effect, they are constrained by the social conventions, students' beliefs and the ministry's policies about how to teach. As a result of this, they continuously switch between pedagogically and socially oriented activities and try to meet the learning and social requirements of the students. Like Saudi Arabia, other EFL settings also request teachers to implement the CLT approach. Nevertheless, EFL teachers in the Arab world frequently utilize the traditional methodologies. In the Saudi setting, teachers prefer implementing the traditional methods and find the use of the CLT approach challenging because of the number of socio-cultural and institutional limitations (Rahman and Alhaisoni, 2013).

#### 3.2.3.4.1 Major Themes of the Theory

Sociocultural theory is highly relevant for this study, in which the students are considered dynamic learners and individuals who become part of the L2 community. Scholars like Vygotsky (1987) presented descriptions of how to view learning that have increasingly become an alternative paradigm for second language acquisition (SLA). Lantolf (2000) called this paradigm sociocultural SLA. In this paradigm, a teacher or more knowledgeable other (MKO) attempts to motivate and make use of learners' abilities by scaffolding learning inside their zone of proximal development (ZPD), as will be discussed in the following section.

##### 3.2.3.4.1.1 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The term 'zone of proximal development' is probably one of the best-known concepts associated with Vygotsky (Dunn and Lantolf, 1998). The term now features in almost every developmental and educational psychology textbook (ibid), and is used widely in studies about teaching and learning in many areas, including second-language learning

(Dunn and Lantolf, 1998; Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995) and moral education (Tappan, 1998), with different kinds of learners (Smith, 1993) and adults (Kilgore, 1999).

For Vygotsky, social communication is a critical vehicle whereby the natural procedures in cognitive development are redirected by social and historical influences. During social interactions, Vygotsky argued, ‘zones of proximal developments’ might be produced. The zone of proximal development can be defined as “the distance between what children can do by themselves and the next learning that they can be helped to achieve with competent assistance” (Raymond, 2000, p.176).). Vygotsky argued that socially maintained activity through discussion in the zone of proximal development awakens and provides paths for intellectual development. For example, during social interactions with their mothers, children accomplished more sophisticated goals than they did on their own (Raymond, 2000). Additionally, an analysis of the videos of these interactions exposed flexibility in the ways by which the goal structure of the task emerged through the interactions (Raymond, 2000). Thus, in adult-child interactions, children are achieving goals that are linked to their own constructive efforts and social life (Oakley 2004).

The second language classroom is an appropriate setting to employ the ZPD theory. The early step in Vygotsky's theory is that having a student work with a more skilled teacher or peer is a necessary part of the procedure. Learners acting as an MKO or skilled partner must work in association with other learners to enable learning. That is, learners must use metacognition to realize where they are as students and where they are going. This differs from some traditional methods that necessitate learners simply reproducing the material delivered to them.

Within the zone of proximal development, there are two levels. First, we have the actual development level. This is the upper limit of the tasks that learners can perform independently. The second level is the level of the learner’s ability to develop. This is the upper limit of the tasks that students can perform with the help of their teacher or an MKO (Casby 2003). Vygotsky viewed the zone of proximal development as the area where the most sensitive instruction or guidance should occur to allow the learner to develop skills to use on his or her own and so develop higher mental functions (Casby 2003).

Scaffolding is another concept of socio-cultural theory. Scaffolding is directly related to the zone of proximal development in that it is a support mechanism that helps students to perform successfully tasks that lie within their ZPD. Typically, a more competent individual supporting the learning of a less competent individual guides this process.

#### 3.2.3.4.1.2 The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

The concept of the More Knowledgeable Other is integrally related to the important principle of the ZPD. The MKO refers to anyone who has a deeper understanding or higher capability level than the student, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept. The MKO is usually believed to be a teacher or older adult, but can be a peer, a younger person, or even a computer program (Raymond, 2000). The MKO has more knowledge about the topic or skill being learned than the learner does and helps the student to learn through the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky (1978) defines the MKO as an important element of learning practice and explains it as someone with further knowledge or a better understanding of a specific task or practice than the learner does.

#### 3.2.3.4.1.3 Scaffolding

Scaffolding is the support provided to the learner, usually by the MKO, to support the completion of a task (Walsh, 2013). The idea of scaffolding was introduced by Jerome Bruner, who described it as “a process of ‘setting up’ the situation to make the child’s entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handing the role to the child as he/she becomes skilled enough to manage it” (Bruner, 1983, p. 60). His work is believed to be an attempt to operationalize the idea of teaching in the ZPD (Wells, 1999). There is clear agreement that Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory and the concept of the zone of proximal development lie at the core of the concept of scaffolding (Wells, 1999).

Scaffolds are a type of support that help to simplify a task for the student. These scaffolds facilitate a learner’s ability to build on their prior knowledge and adopt new information. The tasks provided within scaffolded teaching are just above the level of what the student can do alone (Olson and Pratt, 2000; Engin, 2014). The more knowledgeable other offers the scaffolds so that the student can complete (with help) the tasks that he or she would have been unable to complete alone, thereby helping the student via the ZPD (Bransford, et al., 2000).

An essential feature of scaffolding is that, as the students’ skills increase, the scaffolding provided by the MKO is progressively withdrawn. The goal is for the student to complete the activity and master the ideas or skill independently (Chang, Sung, and Chen, 2002, p. 7). Therefore, the aim of the teacher when using a scaffolding approach is for the learner to become an independent, self-regulating student and problem-solver (Hartman, 2002). According to Vygotskian theory, the external scaffolds delivered by the teacher can be removed once the student has developed “more sophisticated cognitive systems, related to fields of learning such as mathematics or language, the system of knowledge itself



becomes part of the scaffold or social support for the new learning” (Raymond, 2000, p. 176). Bransford, et al. (2000, p.232) list the following features of scaffolded tasks:

- Motivate or enlist the learner’s interest in the task
- Simplify the task to make it more manageable and achievable for a learner
- Provide some direction in order to help the learner focus on achieving the goal
- Clearly indicate the differences between the learner’s work and the standard or desired solution
- Reduce the degree of frustration and risk
- Model and clearly define the expectations of the activity to be performed.

In the educational setting, scaffolds might contain models, cues, prompts, hints, partial solutions, think-aloud modeling and direct instruction (Hartman, 2002). Teachers might also use questions as scaffolds to help learners to solve a problem or complete a task. Educators suggest increasing rather than decreasing support in EFL classrooms until the learner is able to deliver the correct answer (Wells, 1999). This type of scaffold is reflected in the following quotation:

if you receive no response or an incorrect response after asking the question, “How do we change lady to ladies?” you should proceed with a more intrusive verbal prompt: “What is the rule?” to remind the student that there is a rule. If necessary, continue with “What do we do when a word ends in y to make it plural?” to give the student a part of the rule (Olson and Platt, 2000, p.186).

Because the main aim of this study is to investigate teachers’ and students’ perceptions about CLT in the teaching and learning of English in Saudi Arabia, it is important to investigate scaffolding in the Saudi teaching context. The use of group or pair work, where learners support each other in problem solving activities may also be deemed as scaffolding and therefore important for the study. In this kind of setting, learners help each other in small group settings but still receive some teacher support. Samana (2013) conducted a study and found that the scaffolding coming from the learners is similar to knowledge sharing. Li (2012) revealed that scaffolded support is effective, as it offers learners a chance to gain knowledge, use the target language, and employ it productively. Al-Yami (2008) proposed that scaffolded collaboration activities were fruitful in improving the listening comprehension skills of sixth grade elementary school girls in Saudi Arabia.

In EFL learning settings, such as in Saudi Arabia, English language students generally need support in order to restructure their language because of the differences between Arabic and English. Therefore, the students require more conscious, systematic support in order to develop their understanding and use of the TL. Thus, providing support may be based on a strong pedagogical basis, taking into consideration practical implications as well. Therefore, as part of the present study I investigated whether scaffolding was taking place in the classroom and what the pedagogical principles supporting the students in Saudi Arabia were during the procedure of developing and using the TL. Group or pair work is considered to be supportive to learning, where learners can co-construct their own meaning through interaction within a scaffolded environment. As discussed in the following section, the use of pair and small group activities in the second language (L2) classroom has been supported by both theoretical and pedagogical arguments.

#### *3.2.3.5 Group Work in the Language Classroom*

CLT is about interaction and language learning can take place when students are involved in ‘real’ communication that involves knowledge exchange and the negotiation of meaning, working in pairs and groups (Lantolf, 2000; Littlewood, 1981). The activities in CLT classes contain different tasks that allow students to achieve the aims of the communicative approach. In these activities, the students are involved in interactive procedures; for example, information sharing, negotiation of meaning and communication (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Authentic tools that are materials that may have not been considered for teaching reasons provide possible learning tools in line with the authenticity of the language and their close relation with the CLT approach. Their use is one of the features of CLT, as they offer students an opportunity to practise the TL and connect their class language learning to real-life interaction, highlighting communication via interaction (Lantolf, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Group work is thus one of the authentic activities that is often used in the CLT approach, as it offers an opportunity to communicate together using the TL.

Researchers have claimed that, in the language classroom, group work is valuable to L2 students because it offers many varied opportunities to interact directly in the target language (e.g., Doughty and Pica, 1984; Johnson and Johnson, 1994; Johnston and Miles, 2004). Long and Porter (1985) recommend that learners engage in more discussion of meaning in small groups than in teacher-centred, whole-class settings.

Even though group work offers plenty of advantages in language classes, there are also some disadvantages, as reported by researchers worldwide (Payne and Monk-Turner, 2006;

Hassanien, 2007). For instance, when one group member dominates the group, the group's performance reflects this group member's level rather than that of the whole group (Nihalani, et al., 2010). Some learners receive praise for doing very little work while others do the majority of the work (Hassanien, 2007). A significant issue in Saudi Arabia is that, even though group work might support EFL students to increase their language skills, occasionally, working with other students could be considered disadvantageous to and by some group participants (Ahmed and Alamin, 2012).

Nihalani et al. (2010) point out that, at times, the students in a group fail to communicate with one another or, because a teacher is not supervising them closely, they might not take the work seriously; some students in a group may only work with their friends and not with others (Nihalani et al., 2010). In addition, the teacher may find it difficult to grade every group member (Hassanien, 2007), and many teachers complain that group work is time-consuming (Ibnian, 2012). Moreover, different attitudes towards group work, where some students dislike 'taking orders' from others, may be another obstacle. Additionally, some group members may refuse to work with others. Hassanien (2007) claims that noise is one of the main disadvantages that discourages many teachers from using group work and some teachers believe that, once the students are in groups, they lose control of their class. Furthermore, in an EFL context the students might prefer to use their native language, since it is easier for communication (Hassanien, 2007). Nonetheless, it was anticipated that this current study may offer useful evidence that would allow teachers to help their students to understand the potential benefits of group work. Furthermore, this study might increase the instructors' understanding of the reasons for the difficulties associated with group work, which might relate to the dynamics of the group or to the students themselves. The teacher's role in the classroom is important and could differ across teachers regarding their approach to classroom management when applying group work (Gillies, 2008; Webb, 2008). Regardless of the pedagogical approach to be implemented, the teacher permanently holds ultimate responsibility for all of the activities and procedures happening in the class. Based on empirical research, Granström (2006) suggests one way to understand and define teachers' varied management roles in the class. Granström (2006) claims that the teachers in the class should have knowledge of classroom interaction and group processes, as well as an ability to manage and scaffold these. Therefore, the teacher's role is important for all areas in the classroom, and for the relationship between all the students involved in the class (Webb, 2008). In this study, the aim was to investigate the teachers' and students' perceptions about the use of group and pair work in the teaching and learning of English in Saudi Arabia, so the teachers were interviewed in order to discover their perception of

CLT approaches, including group and pair working in teaching English. Moreover, the students' views about such an approach were found in their responses to the questionnaires and all of the findings are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, including the challenges that they faced when working in groups or pairs.

#### *3.2.3.6 Teachers' and Students' Perception of CLT*

Recent efforts to implement the CLT approach in an EFL setting have incited many research endeavours. While some researchers have concentrated on the requirements of the CLT approach, others have examined the appropriateness of this for a particular cultural setting. In this study, investigating the teachers' and students' perceptions are important for defining their aims and performance with respect to the teaching and learning approaches employed in the class.

According to second language teaching studies, teachers have a complex set of beliefs regarding their educational practices. For instance, teachers' instructional choices have been found to be formed by teacher's views, often related to previous experiences as teachers or learners (Borg, 2008). Richards (2005) stated that teachers' beliefs reflect individual attitudes towards teaching. However, some instructors have beliefs about themselves, about how well they compare to other teachers, as well as collective or shared teacher beliefs. In spite of having diverse and challenging beliefs, it has been argued that the association between their beliefs and their class behaviours tends to be positive (Song and Andrews, 2009).

On the other hand, several researchers found a negative association between teachers' belief and what they actually do in class. Although instructors believe a particular approach may be beneficial, in 'real life', they may argue that they cannot certainly act upon those opinions given circumstantial interferences found in classes, institutes and communities (Borg, 2008). Similarly, Ellis (2008) indicated that not all the teachers' belief exactly are in relation to their class and there might be a possible gap between their belief and their performance or the activities they organise in the class.

The main change in teaching has been a reconceptualization of it as an intellectual rather than behaviouristic phenomenon (Fareh, 2010). Conceptualising the teachers' beliefs is not easy because the meaning of teachers' beliefs is varied (Farooq, 2015). Based on individual features, methods to explore teacher beliefs theoretically could be hypothesised from three perspectives: nominative, metacognitive and contextual (Barcelos, 2003). A nominative approach reproduces teachers' belief to be an indicator of their teaching performance, defines, and categorises the kinds of opinions that the teachers have (Bernat

and Gvozdenko, 2005). Alternatively, the metacognitive approach describes belief as the cooperative knowledge that can be expressed and collected from the teachers' knowledge that learners and instructors have about language learning and teaching (Barcelos, 2003). The contextual approach is perhaps the commonly used approach to discover the teachers' beliefs (Bernat and Gvozdenko, 2005), as it views teacher's beliefs as invested in particular situations (Barcelos, 2003). Research studies using this approach are qualitative in natural surroundings, and as they are developed, contribute towards an explanatory paradigm. Teachers' beliefs in the English language context depend on their learning as a student and their own education. According to Richards and Lockhart (1994), teachers' beliefs about education could be established through their training, their teaching experience, or could be influenced by their own experiences as language students themselves. The teachers in this study would have likely experienced different educational practices than the ones they are expected to now use as teachers. It may be challenging for the teachers to decide when, how, and to what extent they should correct errors, for example, in order to not disturb the authentic learning and engagement of students.

Research on teachers' views in Asian and European settings concerning the CLT approach has been conducted (Nunan, 2003; Mustapha and Yahaya, 2013). Several studies have examined teachers' opinions about CLT. A study was performed in Jordan to survey EFL teachers' opinions of CLT; the researchers examined the views of 76 Jordanian EFL teachers, 51 of whom answered the questionnaire. The findings showed that Jordanian EFL instructors have positive perspectives concerning communicative language evaluation. However, it was also suggested that the EFL teachers' understanding of communicative language assessment needed development (Al Shara'h et al., 2011). In addition, a study based in a Taiwanese College to explore EFL teachers' attitudes toward CLT concluded that the participants agreed with the major principles of the CLT approach and used these features in their teaching preparation. Additionally, this study exposed the positive influence of CLT practices on language teaching (Chang, 2009). In addition, El-Kelani (2011) carried out a study to discover the perceptions of 36 EFL teachers regarding the usage of the CLT approach in private and public schools in Saudi Arabia. The public school teachers revealed different views compared to those from private schools. Regarding the study's results, the teachers at the private schools expressed more favourable opinions in contrast to their peers at the public schools. Nevertheless, the teachers at both types of schools failed to indicate a clear understanding of the CLT approach.

Furthermore, Zeeshan (2013) carried out a study to investigate both teachers' and students' views regarding using the CLT approach and GTM in Pakistani governmental secondary

schools in the area of Quetta in Baluchistan. The outcomes of the study showed that the 13 teachers who contributed to this study expressed positive opinions concerning the use of CLT in language teaching and recommended implementing such an approach.

Students, similar to teachers, also have a variety of beliefs and perceptions that influence their behaviour and motivation in the classroom. Some studies have proposed that students have a positive view of the CLT approach (Chung and Yi-Cheng, 2009). In Vietnam, an examination of the students' view concerning the CLT approach showed that the learners regarded it positively (Ngoc and Iwashita, 2012). Arab learners have also shared this positive view of CLT. In Jordan, a study of students' perceptions of the CLT approach indicated that they viewed it positively (Asassfeh et al., 2012). Even though the previously cited studies showed that EFL countries have shifted toward the use of the CLT approach as a beneficial teaching method for their nation to improve students' communicative competence, practical studies indicate a gap between the preferred teaching approach and real class performance (Chung and Yi-Cheng, 2009; Asassfeh et al., 2012; Karim, 2004). Ansarey (2012) stated that, in spite of the teachers' great need to use the CLT approach, many teachers still lack confidence regarding implementing CLT in their classes. Whereas some researchers, such as Holliday (1994), have claimed that resistance to a particular teaching method is in line with cultural and contextual differences, others, such as Bax (2003), have asserted that CLT should be replaced by a contextual approach since CLT disregards the context that is a dynamic feature of language teaching. Consequently, examining the teachers' and students' perceptions in this study was considered an important issue in clarifying their aims and performance with respect to the learning approaches in the classroom. Such a study of both Saudi teachers' and students' perceptions aimed to disclose their thoughts about obstacles, prospects and intentions with regard to applying CLT in Saudi Arabia.

#### *3.2.3.7 Challenges of CLT*

Some researchers have suggested that implementing a teaching method in one part of the world that has been developed in a different part of the world could generate some difficulties and challenges (Holliday 1994; Kramsch and Sullivan 1996). For these researchers, education is intimately related to a particular cultural setting, and efficient teaching actions are created socially in that environment. CLT that developed in the Western setting in the 1970s has been extensively implemented in ESL and EFL classes around the world. Nonetheless, applying CLT in most non-Western EFL settings presents several difficulties and challenges. During the last three decades, several studies have been

carried out to examine the effectiveness of implementing CLT approaches in specific non-Western settings (Li 1998 in Korea; Chang 2011 in Taiwan; Ansarey 2012 in Bangladesh; Alkhayyat 2009 in Jordan; Coskun 2011 in Turkey; Almohanna 2010 and Alzaidi 2011 in Saudi Arabia; Shihiba 2011 in Libya; and Vongxay 2013 in Laos). Table 1 highlights the settings of these studies, presenting the participants, the form of the CLT, and the methodologies that have been applied in them. I am going to synthesise the findings from those studies to provide a general overview of the studies' findings, before going into detail about specific challenges that they identified.

**Table 0-1: Contexts of the previous studies**

Study conducted	Context	Participants	Methodology
Li (1998)	-Korea, State secondary school, -large classes, -Centralised curriculum	Non-native EFL teachers	case study: interview
Chang (2011)	Taiwan, State college, -large classes, -centralised curriculum	Non-native EFL teachers	Interview
Ansarey (2012)	Bangladesh, State primary and secondary school, -large classes, -Centralised curriculum	Non-native EFL teachers	questionnaire, interview
Alkhayyat (2009)	-Jordan, State secondary school, -large classes, -Centralised curriculum	Non-native EFL teachers	questionnaire, observation
Coskun (2011)	-Turkey, State middle school, -large classes, -Centralised curriculum	Non-native EFL teachers	
Alzaidi (2011)	Saudi Arabia, State middle and secondary school, -large classes, -Centralised curriculum	-Non-native female EFL teachers	
Almohanna (2010)	Saudi Arabia, State secondary school, -large classes, -Centralised curriculum	questionnaire, observation	questionnaire, interview
Shihiba (2011)	Libya, State secondary school, -large classes, -Centralised curriculum	questionnaire, observation, interview	questionnaire, interview
Vongxay (2013)	Laos, State college, - large classes, -centralised curriculum	-Non-native EFL college Teachers	case study interview

Possibly, the main challenge to implementing CLT is the large number of learners in the classrooms and limited resources. Teachers are concerned about the lack of classroom management and handling pair and group work during lessons with large class sizes. Even though the CLT approach encourages communication, foreign language students do not possess an adequate amount of the target language to begin with and frequently end up using their native language. The curriculum is often taught, increasingly, item by item instead of holistically, which is different to the CLT approach (Ansarey, 2012). Teachers usually take it upon themselves to reveal knowledge instead of acting as a monitor or facilitator. Above all, the exams are built on discrete objects rather than communication alone and are unified. The settings of the studies above (see Table 3-1) show several similarities with my study context. The similarities particularly related to a large number of learners in classes led by non-native-English speaking teachers who teach English as a foreign language, implementing an integrated communicative curriculum and introducing Western teaching methods, with which they are not very familiar, having been taught themselves by GTM.

The above-mentioned studies showed that using CLT in the classroom was often ineffective and that the teachers failed to transform the theory into practice. Even if most of the teachers appeared to have adequate information about CLT, these studies indicated that the EFL teachers depended on the traditional teaching methods during their teaching. Specific difficulties that the above-mentioned studies identified within non-Western EFL settings will be discussed below. These difficulties can be identified within Butler's (2011) establishment of the theoretical, societal-institutional level boundaries and classroom-level; there is an additional classification; that is, limitations in teacher training.

#### *A) Theoretical limitations*

From the above-mentioned studies, it appears that the theoretical limitations that might face the implementation of the CLT approach might result from different sources:

Teachers' misunderstanding of the CLT approach and how it might be applied was revealed by the abovementioned studies. The results of some studies, for example those by Ansarey (2012), Chang (2011), Shihiba (2011) and Vongxay (2013), exposed some misunderstanding of CLT on the part of English language teachers in EFL settings; for instance, that they believed that there is no chance to teach grammar using the CLT approach; using CLT in education involves focusing on the spoken language only, or utilizing only pair or group activities works with CLT. These misunderstandings functioned as influential obstacles to the implementation of CLT in EFL settings.



Problems related to the lack of clear techniques for student evaluation in CLT is an additional basis for the theoretical limitations identified in the abovementioned studies. The studies of Li (1998), Almohanna (2010), Chang (2011) and Ansarey (2012) indicated that instructors, in these settings, preferred to use obvious techniques for assessing their students' results; they imposed summative evaluations for their learners. They supposed that the formative evaluation techniques that are appropriate for CLT lessons could not provide them with clear values for examining their learners.

#### *B) Teacher training*

From the findings of the aforementioned studies, it could be claimed that the inadequate training of EFL teachers is one of the leading limitations that have restricted the usage of the CLT approach in EFL settings. For example, the findings of some of these studies show that EFL teachers receive limited training on CLT. For instance, Almohanna (2010) and Shihiba (2011) found that the EFL tutors in the Saudi and Libyan settings, correspondingly, required a better theoretical understanding of CLT that might be recognized as a significant feature of the EFL teachers' unwillingness to implement CLT in their classes. Additionally, Alzaidi (2011) pointed out the inadequate opportunities for student teachers to employ the CLT approach in their actual teaching; some training programmes had no room for microteaching and observation, and some lacked practicum programs. Furthermore, other studies, such as Li (1998), Chang (2011), Shihiba (2011), Alzaidi (2011) and Vongxay (2013), revealed that EFL instructors were infrequently offered training programs that might have assisted them to conduct lessons employing the CLT approach, throughout their teaching career. In line with these studies, Aleixo (2003) redirected the teachers' views of CLT and its application in language institutions and high schools in Southern Brazil. where some difficulties in terms of using CLT were identified, such as the lack of training on CLT for EFL teachers.

#### *C) Class restrictions*

These restrictions are associated with the diverse circumstantial features in the classroom, and include a lack of teaching tools, limited time for teaching, organizational challenges (large class sizes, classroom layout), and difficulties with students (e.g. discipline, and different levels of ability).

The results of Chang (2011) and Coskun (2011) show that the employment of CLT in Taiwanese and Turkish settings, correspondingly, is associated with certain difficulties, including the limited time available for preparing communicative tools. Time pressure similarly appeared to play a dynamic role in restricting the use of CLT in class, in the findings of Alzaidi (2011) and Almohanna (2010) who showed that EFL teachers

experienced overload due to their teaching hours. In such circumstances, the EFL tutors in these studies assumed that they were unable to apply CLT because communicative activities were time-consuming.

Studies by Almohanna (2010) and Vongxay (2013) indicated that the EFL instructors were unable to use CLT because their teaching was limited by certain issues, such as lack of teaching tools and English language teaching budget. Moreover, Almohanna (2010) found the high intensity textbooks (i.e. the excessive information provided in the textbook, and the level being too high to be taught in the given time) required in their settings were an additional constraint. The EFL teachers in this study assumed that they lacked sufficient time to cover the whole curriculum due to the restricted time for teaching and high intensity of the textbooks employed.

In addition, the findings of Li (1998), Almohanna (2010), Coskun (2011), Chang (2011), Ansarey (2012) and Vongxay (2013) identified further classroom-level limitations, proposing that using CLT in EFL settings was associated with important challenges that prevented its implementation. These challenges comprised large class sizes and the design of the classes. These studies highlighted that in large classes the instructors occasionally found it challenging to present communicative activities and ensure that the students participated; moreover, arranging pair/group work was time-consuming and required more consideration by the teachers to maintain the learners' self-control.

The findings of Chang (2011), Alzaidi (2011), Ansarey (2012) and Vongxay (2013) showed that students with a lower English level are seen as a challenge that force the EFL teachers to avoid implementing CLT in their classes. Moreover, the findings of Chang (2011) and Vongxay (2013) which suggested that learners struggle to participate is another problem. The findings of Almohanna (2010) and Vongxay (2013) showed that classroom organization was a major problem restraining the usage of CLT in language classes.

#### *D) Societal-institutional level boundaries*

The fourth kind of limitation recognized in the above-mentioned studies takes account of the organizational and structural difficulties outside the class level; that is, at the societal-institutional level. According to the studies such as those of Li (1998), Chang (2011) and Shihiba (2011), grammar translation, which focuses on the examination systems in some EFL settings, had a negative washback on the English teaching and learning procedure. This influential washback caused the EFL teachers to use an exam-oriented method, by concentrating mostly on teaching the grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing skills, which would be evaluated. These studies correspondingly found that the EFL teachers

favoured the traditional methods of teaching and opposed the new teaching approach of CLT, as it did not suit the examinations' requirements.

The results of Almohanna's (2010) study showed that the extensive additional organizational responsibilities of EFL teachers in Saudi schools was one of the societal-institutional level limitations that prevented them from employing CLT in their classrooms. Such administrative duties took up a great deal of the EFL instructors' time, with the result that they had little time in which to organize communicative activities.

Even though significant attention in the literature has been paid to the challenges that limit the implementation of CLT in EFL contexts in many parts of the world, there are other related studies, such as the one conducted by Karim (2004), that examined university-level EFL instructors' views and the prospects concerning CLT in EFL settings. The findings showed that Bangladeshi EFL teachers have a positive attitude toward CLT and performed communicative activities in their classes. Conversely, Karim pointed out the dissimilarities he observed between the teachers' opinions regarding CLT and their teaching performance in the classroom. This is in line with the findings of AlHarbi's (2018) study. The teachers professed to be using CLT, but in fact, there were discrepancies between what they said they did and what the researchers observed.

There have been a number of studies, which debate the implementation of CLT and the different challenges identified with this approach around the world (Littlewood, 2004; Richards, 2005; Savignon, 1991). Considerable research conducted in the context of teaching and learning English in the Arab world has observed that this approach does not produce the desired results (Farooq, 2012; Al-Jarf, 2008). English teaching in Saudi Arabia is influenced by "political, religious, social, and economic overtones and is a topic of heated debate" (Alhazmi, 2006).

However, it can be seen from the plethora of studies that have taken place that it is not just a Saudi issue and other countries have experienced similar problems that can be considered relevant to this study. Anderson (1993), for example, conducted a study on difficulties relating to CLT in China and found the following challenges: an inadequate number of tutors practising CLT, a mismatch between CLT's goals and the learners' views, and difficulties in assessing pupils' performance. Subsequently, Incecay and Incecay (2009) conducted a research study on the effectiveness of CLT in Turkey and found that supporting the CLT activities with the traditional approach had a progressive effect on the learning of EFL students. At the same time, they found a difference in the teachers' beliefs regarding CLT perceptions and their practices in the classroom, which is in line with

findings from Saudi (AlHarbi, 2018) and Bangladeshi (Karim, 2004) contexts reviewed above.

To the best of my knowledge, there is a gap in the literature in relation to research on Saudi EFL teachers' opinions about implementing CLT in Saudi Arabia, particularly with female students in the first level of university. Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) reported concerns about teaching English in the Saudi context in terms of the challenges. Al-Yousef (2006) concentrated on the teaching of reading consideration to ESL/EFL students, while Grami (2012) claimed there were different methods of EFL teaching in the Saudi setting. However, none of these studies focused specifically on Saudi EFL teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the implementation of the CLT approach to the teaching of English in the Saudi context.

As Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 173) state, many of CLT's features "address very general aspects of language learning and teaching that are now largely accepted as self-evident and axiomatic throughout the profession". Overall, it would give the impression that, despite the fact that the aforementioned studies did not assert which CLT versions (weak or strong) they were concerned with, it could be claimed, from their purposes, examinations and outcomes, which these studies concentrated on the weak version.

It is clear from the results of the abovementioned studies in EFL settings, as well as in the Saudi setting, that a number of similar features have challenged the implementation of CLT. Furthermore, according to the researchers in the above-mentioned studies, most EFL instructors had a good theoretical background knowledge of CLT. In other words, it appears that the implementation of CLT has been conducted largely only at a theoretical rather than a practical level.

#### 3.2.4 Post Method Pedagogy

In response to traditional methods and CLT method, Kumaravadivelu (1994) acknowledged what he called the 'post method condition', a result of 'the widespread dissatisfaction with the conventional concept of method' (p. 43). Kumaravadivelu (ibid.) defined post method pedagogy as the construction of the class techniques and values by the teacher based on their prior and experimental knowledge of certain strategies. He explained this concept as follows:

The conventional concept of method entitles theorizers to construct knowledge-oriented pedagogic theories, while the post method condition enables the practitioners to construct classroom-oriented theories of practice. The conventional method authorizes theorizers to centralize pedagogic decision making, while the post method condition enables practitioners to produce local, specific, and novel practices (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 29).

Post method pedagogy is mainly concerned with real life interaction in L2 classes that give learners opportunities to improve their confidence regarding attaining their language learning goals outside the classroom (Motlhaka and Wadesango, 2014). It correspondingly does not mean the end of predictable traditional teaching methods but can be viewed as an alternative to the deficiencies perceived in these approaches (Khany and Darabi, 2014).

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), post method teaching is the best method for teaching English to reform the content of L2 teaching, instructor teaching and class activities. It allows ESL teachers to validate their teaching procedures based on their teaching skills and knowledge of approaches and deploy their own personal method as assessors, observers, critical thinkers, theorizers and ESL teachers. Under this pattern, the teachers are motivated to discover what works and what does not, using what Brown (2007) describes as a rational and extensive method to address their ESL learners' language insufficiency. The post method has three different features for redefining the relation between the centre and the periphery. The first feature of the post method is to seek an alternative to a method rather than another method. The second feature is the teachers' autonomy, so teachers are likely to know how to teach and be able to handle problems within constraints. Encouraging teacher autonomy means allowing and encouraging teachers to theorize based on their practice and to exercise what they have theorized (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The third feature is pragmatism. Kumaravadivelu clarifies that the phrase "principled pragmatism" is dissimilar from eclecticism, that often "degenerates into an unsystematic, unprincipled, and uncritical pedagogy because teachers with very little professional preparation to be eclectic in a principled way have little option but to randomly put together a package of techniques from various methods and label it eclectic" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 30). Teachers can use what Kumaravadivelu has labelled as three different kinds of communication possible within the ESL classroom:

1. Communication as a textual task where learners adapt their language sources to exploit the probabilities of common understanding and decrease interaction breakdown.
2. Communication as an activity that supports learners to exchange and co-construct the meanings of utterances.
3. Communication as an ideational activity that reflects learners' language and discourse sources within social, cultural and political settings (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Bearing in mind these three kinds of communication can help teachers to choose communicative and interactional activities in planning ESL curricula and teaching tools.

This perspective offers teachers a theoretical consideration of language teaching that is socially realistic and contextually sensitive to ESL education. This moreover avoids teachers being held to a prescriptive methodology by recognised authorities, but allows them instead to discover their own teaching methods and approaches, which play to their strengths and thus they can properly adapt their teaching techniques (Saville-Troike, 2006). Kumaravadivelu (2006) uses the term ‘pedagogy’ in a comprehensive way, proposing to cover not only concerns about classroom strategies, instructional materials, curricular objectives, and evaluation measures, but also several historical, political and sociocultural skills that more or less stimulate English language teaching. He then visualizes a post method pedagogy as a three-dimensional scheme made up of three pedagogic limitations: “particularity, practicality, and possibility” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, pp. 537-538). Kumaravadivelu (1994) states that the notion of method unifies the theorizers creating knowledge-oriented theories of pedagogy while post method includes practitioners building classroom-oriented theories of practice. Cheng (2006) provides a comprehensive interpretation of the post method pedagogy as a flexible, dynamic and open-ended teaching concept, different from any of the traditional approaches of language teaching. It takes into account the complexity of language teaching and learning. It amplifies the significance of context sensitivity in language teaching and stresses that society politics and the education system have an essential influence on language teaching. Post method teaching is therefore related to critical teaching, which sponsors social integrity and social change via education (Akbari, 2008). In this study, Saudi EFL teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the teaching methods used for teaching English were explored through interviews and questionnaires to understand their views about the CLT approach and to see if there might be any evidence of a post method approach to teaching and learning in the classrooms observed in the study.

The post method approach changes the content of L2 teaching, teacher teaching and class investigation into an open-ended and comprehensible framework focused on the present theoretical, empirical and educational visions that help teachers to choose their own method for teaching ESL. It has been suggested that the post method teaching supports teachers’ autonomy (Akbari, 2008) and student autonomy when unified with critical teaching, as it seeks to create independent classes and authentic learning practices (Motlhaka and Wadesango, 2014). Training and practice help to increase class performance to enable teachers to reflect on alternative teaching approaches to meet learners’ learning aims and their skills development. Shifting from one method to the post method teaching approach consequently needs co-operation between L2 teachers and their

students as the main players in building knowledge (Can, 2008), which will support both EFL students and language teachers to select the most appropriate path (Can, 2008). Thus, this approach may motivate the EFL learners to use the TL in the language classroom and improve their communicative competence. In a review of English teaching methods, Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 60) has stated that the main change which has taken place in teaching English to ESL/EFL students is from method-based teaching to post method education that uses a variety of approaches borrowed from different methodologies.

### 3.3 Features of Effective EFL Teaching and Learning

It has been suggested that foreign language instructors are different from other subject teachers (Borg, 2008). Borg reported that foreign language instructors are unique in terms of the nature of the subject, the teaching subject and methodology, and the communication between the teacher and students.

Researchers who attempt to describe the features of effective teaching and learning in EFL focus on teaching professionalism, practice and the personal attributes of successful classroom teachers (Schulz, 2000). In the field of teaching a foreign language, as in the case of Saudi Arabia, teachers in classrooms are frequently the only speakers of English with whom learners have the chance to interact in the process of developing their English language skills. Therefore, the effectiveness of foreign language teachers is seen as especially critical (Çelik et al., 2013).

A number of studies have investigated the features of effective language teachers. Borg (2008) reported that those who are considered effective language teachers frequently teach comprehensibly, have a mastery of the language, make their classes interesting, and help learners with their independent study. Penner (1992) pointed out that effective language teaching depends on the classroom communication and effective language instructors should have sufficient ability to communicate to their students and work collaboratively by using appropriate pedagogies within their EFL teaching. Although Penner's work preceded Kumaradivelu's definition of post method pedagogy (1994), there seems no doubt that a more varied pedagogical approach was already being seen as an effective option for those teachers who were concerned about their students' development.

### 3.4 Suitable Pedagogy in Teaching in Different Contexts

The sections above examined important teaching methods and approaches. Nevertheless, the question of which method is most appropriate for the EFL setting in Saudi Arabia

remains. The next section will examine appropriate pedagogies for language teaching in Saudi Arabia.

In the field of language teaching, different teaching methods (like the Grammar Translation Method and Audio-Lingual method) and approaches (like Communicative Language Teaching) have been used to improve the language teaching and learning procedure, although the presentation of these methods and approaches in everyday circumstances and settings faces different challenges. These methods and approaches might be inflexible, needing teachers to commit fully to their educational philosophies and methodologies (Mahmoodzadeh, 2011), irrespective of the precise nature of the target settings. Such an obligation could limit the flexibility of these methods and make it challenging to employ them in different teaching and learning settings. These points thus raise the question of whether one particular pedagogy is appropriate for a certain context.

From the argument above, it appears that the most important point in the critique of the language teaching methods or approaches is the unawareness of the local and linguistic settings wherein they function, which is inadequate for responding to the difficulty of learning a foreign language in different settings; for example, developing countries (Canagarajah, 1999; Long, 1997; Danesi, 2003). Discussing appropriate pedagogy, Canagarajah (1999) claims that learning approaches and methods that are found to be efficient for one society of students might or might not be efficient for another. Canagarajah (1999) also emphasizes that “socio-cultural conditions always influence our cognitive activity, mediating how we perceive and interpret the world around us” (p.14). Therefore, a failure to pay attention to the features of the local setting might lead to the ineffective implementation of any change to the language teaching and learning procedure; for instance, adding new teaching methods, such as the CLT approach to a traditional setting such as Saudi Arabia.

Holliday (1994) states that the teaching methods must be appropriate to the students’ setting and culture. The first stage for a suitable approach or method, as Holliday (1994) claims, depends on knowing what occurs between the students in the class. Thus it is important to learn about the class or the learning setting, that might help individuals to identify the main features of that setting before making a decision about what to teach and how in the class. This will comprise an understanding of the learners’ learning requirements, styles, plans, as well as the textbooks used, local settings, and the culture of the class, school and country (Bax 2003). Similar to Kumaravadivelu’s (2006) proposal with the post-method approach, there may not be one specific method that can address



what is needed in every context, thus putting into question the whole concept of having a 'method'.

Recognizing the major features of the learning setting might help teachers to improve and explore their own teaching preparation via reflective teaching and action, which Kumaravadivelu terms the limitation of practicality (2001). Such understanding could help teachers in their efforts to create a suitable pedagogy that is built on their awareness and understanding of the learning setting (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), and the uniqueness that students bring with them to the class, which Kumaravadivelu (2001) categorises as the limitation of possibility.

Therefore, from the researcher's perspective, to create a suitable form of pedagogy for the Saudi setting, teachers should first examine their learning backgrounds to recognize what they perceive as the real requirements of the learners, and the class culture and abilities, in addition to the teachers' skills. Based on the outcomes of such a judgement, teachers may then perhaps choose what language emphasis should be presented first; for instance, oral skills, grammar, vocabulary, reading or writing. Instructors should be flexible also regarding what kind of approach they select. For instance, they should use the approach that best suits their teaching and learning objectives. The linguistic requirements of the learners might mean that the teachers start teaching their learners by employing traditional methods, such as GTM or ALM, at the beginning sequentially, to help learners to build their linguistic foundations. They may possibly then move on to an additional stage with their learners by enabling them to use what they have learned in scaffolded practice by applying CLT as a means of fostering communication between learners. In other words, instructors should be practical when selecting their teaching methods; they have to use a variety of methods to improve the learners' communication competence.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature in relation to the implementation of the CLT approach. It began with an overview of the historical development of the English language teaching methods in Saudi Arabia, and continued with a discussion about the emergence of CLT, its principles, and previous studies associated with its implementation in various EFL settings. The framework of the study is based on Sociocultural Theories of Language and Development and how they support collaborative learning in teaching. The study investigates teachers' and students' perceptions of teaching and learning English using the CLT approach. As a result, it may be that the most recent teaching approaches and methods, such as CLT and post method teaching, appropriately meet the teachers' and

students' needs by contributing toward activating interaction via the use of the TL, along with involving EFL learners in better engagement inside language classes, while at the same time, not ignoring the grammar elements which are so important in the examinations. This chapter has considered the use of CLT approaches and the benefits and challenges for both English teachers and EFL learners. The literature reviewed in this chapter has also provided specific principles for implementing CLT in EFL classrooms. Approaches such as scaffolding through pair and group work have been discussed which might support teachers' use of the CLT approach in EFL classes and may help the students to use the TL during communication. To present these communicative activities via appropriate and effective methods to the learners using the post method teaching approaches, aspects such as relevance, teacher talk, and developing a confident setting in the classroom, must be taken into account.

In addition, the literature presented in this chapter has discussed the developments of CLT, its principles, and previous studies associated with the implementation of CLT in different EFL settings in order to show how these studies are relevant to and give rise to this current study. The theory and research findings discussed in this chapter will be seen as relevant to a number of the themes that will be discussed regarding to the findings (in Chapters Five to Seven) of the study data that are related to the literature, mentioned in this chapter. The following chapter (Chapter 4) will discuss the methodology employed in this research, focusing on the methodological framework, methods, instruments, and data analysis methods used in this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods that were implemented in this study, which aimed to investigate teachers' and students' perspectives on teaching English in a Saudi university. The research focused in particular on teachers' and students' opinions of communicative approaches in the EFL classroom. In addition, the research explored to what extent the textbooks used in the EFL courses support teachers to use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in teaching the different language skills and grammar. Interactive methodology in teaching English is a direct outcome of what is known as Communicative Language Teaching, or CLT, which aims to implement learner-centred classes where the approach is meaning-based, as an alternative to being form-based, and the purpose is for learners to reach communicative competence. Thus, the research questions were as follows:

- i) To what extent is the CLT approach used in developing each of the oral and written skills (listening, speaking and writing) and teaching grammar?
- ii) What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the opportunities and the limitations associated with implementing the CLT approach in teaching oral and written skills (listening, speaking and writing) and grammar?

All research is based on certain essential philosophical assumptions about what creates knowledge and which research method(s) may be suitable for the investigation of knowledge in a given study. In order to develop a theoretical framework for a study, it is consequently important to know what these assumptions are. The research design for this study was an interpretative case study using qualitative and quantitative methods. Observations of teaching practice, face-to-face interviews, questionnaires and textbook analysis were used to collect the data. The justifications for the research design used in this study are discussed below.

### 4.2 Research Approach

In a research context, the term 'paradigm' describes a system of ideas, or worldview, used by researchers to create knowledge (Mertens, 2005). The term 'paradigm' may be defined as 'a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research' (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p.22), or the philosophical aim or motivation for conducting a study (Cohen and Manion, 1994). A paradigm therefore

suggests a pattern, structure and framework, or a system of scientific and academic ideas, values and assumptions (Neuman, 2000).

In social science research, there are two main paradigms, namely positivist (sometimes called scientific) and interpretivist (also known as antipositivist) (Neuman, 2000). With regard to these two research paradigms, a positivist approach tests objects against a predetermined hypothesis, while interpretivism explores and investigates them (Anderson, 2009). The positivist paradigm can be referred to as a scientific method. Underpinning it is a belief that there is a sole objective reality to any research phenomenon or condition, regardless of the researcher's perception or belief (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Therefore, the researcher follows a precise and structural method in conducting a study by classifying a clear research topic, building suitable hypotheses, and assuming an appropriate research methodology (Carson et al., 2001). Positivists test a theory or describe an experience 'through observation and measurement in order to predict and control forces that surround us' (O'Leary, 2004, p.5).

On the other hand, interpretivist approaches to research represent an intention to understand 'the world of human experience' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.36), suggesting that 'reality is socially constructed' (Mertens, 2005, p.12). The interpretivist researcher tends to depend on the 'participants' views of the situation being studied' (Creswell, 2003, p.8), and identifies the impact of their own experiences and understandings on the research. Every research paradigm, as Scotland (2012) clarified, has its particular ontological and epistemological assumptions. The ontology and epistemology of different paradigms vary in their assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge (Scotland, 2012). In this study, I chose an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism is built on an ontology of relativism (Scotland, 2012). The epistemology of interpretivism is reflected as a social development several views and effects of different kinds of meaning defining the participant's knowledge of reality. That is then an understanding of reality, not a strict meaning of reality. The acceptance of the importance of relative views of reality means that interpretivist research focuses on exploring insights and understanding of real-life phenomena from a variety of perspectives (Scotland, 2012).

In order to investigate the teachers' and students' perceptions of the CLT approach in teaching English, the study took an exploratory approach using a combination of methods.

Mixed-methods research is 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, 2011, p. 5)

Since this study seeks to understand a naturalistic issue, I judged that mixed methods might help to investigate this issue. Mixed methods could support exploring the issue in depth from a variety of perspectives, discussing the phenomenon with participants and using surveys to reach a greater number of participants than could be reached by qualitative methods in the time available. Thus, mixed methods might help me to discover the nature of classroom activities, and explore the teachers' and students' perceptions of the CLT approach to teaching English. Punch (2009) clarified the advantage of mixed-methods research as combining quantitative and qualitative data, helping to reinforce both methods. He stated that:

Quantitative research brings the strengths of conceptualizing variables, profiling dimensions, tracing trends and relationships, formalizing comparisons and using large and perhaps representative samples. On the other hands, qualitative research brings the strengths of sensitivity to meaning and to context, local groundedness, the in-depth study of smaller samples, and greater methodological flexibility which enhances the ability to study process and change. (Punch, 2009, p. 290)

One of the reasons for using a mixed-methods approach in this research was because of this approach's complementary nature. Collins et al. (2006) claimed that this complementary nature means that diverse methods are used to examine diverse features of a phenomenon, generating an enhanced and elaborated understanding of that phenomenon. Collins et al. (2006) asserted that using mixed methods in a study permits more complete, synergistic use and understanding of the phenomenon addressed. Accordingly, a mixed-methods approach in this study aimed to produce a more in-depth understanding of the teaching and learning procedures, gather more data in order to answer the research questions, and present a clearer picture of the implementation of the CLT approach in EFL classes. In this study, the quantitative approach (the questionnaire) delivered an overview of common issues from a large sample of students, while the qualitative approach (the interviews, observations and textbook analysis) delivered comprehensive rich data uncovering the participants' opinions and experiences within their own social and cultural settings. The textbook analysis aimed to elucidate a clear idea of the aims of the authors regarding teaching and learning intentions.

Having ascertained the textbook's position on the way English should be taught and learned the quantitative questionnaire examined the perception of the EFL students about CLT approaches. In addition, data from the qualitative interviews and observations investigated the EFL teachers' perceptions of implementing the CLT approach in teaching and learning English and their actions in the classroom. The teachers' interactional moves and the students' engagement is also noted in the observations.

The other purpose of using mixed methods in the current study is triangulation, which is defined as ‘the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon’ (Denzin, 1978, p.291). There are different kinds of triangulation; methodological triangulation was used in this study, which indicates the use of several methods in order to investigate the research phenomenon (Denzin, 1978). Methodological triangulation comprises two types of triangulation: between-methods triangulation and within-method triangulation. Between-methods triangulation indicates the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches together. Denzin (1978) recommended using between-methods triangulation to help in reducing the bias of any specific method and increasing the validity of the results when data are combined together. The use of multiple methods represents an attempt to investigate an issue more intensively. In this study, a questionnaire, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and textbook analysis were used to allow for between-methods triangulation in order to increase the trustworthiness of the conclusions. While Denzin (2012) maintains that we need to take care when using triangulation, he and others (e.g. Mertens and Hesse Biber, 2014; Morse and Niehaus, 2009) still consider that it has much to contribute to the continuing arguments about qualitative research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In addition, mixed-methods research aimed to increase the reliability and validity of the research. The mixed-methods approach of this study were intended to combine the strong points of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and strengthen results where appropriate, therefore strengthening validity and reliability, and supporting readers to understand the answers to the research questions and the issues of implementing the CLT approach in the Saudi context. The next section describes steps taken to strengthen the reliability and validity of the study.

#### 4.3 Reliability and Validity of the Study

Validity and reliability are two important features in planning a qualitative study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study (Patton, 2002). Merriam (2009) claimed that it is essential in any kind of research to create valid and reliable knowledge and findings. The reliability and validity in a mixed-methods approach might be influenced by the creation of the research problem and implementation of the study, and, generally, how the researcher interprets the data (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2004). Reliability means ‘the extent to which a measuring instrument, for example a test to measure intelligence, gives consistent results’ (Jupp, 2006, p.262). In this study, reliability could not be guaranteed, as I am

looking at a sample of teachers and learners in one institution using a predominantly interpretivist paradigm. Validity signifies ‘the extent to which an indicator or variable adequately measures the theoretical concept it purports to measure’ (Jupp, 2006, p.314). Conversely, according to Gibbs (2007), while quantitative validity indicates that the researcher has ensured accuracy in the findings by following particular processes, qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher’s approach is reliable across diverse research contexts. Seale (1999), when discussing how to establish high-quality reliability and validity in qualitative research, stated that the ‘trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability’ (p. 266). Thus, it was important to ensure that the research community could deem the study ‘trustworthy’.

In the current study, the relationships between the research questions, research tools and data collection will be discussed fully in the following sections of this chapter, in order to clarify the research with a view to establishing trustworthiness (Opie, 2004).

In this study, a number of strategies were employed to ensure trustworthiness, and provide a dependable account of the extent of the implementation of the CLT approach in Saudi EFL classes in the institution where the research was situated. The mixed-methods approach in this study was used to gain multiple perceptions from diverse sources of data, so that they provided a convincing story of reality (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2004). The current study was also concerned with achieving a qualitative, fine-grained understanding of teachers’ and students’ perceptions of CLT approaches in teaching English. Consequently, the data from the four research tools (questionnaire, observation, interview and textbook analysis) supplement and complement each other. Hence, classroom observations supported the interviews and questionnaire regarding both sets of participants in the study, as the observations were conducted before the interviews and completion of the questionnaires. This was done in order to ensure that I was conscious of the behaviours and perceptions of both students and teachers in the EFL classroom, before holding direct discussions in the interviews and asking students to complete the questionnaire. This was also intended to secure the trustworthiness of this study.

This section has demonstrated how I aimed to ensure trustworthiness of the mixed-methods approach undertaken in this study by explaining the research approach in detail. In any kind of research, it is essential for the findings to be acceptable, credible and reliable; consequently, it is important for both qualitative and quantitative research to be tested and shown to be believable (Golafshani, 2003). Patton (2002) clarified that though believability in quantitative research depends on the construction of the tools, in qualitative research it is the researcher himself/herself who represents the tool. Likewise, Golafshani (2003)

proposed that it is the ability and determination of the researcher that decides the reliability of a qualitative study.

This notion is appropriate to this present study, as I made a significant effort to interact with the participants whilst gathering data, in order to gain rich information, and subsequently I immersed myself in the analysis of the data that followed, examining and re-examining possible codes and themes until I believed that the reader would be convinced by my analysis and findings. Triangulating the four methods (textbook analysis, questionnaire, interviews and classroom observations), as indicated above, aimed to reinforce the reliability of the findings (Stavros and Westberg, 2009) by attaining data saturation. To enhance reliability further, in addition to the analysis of the compulsory textbook, the data were gathered from a range of sources, which included five interviews with English teachers, a questionnaire conducted with 100 students of the interviewed teachers, and 12 class visits with observations of classes of grammar, writing, listening and speaking skills in the university. This number of participants elaborated various perceptions of the CLT approach in teaching English in a Saudi language classroom. Therefore, it can be argued that the procedures described above should ensure reliability, dependability and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003) With respect to the transferability of the findings of the study, although the research was undertaken in one institution it could be argued that, as the Saudi education system is centralised, the findings could also be appropriate outside the particular setting of the study, to other higher education organisations in Saudi Arabia. The study population and sampling method will be discussed below in the following section.

#### 4.4 Study Population and Sampling Method

This study applied convenience (or opportunity) sampling. This is considered one of the most common sample types in second language research (Dörnyei, 2007). Convenience sampling is nonprobability sampling, where participants of the target population – who meet particular practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, availability at a specified time, or the willingness to contribute – are involved for the purpose of the study (Dörnyei, 2007). The target population in this study was EFL teachers and EFL students who were respectively teaching and studying in one of the leading universities in Riyadh. The participating teachers and students were from the first-year English department because all the students have to study English grammar and the four skills in their first year. The rationale behind this selection was to seek the Saudi EFL teachers' and students'



perceptions, and classify any conceptual issues (Charmaz, 2014) concerning English language teaching and learning in the L2 classes.

As this university is considered a high-level university in Saudi Arabia, I expected that the standard of teaching and learning would enable me to gain a clear picture of the approaches used in teaching English that could usually be considered good practice. Additionally, I was aware that the CLT approach, which supports students to use and speak the target language (TL) inside and outside the class, is not expected to be practised often in most Saudi universities. The reason for this is because the educational system is so centralised that each university provides a textbook, the curriculum and levels that are different from the other universities in the country. For that reason, the teacher at every university follows curriculum and textbook provided from their university, thus it means that the results could reasonably be expected to have implications for not just the university where the study was conducted, but others. As all Saudi Arabian schools and universities are gender segregated, and as I am female, I could only gain access to the female section. I chose the region and city based on my domicile and other practical issues, such as the matter of the region being easily and conveniently accessed.

In this study, I aimed to involve six female EFL teachers who had volunteered, based on as wide a range of teaching subjects (listening, speaking, writing and grammar) as possible, but only five teachers were prepared to be interviewed. One of the teachers was teaching two subjects. The teachers who participated are well-qualified and experienced female teachers. All of the interviewed teachers are M.A. holders in English. In addition, I was interested in obtaining the views of students attending the first year of their undergraduate degree, which was the same one I observed, so that I was as aware as possible of the teaching setting, policy and materials provided. Ethical considerations will be discussed in the next section.

#### 4.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues noted by Heigham and Crocker (2009) were taken into account when conducting the study. The main ethical concerns were privacy and confidentiality, deception and consent, and trust. Thus, the confidentiality of the participants' identities and opinions had to be protected. I used the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) and University of Glasgow to plan and conduct the study. Firstly, permission for the study was sought from the University of Glasgow's Ethics Forum. Secondly, as this study was conducted in a public university in Saudi Arabia, I was

required to gain permission from the university, then from the English department of the university, before commencing data collection. Consequently, I clearly informed the participating university early in my planning about the aims and purposes of my study, and requested their permission to obtain access to the sample of the study, as shown in Appendix A.

The purpose behind this was to gain access to the field of interest, (classes, teachers and students). For that reason, it was important to explain the purposes of the study. The selection of participants was explained to all parties included in this research: management and heads of departments, students, and teachers. A plain language statement, clarifying the purpose of the study, was given to both teachers and students (as shown in Appendices B and C). The plain language statement also defined how the participants' interviews, questionnaire and classroom observations would be organised with the coordination of the appropriate parties (heads of department) in the English department.

The information that I provided in those applications emphasised how the participants' identities would be kept confidential in the interviews, questionnaire and classroom observations. I explained to the teachers that I would be using an audio recorder in their interviews, and no one apart from me would have the opportunity to access the recordings. Throughout the study, I observed the ethical requirements of my university (University of Glasgow), along with BERA ethical guidelines for research with human participants. All the participants took part in this study on a voluntary basis, and were made aware of their right to withdraw at any time. Consent forms (Appendices D and E) were distributed when the participants were informed of the aims of the study. They were told that they could stop participating in the study at any time, without providing any clarification or reason. Participants were assured that the questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews did not contain any data that might possibly threaten the teachers' reputations or careers, or the students' grades. I explained that I would not be sharing any personal information. They were also assured that the information they provided would be made anonymous, and any identifiers would be eliminated and exchanged with codes. As Bulmer (2001) has stated, the anonymity principle is essential to our social beliefs that people matter, and people have the right for their affairs to be private. The consent forms were attached to all of the questionnaires given to the students (see Appendix E) and provided to each teacher before their interview (see Appendix D). To prevent any potential interruption, individual interviews were conducted in each teacher's office. In each interview and when distributing the questionnaire, I began by welcoming the participant(s) and introducing myself and my study. The participants in the classroom observations were informed that

their teaching and learning were being observed for academic research purposes only. The researcher's role in this study will be discussed in the following section.

#### 4.6 Researcher's Role in the Study

The role of the researcher in quantitative research is theoretically non-existent, which is to say that the participants act independently, without any interference from the researcher, whereas the researcher in a qualitative study is considered an instrument of data collection who tries to understand the opinions and feelings of the study participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). I made every effort to work in collaboration with the participants to gather the data. Aligned with the nature of such research and the imperative of ethical behaviour, it is the researcher's duty to establish some procedures to prevent the participants from any physical or psychological harm (Glesne, 1999). The researcher should attempt to prevent bias or subjectivity, and anticipate that their involvement may influence their ability to conduct the research (Greenbank, 2003). During the interviews, the planning of the questionnaire and analysis process, I made great efforts to avoid any subjectivity bias by asking some of my friends to review my conclusions then I asked my supervisors to review my work. After their feedback, some issues were noted that had been missed and needed to be addressed. They also provided statements that were useful and valuable to the data collection.

Since I was investigating an area of which I had a great deal of knowledge, as a former university teacher of English myself, I took great care to approach the research as objectively as possible, while acknowledging my 'inside knowledge' would be helpful in providing an understanding of the experiences and concerns expressed by the participants. Insider researchers are likely to have a passion about the issue they are working on (Unluer 2012). It means that the researcher is committed to the study despite any potential difficulties, in order to provide different positive influences of which an insider has special understanding, issues related to the research. This understanding allows the insider to conduct research in sequence to shed light on ways to improve (Simon, 2015). The researcher is accountable for recognising his/her position as a complete participant (an insider, such as I was). Thus, insider-researchers usually know the policy of the institutions, not only the formal order but also 'how it works'. They are acquainted with how to best approach individuals. Generally, they have a great deal of understanding that takes an outsider a long time to obtain (Simon, 2015).

Unluer (2012) suggested that being an insider researcher offers three benefits to the research. First, an insider understands the issues involved; second, he/she will not disturb

the flow of social interaction; and finally, he/she will be able to obtain 'true' data from the participants, as he/she is able to communicate well with them. Furthermore, a researcher's understanding of the cultural and political structure of a society will help to save time in attempting to understand the issue being studied, as he/she, by this time, has some familiarity regarding the issue (Smyth and Holian, 2008).

However, there is the issue of the promise of an insider not to expose too much sensitive data in the research, since he/she knows the matter well (Smyth and Holian, 2008). It is for this reason that insider researchers generally have such easy access to data that from time to time they overlook the confidentiality and sensitivity of the data. In this study, I dealt with data as objectively as possible, attempting to record participants' responses without any personal interference. I also made every effort to understand their situation by asking probing questions and giving more examples from their own culture, listening carefully to their responses, and asking more questions to gain a deep understanding of the situation as they perceived it. They were also aware of my experience as a teacher of English and I hoped that they would see me as an interested professional colleague, who understood the issues that they faced, rather than a formal researcher or someone who was there to judge them. For example, I tried to make the discussion more informal at times with the teachers and the students, to ensure that they felt comfortable around me and would act and behave as much as possible as 'normal'. This allowed me to notice some nuanced behaviours during the observed classes that an outsider researcher may have missed. On the other hand, there are also difficulties related with being an insider. For instance, being more familiar may lead to a loss of objectivity (Simon, 2015). Unconsciously making incorrect hypotheses about the research procedure built on the researcher's prior knowledge can be considered to be a bias (DeLyser, 2001). Educational research is related to human beings and their performance, concerning several participants, each of whom brings to the research procedure a variety of perceptions, as well as the researcher's own perception. As an insider, the difficulty is not just that the researcher might not accept or see essential information. An additional problem could be that the insider might receive sensitive information, because, insider researchers frequently can gain access to information which they have to manage with confidentiality and sensitivity (DeLyser, 2001). In this study, the inside understanding of the cultural and political structure of the organisation helped to save time in understanding the issue that was studied. However, insiders must establish a clear cognizance, of the possible areas of observed bias during data collection and analysis, respect the ethical subjects and ensure the anonymity of the association and individual members, considering the issues which might influence a researcher's insider role on

compliance and access to confidential data, at each stage of the research (DeLyser, 2001). To conduct a reliable insider research, as an insider researcher I made every effort to create a clear awareness of the possible properties of perceived bias regarding the data collection and analysis, I respected all the potential ethical issues related to the anonymity of the participants and reflected and bore in mind issues the possible influence of the researcher's insider role on coercion, agreement and access to confidential information, at each and every stage of the research. The next section will discuss the research methods and data collection.

#### 4.7 Research Methods and Data Collection

Four different data collection tools were used in this mixed methods approach: textbook analysis, classroom observation, interviews with teachers and questionnaires with students. The textbook analysis of the grammar subject textbook was conducted before the data collection in order to have a good understanding of what I might see in the observations and whether the textbook might have influenced the teachers' use of different strategies. The classroom observations were conducted for between 45–95 minutes to observe the classroom practices of EFL teachers and students in EFL classes. The classroom observations in this study covered four classes, one for each subject, in total 12 classes over a period of three weeks. An interview was conducted with each teacher for 10–30 minutes; the interviews were conducted following the classroom observations. One hundred of the EFL students were asked to complete the questionnaire, with a duration of approximately 30 minutes, so that I could discover their opinions. A time span of three weeks was required to manage the completion of the questionnaires, as I required to visit a number of classes in order to distribute the questionnaire to the students who were observed by me, studying grammar, writing, and listening and speaking. Accordingly, I needed to distribute according to the times of these subjects. This is explained in detail in the following section.

##### 4.7.1 Textbook Analysis

Textbook analysis was considered helpful to provide a context for the classes being observed, and to gain some understanding of the way that teachers are expected to teach (Chien and Young, 2007; Ellis, 1998; Tomlinson, 2003). Newton and Newton (2005) assume that the textbook might be seen as a model for prospective practice in classes, even though various potential methods of teaching practice could be used based on the same textbook.

The textbook is an instrument to support teaching and learning (Chien and Young, 2007). Sheldon (1999) indicated that the textbook could be an important tool in teaching in the Saudi context (Alseghayer, 2011). As discussed in Chapter 2, the education system in Saudi Arabia has imposed the textbook for use in the class. There is much theoretical effort from the syllabus planners in Saudi Arabia to support the implementation of CLT in EFL classes (Alseghayer, 2011). Al-Saif (2005, p.7) stated that: ‘Textbooks are central to how EFL teaching is done in Saudi Arabia; there is much need for an evaluation of their content and to investigate their role in teaching practice.’

Consequently, I believed that it would be significant in this study to explore this key resource for teaching, and whether it might influence teachers and students to use the CLT approach or not. Chien and Young (2007) argue that if teachers depend on the textbook in their teaching, there might be limitations and inflexibility, which discourage learners. However, Newton and Newton (2009) countered that textbooks might support students to improve and learn effectively. They argue that textbooks help the students to enhance comprehension and retention of text material; this helps them to form their learning both inside and outside the classroom, and enables them to learn better, faster, more clearly and easily.

Textbook analysis was considered useful in this study because it is a systematic analysis of the activities in the book that might encourage CLT approach practices. Consequently, I investigated the nature of the tasks in the book to identify their potential in supporting collaborative work. I hoped that textbook analysis could help me to define what sort of thinking and theories underpinned the book, and to identify whether the textbook advocated a particular approach, and whether and how the teachers followed that approach.

#### *4.7.1.1 The Organisation of Tasks*

I analysed *Grammar Sense 2*, by Cheryl Pavlik, 2004; this textbook was used to teach the grammar subject for first-year students when this study was conducted. I chose to analyse the grammar textbook, as grammar is a fundamental subject in Saudi Arabia, underpinning the study of other linguistic skills. Moreover, while the textbook analysis focused on the grammar subject textbook, I observed lessons for different skills, and spoke to the teachers of these skills, as well as those teaching grammar. I began the analysis of the textbook by determining criteria and labels for the different tasks in the textbook. I looked at all the activities in order to decide what they required the student to do, and whether these tasks would likely lead teachers and students to use CLT or not, based on the characteristics of

the CLT approach, as mentioned in the literature review (Chapter 3). The chosen criteria and the connected labels used in the procedure of textbook analysis will be discussed in detail in the following section.

I focused on analysing the tasks provided in the textbook and how they supported the students to complete the tasks by working individually, in pairs or in groups. After looking at the tasks, I categorised them as interactive or un-interactive activities, based on their type. My criteria concentrated on collaborative learning and pair and group work (Sheen, 2002; Doughty, 2003). The labels of the process of the analysis were created after considering the following seven questions to structure my analysis (Sheen, 2002; Doughty, 2003):

1. To what extent are the topics in the textbook meaningful and relevant to the students and their culture?
2. In what ways does the textbook help the teacher to support student learning?
3. How does the textbook build on students' previous knowledge?
4. To what extent does the grammar textbook support other skills?
5. What kind of feedback does the textbook/teacher's book offer to the student?
6. What opportunities do the textbook tasks give to the students to work in groups, in pairs, or on their own?
7. What kind of teaching style does the textbook support?

From these questions, I decided that the labels in the procedure of the analysis could be distributed into two criteria to analyse each task. The first criterion of two criteria to analyse each task for analysis was the task kind, I will explain the first criterion below, before moving to the second one. Regarding the tasks in the textbook, I recognised that the kinds of tasks in the textbook could be recognised under nine headings, based on the EFL types of tasks, as mentioned by Scrivener (2010) and Ur (2011), and these are as follows:

1. Activate schemata for the activities, which helps learners to activate their prior knowledge by recognising or creating what they previously know about the activity;
2. Brainstorm for the activities wherein learners are assisted to articulate all thoughts or vocabulary that are associated with the topic;
3. Assessment for the activities offered for students, to assess information or evaluate their understanding;
4. Grammar application for the activities that involve students utilising learned grammar rules;

5. Knowledge understanding for the activities that support students to understand what they have been learning through the procedure of finishing the activities;
6. Listening for particular information and understand it to practise listening skills, or writing knowledge;
7. Test fluency for the activities presented in the textbook for students to practise language and communicative skills and comprehensive oral activity;
8. Vocabulary presentation for activities, which is given in the textbook for students to use the learned vocabulary;
9. Writing for the activities that are provided in the textbook to support students to complete the writing activities.

The second criterion for the analysis was: what do the tasks ask the students to do, and do they involve interactive features or not? From the literature regarding this criterion (Scrivener, 2010; Ur, 2011), I characterised the textbook data into eight categories as follows:

1. Classify information for the activities that request learners to learn knowledge;
2. Assess the activities that request learners to assess their effort;
3. Create oral understanding for the activities that require learners to speak and discuss the information;
4. Create written information that asks learners to write about the information in the activity;
5. Obtain understanding of the activities that require learners to listen;
6. Activate prior knowledge with interactive activities that help learners to draw on prior knowledge, or be familiar with the required knowledge;
7. Transfer of information activities that support learners to transfer their knowledge from one context to another, or from the class to their real life;
8. Cooperative learning activities that request learners to work in groups or pairs to finish a task, or when students need to work together to create understanding.

The selected criteria and the related labels that were used in the process of the textbook analysis were drawn from the lists above. The analysis and the categorization of the textbook aimed to discover the scope of the tasks in the textbook, and whether they could be considered communicative, in order to then be able to investigate teachers' and students' perception of the textbook used in EFL classrooms. Accordingly, the two lists above were used to identify the occurrence of the certain types of tasks that might help students to develop their skills in learning English, by concentrating, not only on the actual



activities students were asked to do, but also to understand the purpose behind such tasks, for example, did the tasks oblige students to interact in pairs, or groups, drawing on previously learned language to make their own meaning or was the purpose of the task to help them reflect on and evaluate their learning? By using both criteria I was able to analyse as many areas covered in the textbook as possible to identify whether the activities were interactive or not. The two main criteria were also helpful in drawing up my observation schedule which will be discussed in section 4.7.2.

#### 4.7.1.2 The Procedure of Classification

When I completed setting the labels for the selected criteria that were a mix of both types of criteria discussed above, as presented in the previous section, I started to relate the tasks of the first chapter in the grammar textbook (*Grammar Sense 2*, by Cheryl Pavlik, 2004) to the suitable labels, according to the criteria discussed above and the different types of activities.

Below is an example of the analysis of all the tasks in the first chapter according to my criteria.

**Table 0-1: Textbook analysis based on my criteria, Grammar Sense 2 chapter tasks**

	Prior knowledge	Meaningful topic	Scaffolding	Testing understanding	Recall knowledge	Integrate the skills	Cultural background	Feedback	Pair and group work	Critical thinking
A Mysterious Island: A1 (p.4)	✓		✓		✓				✓	✓
A2: (p.4)		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	
A 3: (p.5)			✓	✓						
Form B: Examining form (p.6)			✓	✓	✓			✓		
B1: (p.8)			✓	✓	✓			✓		
B2: (p.8)			✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
B3: A (p.9)			✓	✓	✓	✓				
B3: B (p.9)			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
B4: A (p.10)			✓	✓	✓					✓
B4: B (p.10)			✓		✓			✓		
B5: A (p.10)			✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
B5: B (p.10)			✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
Examine Meaning and use C: (p.11)			✓		✓					
C1: (p.12)			✓	✓		✓				
C2: A (p.13)			✓	✓						
C2: B (p.13)			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
C 3: A (p.13)			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
C 3: B (p.13)			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
C4: A (p.14)		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
C4: B (p.14)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

Review D:D1 (p.15)			✓	✓	✓					
D2: (p.15)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Beyond the classroom: searching (p.16)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Speaking (p.16)	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

The textbook analysis helped to provide a clear indication of the content of the textbook, and illustrated how the textbook encourages teachers in real settings. Although the main purpose of analysing the textbook was to identify its possible influence in helping EFL teachers to apply CLT in their classes, the textbook analysis would not be sufficient to comment knowledgeably about the use of CLT approaches until I had observed teachers in actual classes. Textbook analysis, however, could lead to an effective understanding of the text resources containing the structure, the focus, and any special learning assistance provided in the textbook. Teachers may consider the textbook as a valued text and follow it without thought or they may think that it is inadequate (Chien and Young, 2007). Either approach could be difficult for the students so it is preferable in this case to analyse the used textbook. According to Drew et al. (2008) several teachers had concerns when assessing textbooks. They say that teachers and students are all users of textbooks; but they may have different views about what a good/standard textbook is. The literature regarding appropriate textbooks is enormous (Alseghayer, 2011). A number of researchers have recommended diverse ways to help teachers become more efficient and objective in assessing textbooks (Chien and Young, 2007; Alseghayer, 2011; Sheldon, 1988). They have offered lists built on apparently generalizable criteria. These sometimes-detailed check-sheets use a variety of approaches to measure how well a specific textbook under inspection measures up. In addition, further methods were developed in this study to investigate the teachers' and students' perceptions. The purpose of the other methods – questionnaire, observations and interviews – was to permit a greater consideration of teachers' and students' perceptions of the use of CLT in teaching and learning English. The observations helped me to gain deeper understanding of the teaching approaches, and the questionnaire and interviews allowed me to gain insight into the teachers' and students' views of the CLT approach to teaching and learning English. However, textbook analysis provided me with a starting point and a clear idea of the context within which the teachers worked.

#### 4.7.2 Classroom Observation

Classroom observation is a systematic procedure in which the observer sits in on one or more classroom sessions, records the teacher's teaching performance and learner actions, and then often meets with the teacher to discuss the observations (Bailey, 2001). Consequently, it is often viewed as a collaborative process. Both the teacher observed and the observer have important roles before, during and after the observation procedure (Bailey, 2001). In this study, I was able to observe the setting and group under study without participating, although participants were aware that they were being observed. However, I took care to remain as unobtrusive as possible. I sat near the back of the class out of the sightlines of the majority of the students and did nothing to draw attention to myself. This was done explicitly in order to support the validity of this approach, as I hoped that the participants would behave more authentically if they were not as aware of my presence. The observation allowed me to watch students and teachers' interactions directly and the number of observations meant that the students and the teachers became used to having them in the class and therefore appeared to act as if they were not there.

Observation was used in this study to gain insight into how grammar and other skills are taught in the Saudi EFL first year university classroom. Observation data for my research provided information about teachers teaching English in their contexts. Observation is important, because people do not at all times do what they always say they do, or believe that they do (Johnson and Christensen, 2004). Additionally, although teachers might have the knowledge necessary to initiate the CLT approach, this perhaps may not have been reflected in their teaching. I chose to conduct classroom observations in order to gain deeper understanding of whether interactive English teaching was implemented in a Saudi university classroom, and, if so, how it was implemented. Before observing the lesson, I examined the teaching textbook and instructional materials to determine the different components, as mentioned in the previous section.

Drew et al. (2008) state that there are two kinds of observation: participant and non-participant. I used non-participant observation, since my role was that of an observer, and I was not permitted to share knowledge with learners and teachers throughout the classroom observations. Nonetheless, I was able to use an observation sheet in order to record teachers' and students' behaviours that illuminated the investigated themes (see Appendix F).

I also wanted to identify instances of teachers' scaffolding. In the literature review (Chapter 3), scaffolding students' learning via discussion was identified as a significant

behaviour for teachers when developing interactive methodology, which in turn supports the learners to accomplish tasks successfully. Scaffolding is used by teachers as a way to ease learning and help students do tasks that may be beyond their ability to accomplish individually (Walsh, 2006). From discussion with the learners, teachers are capable of understanding students' difficulties, and they can then classify the type of assistance that students need, and work on closing the gap (Shayer and Adey, 2002).

An observation proforma (see Appendix F) was used for the observation, which linked to the criteria used for the textbook analysis. The proforma was created by carefully reading the literature and deciding what should be noted, using the criteria used for the textbook analysis and by looking at other examples of observation proforma. Then, it was given to two of my colleagues working in the same field to read it. After that my supervisors gave me their feedback and it was adapted accordingly. The observation was conducted in order to cover the research areas identified in the literature review: tasks, roles of the teacher, strategies, and external materials used. As I was not allowed to video record the classes, the observation schedule recorded aspects, such as the timing of tasks, the input to students (telling, eliciting, recall knowledge/build on previous experience, modelling), materials, cultural background information, meaningfulness of topics, integration of skills and grammar, student engagement/participation, output interaction, and the types of feedback used in the class. While taking notes, I wrote any other relevant observations on the back of the sheet, then when the class finished I filled in the pro forma schedule. The field notes were my record of what I had observed and what information was included in an observation. The researcher creates field notes during the act of qualitative research to remember and record behaviours, actions, events, and other structures of an observation (Walsh, 2006). It is suggested by Schwandt, (2015) that field notes be read by the researcher as further evidence to understand the culture, social state or phenomenon being studied. The notes might constitute the entirety of the data collected for some research studies (Schwandt, 2015). In this study, they were significant, but they contributed to the data collected by questionnaires and interviews to ensure I had a rich and varied collection of data.

Observation is viewed as a main qualitative research tool in this study. There is a great deal of literature surrounding observation. It is features of describing reasonably, noticing and recording the events, actions and objects in the field of study (Fies and Marshall, 2006). Through observation, a researcher is capable to express events by using his five senses,

consequently providing as close as possible a picture of the reality of the actions within the field of the study.

Observation could be one of the most common methods of data collection (Schwandt, 2015). It does not need much technical knowledge (Fies and Marshall, 2006). Observing a phenomenon continuously helps the researcher to be familiar with the observed setting, since the researcher will then know more about participants' habits, likes, dislikes, problems, opinions, diverse activities and unexpected matters arising. All these aspects help the researcher to form a hypothesis on them. However, being too familiar with an environment could be dangerous, so I made every effort to stay alert in order to identify the unfamiliar in what was a familiar setting for me (Fies and Marshall, 2006).

Any researcher, therefore, has to be a good observer. It will help the researcher to delve into the complex situation of an EFL classroom to try to understand what is actually happening. The observation used here offered considerable support to the information acquired from the interviews and questionnaire. As argued by Cohen et al. (2007), what people say they do might differ from what they really do. Therefore, I aimed that the observations be used as a tool of correction to ensure a reality check (Cohen et al., 2007). Observation can deal with phenomena that participants find difficult to express through verbal information about their actions, emotion and behaviours (Fies and Marshall, 2006). The observations were particularly useful because they highlighted some anomalies regarding practice to what the teachers had claimed in the interviews. This will all be discussed in the chapters dedicated to the findings. There are limitations to observation methods, for instance needing a great deal of time, and the possibility of unnatural actions from the observed individuals (Johnson and Christensen, 2004). It can be difficult to get time and privacy for recording the notes while observing. For example, with observations it might be hard for the researchers to take notes openly and therefore they have to wait until they are alone, which means relying on their memory. This can be a problem as they may forget details and are unlikely to remember direct quotations; also, they need more time to record their notes (Cohen et al, 2007). I did use the observation proforma (see Appendix F) to write all the notes and information I needed, then after the observation I wrote more about the observed classes in order not to miss any important information. This was done after each class. In this study, I used, beside the observations, the questionnaire and interviews to collect more information on the teachers' and students' perceptions on using the CLT approach in teaching English.

#### 4.7.2.1 Procedure of the Observation

After obtaining permission from the Dean of the University, as mentioned in the ethics section 4.5, (see Appendix A), I met the deputy of the department in the girls section and asked her for the names of teachers teaching grammar, listening, and speaking and writing who might be willing and able to participate in my study. I then arranged meetings with each teacher individually to explain the purpose of my study. I explained that I would like to observe two lessons and then conduct a follow-up interview with them. I explained to them that I would not participate during these lessons, but would make notes to help me in my research. Following that, I asked them if they were happy to participate or not. If the teacher accepted, I gave her the plain language statement (see Appendix B), so she had time to consider participation, and then I gave her the consent form (see Appendix D) to sign before observing and interviewing her. I approached seven teachers and aimed to observe six EFL teachers, but only five teachers were interviewed in this study, as one of the teachers was teaching two subjects.

I then attended the lessons that the teachers allowed me to observe. I observed classes in the English department for first-year students. Each class consisted of more than 45 students, and I observed six classes (two grammar classes, two writing classes, and two listening and speaking classes). Every subject is taken for two hours a week. Thus, I observed four classes for each subject, which made 12 classes in total over a period of three weeks, as explained in Table 4-2.

**Table 4-2: Classroom observations**

Subject	Number of classes for week 1	Number of classes for week 2	Number of classes for week 3	Number of teachers observed	Total classes observed for 3 weeks
Grammar	2	2	0	2	4
Writing	2	0	2	2	4
Listening and speaking	0	2	2	2	4

After observing the classes, I read my field notes carefully, and attempted to classify the activities according to my observation criteria to see what kind of interaction there had been that I could relate to my reading. Bearing in mind the limitations of observation, which perhaps does not lead to natural behaviour from observed people (Johnson and Christensen, 2004), I augmented the observations with teachers' interviews and students' questionnaires to obtain a more comprehensive picture of teachers' and students' practices and perceptions of using the CLT approach in teaching grammar and the different skills. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) have stated that outcomes are more valid when joined with

other methods, so to understand the observations clearly, interviews were conducted with the teachers, as presented in the next section.

#### 4.7.3 Interviews

A researcher uses a qualitative research interview to find the meanings of central themes in the life world of his/ her subjects (Kvale, 1996; Jupp, 2006). The interview is intended to cover both a factual and a meaning dimension. It can be frequently difficult to interview, as it can be time consuming for both researcher and interviewee, and it can be difficult to arrange a suitable place and time for both parties (Cohen et al., 2007). Interviews allow the researcher to follow up, in depth, information initially presented about a topic. Interviews may be useful as a follow-up to questionnaires, e.g. to further investigate responses (Kvale, 1996; Jupp, 2006). I used interviews in my research in order to gather information about teachers' beliefs about their teaching behaviour, and gain a clear understanding of their perceptions about ways of teaching and learning English.

To address the second research question, which focuses on the opportunities and limitations of implementing the CLT approach in teaching grammar and the four skills from the perception of teachers, the interview was deemed an appropriate instrument to gain their opinions.

There is a choice between structured and semi-structured interviewing. Semi-structured interviews are often preceded by observations in order to allow researchers to develop a keen understanding of the topic of interest, which is essential for developing relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions (Kelly, 2010). In a semi-structured interview, the researcher asks a series of open-ended questions, with accompanying queries to seek more detailed and contextual data. In my study, I used semi-structured interviews, as they allowed the conversation to flow freely in order to deal with issues, as opposed to cutting someone off, for example, because they had strayed from the topic (Galletta, 2012). The interviews were conducted after the classroom observations, and to make efficient use of interview time, I used an interview guide. Interview guides are useful in assisting the researcher to explore respondents' views more systematically and carefully, in addition to keeping the interview concentrated on the required line of action (Creswell, 2004). The questions in the interview guide included core questions and many associated questions related to the observations and the responses of the teachers.

In my study, the interviews (see Appendix G) consisted of open-ended questions, because they help to open a conversation and provide an opportunity for new questions to be asked

(Foddy, 1993). They also permit the interviewer to be ready, appear competent during the interview, and offer reliable, comparable qualitative data. Frequently the information obtained from semi-structured interviews will deliver not just answers, but the explanations for the answers. Open-ended questions allowed the teachers to express their thoughts and understanding regarding using the CLT approach (Galletta, 2012). The interview questions were designed according to the criteria used in the textbook analysis and the observation proforma that were created by carefully reading the literature. After I had devised the interview questions, I got feedback on the questions from two colleagues and my supervisor I also asked these questions to two teachers teaching English in Saudi Arabia in order to see if they were understandable or not. Moreover, some of the questions were adapted because I wanted to find out more about some of the observed actions in the classroom. However, it needs skill to conduct the interview and afterwards to examine the data (Foddy, 1993). There is always a risk of construing too much questions in the interview it can be time consuming for the researcher and participant, so the researcher needs to limit the number of questions in the interviews. As semi-structured interviews are sometimes considered time-consuming to conduct and analyse, the researcher needs to collect the needed information from the participants and not a representative sample of the other categories of informants (Galletta, 2012) .

The data gathered from teachers' interviews were triangulated by the use of the other research methods. In my study, I was aware of possible bias in the interviews, such as not mentioning some of their teaching behaviours that became apparent during the observations; however, I had observed the classes and a number of the interview questions were based on the teacher's performance and the activities in the observed classes.

#### *4.7.3.1 The Interview Sample*

The interview questions were aimed towards gathering data about the pedagogical practice of the Saudi teachers of first-year students in a Saudi university, the features that affect their selection of teaching methods, and any suggestions that they believed could help in implementing or which hindered the implementation of the CLT approach. Therefore, in order to achieve these aims, the teachers' interview sample was selected to be representative of graduates of the English language teacher education programmes in the KSA. The population of the study consisted of five English teachers who had graduated from the English departments of different Saudi universities, all being M.A. holders. I selected teachers who had experienced different teaching methods in language teacher



education programmes in the university, and who were teaching grammar, listening, speaking and writing.

#### *4.7.3.2 Conducting the Interviews*

After obtaining permission and observing the classes, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the five teachers in order to explore and understand their views about using the CLT approach in teaching English.

Every teacher was interviewed individually in her office in order to ensure that they felt comfortable in a familiar space. All the interviews were in English, due to the teachers' English backgrounds and their high level of proficiency, which enabled them to interact in English. The interviews were conducted using the following stages: presenting the aim and the layout of the interview to the participants; creating a suitable connection with the interviewees so that they felt sufficiently confident to take part in the interview; and maintaining a particular structure in asking appropriate questions. I recorded the interviews with an audio device (Cohen et al., 2007). I gave the teachers information related to ethical concerns such as privacy, emphasising that they were not obliged to answer any questions they did not wish to answer, and that they could withdraw at any phase of the interview or research process. Interviews ranged from 10–30 minutes each. A possible reason for the short length of some interviews was that those EFL teachers did not feel sufficiently comfortable to express themselves fully; when I had an informal conversation with them, they appeared more confident and provided me with more answers. This may have been because the formal conversation was audio-recorded, and despite my assurances of confidentiality they were influenced by the Saudi culture and religion as the teachers did not like their voices to be recorded for the cultural and religious issue that they are not allowed to be heard by men. I was aware that any kind of interview is not a common conversation for some people (Cohen et al., 2007), as it cannot be compared to daily conversation, because it has a certain aim.

I encouraged the participants to discuss freely their answers during the interviews, and in order to let the teachers expand on their responses, I probed their answers using phrases such as: 'Why do you use...?', 'How do you help...?', 'How does it help you and the students?', 'Is it useful to...?', 'What do you think about....?', 'From the observation I noticed that...?' and similar prompts when needed. In fact, during the interview procedure, I realised that these stimuli and probing questions allowed teachers to continue and share

more about their present practices, and allowed me to comprehend their understandings more deeply.

Furthermore, the interviewing procedure with the first teacher allowed me to notice things and adapt questions in later interviews with other teachers. After finishing an interview, I listened to the audio recording repeatedly to collect data, note significant things from it, and think about the next interview. For example, in the first interview I noticed that there were some leading questions (e.g. ‘Do you think that if the class is smaller you can implement CLT in your classes?’), and I adapted such questions in later interviews with a more open approach. Regarding the students’ perceptions, it would have been impossible to interview a large sample of students, even using focus groups, in the time available; therefore, I chose to use a survey instrument to obtain as much information from as many participants as possible. The questionnaire procedure is discussed below.

#### 4.7.4 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a ‘tool’ for collecting and recording data about a specific issue of interest. Questionnaires provide a relatively cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people (Gillham, 2008). Using a questionnaire in this study was deemed appropriate, as it would allow for feedback from a large number of students, because it was impossible to collect so many of their opinions about the CLT approach in learning English by using other research methods (Cohen et al., 2007). In other words, the questionnaires were designed to provide a wider perspective of the issues addressed by the research questions than the teacher interviews alone could provide (Popper, 2004).

The questionnaire was used in this study to supplement the data of the textbook analysis, classroom observations and interviews in addressing the research problem. Consequently, it enhanced the other methods of approaching the research problem, since it facilitated the gathering of information about the opinions and preferred teaching methods of a large sample of participants. In addition, the questionnaire was used for triangulation, in order to confirm or not the validity of the textbook analysis, interviews and classroom observation data. Furthermore, since the students in this study were studying grammar, listening, speaking and writing at the same level, using the questionnaire presented the opportunity to create general comparisons between their perceptions of the CLT approach in learning English. The questionnaire was conducted after the classroom observations.

#### *4.7.4.1 Advantages and Limits of the Questionnaire*

As is the case for the other tools used in social research, the questionnaire has its advantages and limitations. Walker (1985) has stated that:

“The questionnaire is like interviewing-by-numbers, and, like painting-by-numbers, it suffers some of the same problems of mass production and lack of interpretative opportunity. On the other hand, it offers considerable advantages in administration - it presents an even stimulus, potentially to large numbers of people simultaneously, and provides the investigator with an easy (relatively easy) accumulation of data.” (p.91)

The questionnaire's strong points in this study were the result of it being:

1. Valuable in defining and comparing the actual procedural practice of undergraduate students in the KSA, their perceived level of proficiency in English, and the features that determined their selections.
2. Able to reach a larger number of participants.
3. Able to offer greater anonymity to students, which was helpful, as the questionnaire dealt with concerns associated with perceptions and feelings.
4. Easy to manage and analyse.

Conversely, its limits were the result of the following:

1. Since there was anonymity, I could not know from the students' responses which class were they in, and for which subject they might be responding.
2. Moreover, I was not able to ascertain reasons for responses. Because the questionnaire followed quantitative procedures, there was no opportunity to follow up on interesting responses with probing questions.

#### *4.7.4.2 Operationalising the Questionnaire*

The first stage was to make the objective of the questionnaire clear. The key reason for using the questionnaire in this study was to investigate the Saudi students' perception of the use of the CLT approach in classes, and the challenges they might face when working in pairs or groups. The second stage was the identification and specification of supplementary themes related to the criteria used in the textbook analysis and the outcomes of the textbook analysis. Before conducting the questionnaire, it was sent to five teachers in order to check its reliability and to what point they considered the questionnaire items were reliable (Punch, 2009). Then, my supervisors assessed the questionnaire prior to its final draft.

#### *4.7.4.3 Questionnaire Type and Its Items*

Questions that have multiple-choice answers and allow respondents to choose a single option are called closed-format or closed-ended questions (Saris and Gallhofer, 2014). In this study, closed-format questions were used to conduct the questionnaire. This kind of

questionnaire is particularly useful when conducting preliminary analysis. A fixed answer set is perfect for the calculation of statistical information and percentages of different kinds (Saris and Gallhofer, 2014). Closed-ended questions help to identify opinions about an issue in a more efficient manner (Saris and Gallhofer, 2014).

The questionnaire was framed to contain two sections, as shown in Appendix H. The first section asked for the students' personal and background information, for example, '*For how many years have you studied English?*'. The second section was about the students' personal opinions, which consisted of four themes. Each theme had its own questions. The four themes were as follows: working in groups and individually; opinion of the textbook; what kind of feedback is valued; and how the teacher guides learning.

When planning the questionnaire, I used Likert-influenced rating scales (closed questions), that required short, check-mark replies, since they are easy to fill out, take little time, are comparatively objective, and are easy to categorise and analyse (Best and Kahn, 1989). However, closed questions do not allow the participants to add any explanation or clarification of their responses, while open-ended questions permit the participants to add free answers and explain them. Nonetheless, open-ended questions are more difficult to sort and code (Cohen et al., 2007) and since the main data gathering instruments were the observations and teacher interviews, the decision was taken, in the interests of time management of the project, to use closed questions.

Additionally, in designing the questionnaire I attempted to:

1. Avoid unclear or vague questions;
2. Avoid questions that could lead the participant;
3. Make each question deal with a single idea, worded as simply and clearly as possible (Best and Kahn, 1989).

All respondents were asked the same questions in the same order. Because the responses were fixed, there was less scope for respondents to supply answers that reflected their true feelings on a topic (Saris and Gallhofer, 2014). In this study, as the questionnaire was conducted by using closed-format questions, the students' responses lacked detail, and I was not able to identify their reasons for choosing their answers.

#### *4.7.4.4 Questionnaire Participants*

The participants of the study, 100 first-year English students of the English department in a Saudi university in Riyadh, had all graduated from secondary schools and passed the preparation year in the university to join the English department. This sample was a

purposive sampling where all the students were from classes observed by the researcher. Initially, students were asked to read the plain language statement (see Appendix C) and sign a consent form (see Appendix E) before beginning the questionnaire. To make a representative selection, my selection was based on characteristics of the class; I wanted to ensure that I focused on each of the different language skills classes. Then I invited everyone in the class to take the questionnaire, not just a random subset of students in each class.

Although the total strength of the participants (100) does not seem to be particularly large, in reality obtaining this number of participants was time consuming. This was because all students in the first year have other subjects to study and not all the students initially approached wished to take part, so others had to be invited.

#### *4.7.4.5 Questionnaire Procedure*

I asked each teacher to explain to her students that I would give them a questionnaire to answer if they wanted to be volunteers in the study, along with a very brief introduction to my study. She explained to them that if they wanted to participate it would not affect their grades in the subject, and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Then, I met the students and explained more about my study and what the questionnaire was about. Later, the students who decided to participate were given the plain language statement (see Appendix C) and the consent form (see Appendix E) to sign. Then, I gave them the questionnaire (see Appendix H), which was in English. As the students studied English, the assumption was made that they would understand it. It was also recommended by the Dean of the department that the questionnaire should be conducted in English. Having collected the data, the next step was to analyse them. The data analysis method and its process will be discussed in the following section.

#### *4.8 The Data Analysis Method and Its Process*

The first stage of the analysis was the textbook analysis – discovering to what extent the textbook could possibly influence teachers and students to use the CLT approach. The data from the questionnaire, observations and interviews were complex. Consequently, the analysis was conducted systematically, following such stages as: preparing the data sources and becoming familiar with the data, developing themes, and refining themes (Cohen et al., 2007). This procedure included using inductive reasoning, by which themes, categories and concepts arose directly from the data through the researcher's careful examination. In addition, the process used deductive analysis in interpretation of the data (Lodico et al.,

2006). The use of inductive and deductive analysis will be described in more detail on the coming sections.

Following data collection, the data needed to be put into a system in order to make the analysis easier (Litchman, 2006). This involved transcribing the interviews, and organising questionnaire data and observational sheets. The procedure of transcribing an interview can be time consuming and tedious; however, this contributed to familiarisation with the data (Gale et al., 2013). Braun and Clarke (2006) have claimed that there is no specific form into which these oral interviews should be transcribed when conducting thematic analysis; however, it might be helpful to note the essential facts from the oral content. If an individual, on behalf of the researcher, transcribes the interviews, there might be the necessity for more familiarisation with the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006), however, I transcribed the teachers' interviews manually (see Appendix I) as I preferred engaging with the data myself, without the involvement of anyone else in the transcription, meaning that I could also confirm that the data were transcribed in an appropriate manner. Afterwards, the next step was a close reading of the transcripts for a number of times, which was helpful in becoming familiar with the data. The same procedure was used for the questionnaire and the observation data. Then, to understand the data deeply, I worked on different processes and phases. These will be detailed below.

#### 4. 8.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

##### *4.8.1.1: Interview Data.*

Because of the large amounts of qualitative data collected, it is not always easy to explain until the information they contain has been systemically reduced. Data reduction is the procedure of coding the data in order to prepare it for analysis (Cohen et al., 2007; Braun and Clarke, 2006 ). The procedure I adopted included inductive thematic analysis, wherein themes, categories and concepts arise from the data via the researcher's careful examination. The aim of a thematic analysis is to classify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are significant or remarkable, and use these themes to address the research (Smith and Osborn, 2007). This is considerably more than just summarising the data; a beneficial thematic analysis interprets and makes sense of it. The flexibility that inductive thematic analysis offers can be a valuable tool to generate themes (Alhojilan, 2012), as was the case in this research. In addition, generating themes, concepts and variables from present theories or previous studies is also valued in qualitative research, mainly at the inception of the data analysis, comparing the collected data with the participants' opinions (Berg, 2001). Thus, I remained alert to the results of previous studies and existing theories during

the analytical process which helped me to make sense of what the data was telling me. A common approach when conducting thematic analysis is to use the principal interview questions as the themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Coding procedures can be defined as a part of data analysis wherein the data is collected and combined to generate a theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This coding can be a kind of content analysis, the goal of which is to determine and define important concerns developing from the data (Moghaddam, 2006). For instance, if a researcher needs to analyse an interview, she/he may become aware of what the participants' words have highlighted as the issues (Moghaddam, 2006). In terms of coding, any amount of codes can be produced from a single text; consequently, data should be revised numerous times sequentially to look for other codes that may arise (Moghaddam, 2006). When coding, it is important to be aware that the strategies of qualitative analysis do not follow rules but deal with rules that have to be engaged in a flexible way to suit the research questions, helping the analysis move from each phase to the next (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

In this study, an inductive thematic analysis was used as the themes arose from the data (Patton, 2002). As a result, it could be suggested that inductive analysis in this study is a data coding procedure without connection to a 'pre-existing coding frame' or to any kind of previous hypothesis on the part of the researcher; therefore, thematic analysis in this procedure is the process guided by the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). It can be argued that in an inductive thematic analysis, it is better for the researcher to be less involved with the literature that is associated with his/her analysis, as it may possibly limit their view of the analytical area (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Nonetheless, others, such as Tuckett (2005) argue that the thematic analysis proceed as Braun and Clarke advise, but I was aware of the theoretical and empirical literature which helped to understand what the data is. In this study, coding was conducted according to teachers' responses in the interviews and classroom observations, with the purpose of formulating a 'theoretical conception' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). The inductive thematic analysis data procedure will be illustrated further below.

It is significant for the researcher to be involved with the data when collecting and analysing them, since the researcher will be familiar with these collected data up to that time (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The data collected from participants should be read frequently in order to identify themes, forms and their common sense (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I became familiar with the data by listening to the interviews via the audio recordings and reading the notes taken from the classroom observation for coding, and this offered me to analyse these data (Gale et al., 2013).

As I had a great deal of data from different sources, I had to organise them so that they could be manageable, for instance, I could have put them in tables or used a word file to make them ready for the analysis by analysing them word by word and identify important themes and categories (Alhojilan, 2012). I transcribed (see appendix I) the interviews with the teachers manually, as I wanted to engage myself deeply with the data, as well as to confirm that they were transcribed correctly, as Braun and Clark (2006) have suggested.

I read the data carefully on different times so that they became familiar for me. When these themes had been agreed out, I was ready to begin coding after the transcription of the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The use of suitable audio recording, in oral interviews to gather the data, as used in this study, needs to be transcribed to a written format in order to use thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The procedure of transcribing an interview might be time consuming and boring; though, this can contribute to the familiarisation with the data I was not able to ascertain reasons for responses. Because the questionnaire followed quantitative procedures, there was no opportunity to follow up on interesting responses with probing questions (Gale et al., 2013).

Regarding coding and analysis of data, a number of researchers (Gale et al., 2013; Alhojilan, 2012) suggest that it could be valuable to use software such as NVivo to analyse interview data. In the analysis in this study, I conducted the initial coding and data analysis manually, avoiding the use of such software, as I mentioned earlier, even though the size of data from the observations and interviews was significant

In this study, the initial stage of coding was the first step in the data analysis. The coding was done line by line, searching for key words that could assist in connecting the participants' data to arrive at a concept or idea that could help in interpreting their actions or what they had said. For example, one of the concepts that arose from the interview data was that the CLT approach cannot be implemented in Saudi university classes. It was coded as shown in Table 4-3, throughout the analysis of the data (Tuckett, 2005). There were a number of categories identified in the initial stages, and Table 4-3 provides a snapshot of the type of codes that arose.

**Table 4-3: Teachers' perceptions of activities and resourcing**

T4: <i>'Actually, <u>collaborative learning</u> is good in specific situations where I think if we cannot start it from beginning of the semester, we need to have a time to be able to group them effectively, so I think <u>collaborative learning</u> should last more than one semester. So I need to cover certain amounts of <u>textbooks</u>, where sometimes I feel that is priority and more important.'</i>	CLT approach
T5: <i>'Yes, because the student will collaborate and have <u>a lot of time</u> to discuss and participate. The interactive method will help them, but we have <u>problem with number of students</u>, so we would like to use collaborative learning, but we <u>face time consuming and large number of students</u>; also, we have <u>unified final question and we should follow a</u></i>	Obstacles to implementing the CLT approach



<i>specific time, therefore I am not free to teach what I want and my exams have been earlier and time is short.'</i>	Materials used
T2: <i>'Yes, I used as well as textbook, projector, PowerPoint, I take something from internet where that depends on the lesson.'</i>	Group work
T3: <i>'Yes, I like them to <u>work in groups</u>, mostly in the discussion sections.'</i> T1: <i>'Sometimes, if we explain vocabulary in the lesson and exercise this vocabulary in sentence, I prefer <u>work in-group</u>, because I want to see how much they understand of word.'</i>	Use of the TL
T2: <i>'Yes, I make <u>them speak, in speaking class</u>, reading sentences, reading paragraphs, <u>by speaking</u>, reading and writing, when I give them homework for writing, writing paragraphs about certain subjects.'</i> T4: <i>'I encourage students to practise the language themselves, and I give them <u>also presentations for encouraging them to use the language</u>.'</i>	Motivation and participation
T4: <i>'By <u>welcoming any answer, accepting any point and anything</u>, they feel always welcome.'</i> T5: <i>'...giving them chance to participate to enjoy the classes.'</i>	

Initial codes of the teachers' interviews:

The teachers' codes seemed to centre around the six main codes underlined below.

1. *Perceptions of CLT approach*
2. *Obstacles to implementing the CLT approach*
3. *Materials used*
4. *Group work*
5. *Use of the TL*
6. *Motivation and participation*

Moreover, these categories were reduced further to produce themes by taking a similar approach with the coding and analysis of data. These codes were condensed to achieve three categories:

1. *Perceptions of CLT approaches*
2. *Use of the TL in the EFL classes*
3. *Difficulties of implementing the CLT approach*

#### 4.8.1.2. Observation Data

The classroom observation analysis did not include transcription before coding and analysis. The information regarding the classroom observations was created from the notes I took on the template observation sheet (Silverman, 2014), as discussed in section 4.7.2. For clarification of how I coded the classroom observation information, Table 4-4 presents a sample of the coding table used in analysing the information in this study.

**Table 4-4: Classroom observation coding**

Emphasis	Initial Codes	Themes
a- What is the teacher doing to attract the students' attention? b- Are the students interacting and participating in class? c- Is there any pair/group work? c- What type of methods and activities are used?	Warm-up Games Interactive exercises Pair and group work Significant material Recall knowledge materials/ Cultural background/ Meaningful topic/ Integrate Skills Communication for meaning Students' engagement Discussion Learner-centred approach Teacher-centred approach Use of the TL Feedback	Mix of communicative and interactive activities Implementation and use of the CLT activities Students and TL culture consideration Use of the TL in the class

Table 5 shows an example of the classroom observation coding. It indicates that the emphasis of the observation (in the left column of Table 4-4) characterises the classroom in relation to the kind of English language teaching and learning activities used. The coding of these observations began by initiating and reducing codes of teaching and learning activities in the observed EFL classes. These initial codes were reduced during the data analysis procedure to create new themes (stated in the right-hand column of Table 4-4). The categories were summarised to generate a new broader theme or category. After all of the processes of coding, analysis the initial themes had been resolved, I had a common sense of the meaningful themes.

Moreover, to gain a full picture of what the data was telling me, open, axial, and selective coding were used for the interview and observation analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The open coding was the first stage in the data analysis. In this stage, the coding was done by searching and reading line-by-line, to look for key words that might help to associate the participants' information to the circumstances under investigation, linked to the literature, and to come up with a concept or idea that could help in interpreting the situation. For instance, one of the initial categories that arose from the interview data was, *Communication for meaning*. This concept was therefore coded with an initial code, which carried its name, as shown in Table 0-4. All references to this notion were labelled using the same code.

Axial coding was the second stage in the data analysis that helped me classify the relationships between different classifications that emerged from the open coding. For example, as shown in Table 0-4 the initial codes were general and needed to be reduced to more specific themes more related to the CLT approach.

The Selective coding, which was the selection of coding that carried the essential ideas that were related to the main findings, was the last phase of the data analysis. Selective coding helps to collect the essential categories together to make meaning for the issue under investigation (Moghaddam, 2006). For instance, the theme that represented the *implementation and use of the CLT activities* is an example of a selective code that included sub-codes such as *the challenges of implementing the CLT approach*. When I reached this phase of analysis, after identifying possible themes, I started to present the data. Data presentation is essentially defined as the orderly, systematic, reduced presentation of gathered data (Johnston and Miles 2004). I determined that the aim of creating the themes which encapsulated the information in this study through thematic analysis was to influence the reader that the findings from the data presented in this study could be considered trustworthy (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Before continuing to the final phase, it was essential to review the themes and confirm their validity (Alhojilan, 2012). Correspondingly, I saw the aim is to improve the process of refinement of the themes and to explain them for this study, as well as creating understanding of the data by creating related ideas from several statements (Alhojilan, 2012).

While the procedure of scrutinising the data and breaking them into themes continued, I revised the data, as some codes might still emerge, including the initiation of new themes as Moghaddam (2006) suggested. The aim of this procedure, as Braun and Clarke (2006) indicate that are some chosen themes might not be themes at all, if there was no information or codes to support them; themes should link together comprehensibly, even though there should be a vibrant and obvious difference between them. After this review of the data in this stage of analysis, I recognised that some themes required to have an extra code or that I had omitted some of the seemingly irrelevant themes in order to have a more significant logical theme. After this, I was pleased with the themes that had emerged and continued to the next stage of analysis, which is defining and naming the theme. This stage confirmed that, the themes that arose from the data were assessed, improved, reviewed and fixed; and they become related to the elements of thematic analysis (Alhojilan, 2012). It should be assumed that modification and definition of themes in this stage show the essence of what each theme could emphasise (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, each theme recognized in this data had to be connected to the other themes. In addition, it was suggested that these themes could be shared with an independent reviewer to confirm that, the themes could be considered dependable with the entire study (Alhojilan, 2012). My supervisors reviewed, and participated in this particular procedure from an early phase of

analysis and delivered their feedback. This aimed to improve the reliability of the coding and analysis of themes. Even though I had given the themes headings, I presumed that these themes needed to be very brief in order to rapidly give the reader an understanding of the theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The following stage will explain how these themes were reported and displayed.

It should be noted that from the interview and observation coding, I was often supporting the data and themes with suitable evidence in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis; Braun and Clarke (2006) have suggested that quotes from participants exemplify the development of each theme. These quotes represented the principles of the phenomenon that I highlighted. The quotes were an example of the phenomenon; they were also utilised to create an argument by connecting them to the research questions to suggest an explanation of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Gibbs (2002) has proposed that tables, maps, charts, figures and citations should be employed when recording and presenting data. This helps to get a deep understanding of the data, and likewise gives the researcher the option of presenting richer data (Gibbs, 2002). As this helped in this study to understand deeply the data and get deeper information of the study. The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data in the study will be fully illustrated in the following chapters. Quantitative data analysis of the questionnaire data and the limitations of this data collection method will be discussed below.

#### 4. 8. 2. Quantitative Data Analysis

Before coding and conducting the questionnaire, it was checked and edited to be comprehensive, that is, I made certain that the questions could be answered in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The answers were at that time tested for accuracy. After the questionnaires had been completed, the next step was the analysis of questionnaire items by uploading them into the SPSS software program. The questionnaire data was examined by applying descriptive statistics techniques for frequent responses (see Appendix J for examples of questionnaire analysis). Descriptive statistics are numbers that are used to review and define data via percentages, averages and amounts in tables or diagrams (Trochim, 2006). I preferred not to make assumptions about the responses. Therefore, I checked the data in order to see if I could tell whether similar responses came from the same students or not. In order to do this the data was re-examined by using the appropriate statistical test (chi-square) and from this test, it was clear that they were not the same students who answered the same questions.

#### 4. 8.3 Representing the Findings

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) suggested four kinds of mixed analysis methods – parallel, sequential, conversion and multilevel data analyses. In this study, I used parallel data analysis, wherein each item of data is examined alone, and later the data with regard to particular issues (themes or categories) is examined by connecting and integrating the outcomes from the four analyses: the textbook analysis, classroom observations, interviews and questionnaires together. The parallel approach was chosen because it helped in deeply and extensively presenting the findings of the study and integrating the data together.

In this study, a mixed method was used in an attempt to overcome the limitations and to extend the strengths of a sole design. Additionally, one of the significant goals of using a mixed method is the triangulation strategy; a different method should allow the building of a holistic body of data relating to the status of the CLT approach in the Saudi context. Accurate use of clear observation criteria will be of further significance. Validity and reliability of observation data can be improved via triangulation of data observed with that from questionnaires and the interviews. The collection of the data and what was observed in the class observations were also discussed in those presentations, as in order to examine the features of classroom practice, it is essential to explore it in its setting, and to describe the communications that take place in the settings.

Finally, the triangulation approach implemented in this study was useful in finding more interesting and valuable data about relationships that existed between teachers' and students' usage of the target language within a CLT approach, and a number of concepts were found to correspond through the data. Nonetheless, there remained contradictions in the data, between features noted in the interview, questionnaire and observation. In some cases, it was clear from teachers and student responses that what they really did in the class was quite different from what believed they did as will be discussed in chapter 5 and 6. Therefore, the aim of this design was to gain diverse data, which provided a balanced view on the topic to best understand the research problem. The intention in using this design was to combine the different strengths and weaknesses of the study. The study limitations will be introduced in the following section.

#### 4.9 Limitations of the Study

The study proposed investigating teachers' and students' perceptions of the CLT approach in teaching and learning English. In addition, it investigated the challenges that Saudi teachers face when applying what are seen as innovative teaching methods, such as the CLT approach, in the university. The study was limited in the following ways:

- a) The research took place in one university, where most of the teachers and students are Saudi nationals, who have graduated from local universities and schools.
- b) English teachers teaching specific subjects and levels were the target of the study.
- c) Students from the first year in the English department of a specific university were the target of the study.
- d) Participants were all female, since the educational system in Saudi Arabia is segregated by gender, and the researcher, as a female, has no access to male education in the study context.
- e) Some of the teachers refused to participate when they knew that they would be audio recorded; this might be considered to be a cultural issue.
- f) It could be argued that findings and the results of this study cannot be generalised to populations as the study was conducted on one university only.

#### 4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research methods used, and the techniques for choosing and designing the methods for conducting the current study. It has correspondingly discussed how the chosen methods helped to address the research questions. The discussion centred on the philosophical view of research, research methods and theoretical frameworks, as well as the data collection processes in the university, which was visited to collect the data. The chapter started by addressing the research approach and the appropriate methodological paradigm that is adopted in the study, which used interpretivism in order to explore the issues and suggest themes arising from them which could help answer the research questions, in keeping with qualitative research methodology. I discussed the mixed-methods approach explaining the reasons for implementing this approach as the most suitable for this research. The chapter moved on to discuss questions of reliability and validity of the study, the study population and sampling methods, ethical considerations, and the researcher's role in the study.

The use of enquiry methods, particularly for the collection of the data, the interviews and questionnaires with both sets of respondents (students and teachers), was discussed, as well

as the classroom observations and textbook analysis. Classroom observations allowed me to deeply investigate the teachers' and students' roles in the class. Furthermore, the textbook analysis allowed me to determine what sort of teaching methodology it supported, how textbooks might influence teachers to use the CLT approach in the classroom, and how the activities that the literature identified were important in applying the CLT approach. This chapter also discussed the design of each instrument, and the strengths and limitations of using each one. The systematic procedure in the thematic analysis used in this study was proposed to simplify and understand the data during the analysis. The chapter has clarified how the thematic analysis developed via a number of stages, which involved initial coding, moving from that stage to how the themes were generated. The quantitative analysis was also discussed in this chapter.

In the following chapter, the findings regarding EFL teachers' perceptions and beliefs with relation to the CLT approach in teaching English at university level will be discussed.

## CHAPTER FIVE: TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE CLT APPROACH

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study based on the data collected from the teachers, through the semi-structured interviews, classroom observation and analysis of how the textbook used influenced and guided the five Saudi English teacher to use the CLT approach. This study aimed to investigate the teachers' perceptions of the CLT approach to English language teaching in the Saudi context.

The data were analysed and guided by the following research questions:

- i) To what extent is the CLT approach used in developing each of the oral and written skills (listening, speaking and writing) and teaching grammar?
- ii) What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the opportunities and the limitations associated with implementing the CLT approach in teaching oral and written skills (listening, speaking and writing) and grammar?

This chapter investigates the teachers' perceptions regarding university first year teaching and strategies for engaging the learners. The chapter summarises the findings on the teachers' teaching preferences and the teaching methods they used when teaching the first level stage at the university. This chapter highlights how the use of the communicative approach can create interactive settings and motivate students to use the target language in preparation for real-life situations. Thus, the chapter will discuss the teachers' perceptions about the communicative and interactive approaches, their beliefs about their teaching methods and the classroom's limitations regarding the use of CLT, their positive beliefs about interactive methodology, and their concerns about obstacles to implementing the interactive approach in the classroom. Moreover, it will examine the teachers' views of pair and group work, the use of the target language, the influence of the textbook in guiding the teachers to use an interactive approach, their views on the students' motivation and engagement, and the teachers' views regarding giving feedback.

### 5.2 Communicative and Interactive Approaches

As illustrated in the literature review, the CLT approach defines language as a system for communication, with the aim of developing learners' communicative competence (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). The suggestion therefore is that, when learning a language, it is mainly learning not language structures but language functions (how to do things with words). The role of the teachers is to assist their students by creating the necessary skills for becoming independent learners (Richards, 2005). Dickinson (1987) suggests that



providing learners with opportunities to practise language for communicative purposes can support independent learning. Hence, CLT may encourage a learner-centred approach, not only because the aim of such programs is based on real-life needs and the communicative goals of the student, but also because training in communicative approaches plays an important role in student learning, as mentioned in the literature review (chapter 3).

The teachers in this study were questioned, during the interviews, about their perceptions of the CLT approach to teaching and learning EFL. The data analysis suggests that each of the English teachers interviewed had their own perception about the CLT approach (five teachers teaching grammar, listening, speaking and writing) and, from their interviews and the observations, three major themes emerged. The first theme is ‘the teachers’ beliefs regarding their teaching methods and the classroom’s limitations regarding the use of CLT’, the second theme is the ‘positive perception of the CLT approach’ and the third theme is ‘obstacles to implementing the CLT approach. Each of these themes will be discussed and examples will be given to support the analysis below.

#### 5.2.1 Beliefs Regarding their Teaching Methods and the Classroom’s Limitations Regarding the Use of CLT

Being a teacher is an honourable occupation that adds to the world in meaningful ways (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Teachers have their own aims as a teacher to accomplish their job successfully. The five teachers in this study had their own goals as Saudi English teachers as well. When they were interviewed, they were very enthusiastic about fulfilling their objectives as Saudi English teachers and keen to help their students to acquire the target language (TL) and use it in their classes. The teachers in the observed classes said that they were willing to support their students at all times and help them to overcome any obstacles they might face. What was seen in the classes aligns with what T2 and T3 stated below:

T2: *clarifying more examples and by writing something on the board, giving them a test a thing a little bit they can understand by doing more exercises in the book, so this is very helpful for them.*

T3: *If I have chance, I work with one group, starting with their difficulties, then a second group with difficulties, and help them.*

However, they were certain that these goals were sometimes impossible to reach, because they identified some limitations in their classrooms, which sometimes limited their ability to teach or complete their classes successfully. They believed that these interferences affected not only their teaching performance, but also their students’ learning process. One of the difficulties that the teachers agreed on was that the English textbooks and their topics that they used in the class were one of the limitations that they might face in their classes. The teachers did not consider the textbooks that the University assigned to learners

to be helpful for improving English learning. They believed that teaching English would be more effective if the English teachers used meaningful and interesting materials, which were not always found in their English textbooks, as will be mentioned in the textbook section (5.5):

T4: *they are not interesting for the students because they are not from other cultures and if they don't make many students interested.*

T5: *some of the topics are not interesting for these students; they do not match their interests.*

T4 and T5 indicated that some of the topics in the textbook were irrelevant to the students' culture and interests. Since the students were in their first year of University, they argued that topics such as fashion, travel, etc., might be more interesting to them than the topics found in their textbook. The textbook is used for both female and male students' classes, thus the bias in the book, might be arguably towards generic, possibly what could be considered masculine interests.

However, it was interesting to note that the teachers in the observed classes were linking these topics to the students' culture and interests. For example, one of the teachers in the observed classes was discussing the topic of animals in danger. At the beginning, the students seemed bored but the teacher asked the students in English if they liked pets and what animal they would like to adopt. The students started to give their responses in English and appeared more interested in the topic. Thus, the teacher in this class shifted to using an interactive approach in order to help the students to be engaged in the class by having a chance to interact together and with the teacher.

Moreover, some of the teachers in the observed classes used other materials as well as the required textbook in order to engage the students with the topics. As T1 stated: *'I would like to do more exercises in the discussion part because I would like to know about the topic question, I would like also to have more materials.'* As evidenced from the observed classes, only two teachers gave the students some worksheets as an extra exercise. For instance, in the observed grammar class, which was studying future constructions in the language, the teacher gave the students worksheets containing additional tasks about the future tense. To ensure that the students were able to complete the task easily and be able to use the target language (TL) during the class, the teacher applied the CLT approach by interacting with students in the TL language and providing worksheets that required them to speak and work in groups. Conversely, the rest of the teachers did not provide their students with extra or different exercises from the textbook, but it is possible that they will have used extra worksheets in classes that were not observed.

The Saudi Ministry of Education strictly governs the choice of classroom textbooks and syllabus (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Al-Asmari and Khan, 2014). Consequently, it is uncommon for Saudi English teachers to have the freedom to choose their own learning textbooks. Nonetheless, the teachers believed that using other materials (e.g., worksheets and web pages), instead of the assigned textbooks for teaching English is a useful technique that might assist their English classes. They mentioned that, even if they used other materials, however, they still had to finish the textbook and stick to the given syllabus from the university; as T2 stated *'in general is within the topic of the book, we don't go outside the textbook.'* Thus, the teachers were obliged to follow the given curriculum because the final exams are unified, in which all the female and male sections of the first level of the English department will sit the same final exam at the end of the term for each subject.

The teachers mentioned that they had to finish a large amount of lessons in a specific time and that could overload the students. They reported that providing the students with such a large workload would not help them to learn effectively. Bawden and Robinson (2009) have indicated that overloading learners causes not only academic stress, but also takes a toll on learners' mental and physical health, which hinders learning ability. Because these textbooks covered each of the English language skills, the teachers indicated that they would focus on their given skill that they were teaching and its objectives and would not explain the other skills, since to do otherwise would confuse the students and make them incapable of focusing and benefitting from these skills. However, from the observation the teachers were seen to be integrating the four skills with grammar in their classes when teaching grammar or the other skills, as this is one of the textbook's goals. Thus, there was a contradiction between the teachers' indications mentioned below and the classroom observation.

*T1: Yes I wouldn't include the pronunciation part with the part on speaking, because it is useless, we never practise it enough, we don't include it in exams, so I think there are not a lot of benefits, also for the grammar section, students study grammar as a separate subject so no need to explain the grammar section in the listening.*

*T5: Yes but I do not explain the other skills; I only concentrate on grammar.*

*T2: I like the discussion part and unfortunately I don't have a lot of time to do that just I have three hours and three hours have been divided into listening and speaking, also the huge number of students isn't helping in this field, also I like the discussion part, because I can talk and speak in the listening part.*

T2 seems to be integrating listening and speaking together in a communicative way even though she does not state that. It is worth mentioning that the teachers said they tended to avoid using interactive methods because of the large number of students per class, as will

be mentioned in section 5.2.3.2. The teachers supposed that the large number of students prevented them from improving the level of their students' language proficiency. As one of the teachers said:

*The major problem is the huge number of students, where I cannot give an opportunity equally to a lot of them, so they have not the same opportunity to speak or even to encourage one who speaks and practises the language.*

In the observed classes, most of the teachers were encouraging their students to participate and trying to give all students a chance to speak, even if there were over than 40 students in the class. Some of the teachers called out the students' names from the registration sheet and some marked off their name if they had participated in order to give the other students a chance to use the TL. Even if all of these teachers could be seen to be attempting to fulfil their own aims and objectives effectively as Saudi English teachers, the limitations that they believed existed in their classes were more likely to prevent them from reaching these aims such as getting the learners to use the TL. These limitations or challenges affected not only the teachers' performance but also their perceptions of the students' learning practices and their view of the CLT approach, as will be discussed below.

#### 5.2.2 Positive Perception of the CLT Approach

In the teacher's responses, they agreed that teaching language for communicative purposes, by involving students in using the interactive approach and promoting collaborative learning, could make a positive contribution to improving the teaching and learning of English language in Saudi Arabia for everyday purposes. Importantly, however, despite these beliefs, they said that they tended not to use such an approach in their own practice. All of the teachers said that they were willing to use the CLT approach and help students to work cooperatively on a language-learning task or interactively by achieving the goal through the communicative use of the TL but they mentioned several obstacles and difficulties as reasons for avoiding implementing such an approach in their classes. The teachers agreed that the reasons for not implementing such an approach included having a huge number of students in the class; they felt it would be too time consuming, and they were concerned about the pressure of the unified exams as will be discussed below in the coming sections. However, T3 underneath is an example of one of the teachers who said that they cannot use the CLT but it seems that she did not realise that she was already using interactive techniques. Here are some examples from the teachers' responses regarding their willingness to implement the CLT approach collaboratively with their students:

*T3: I believe it is very important and good for students, where it gives students trust in themselves and confidence when the teacher works with them and collaboration between them will increase, even they will trust each other and help each other, thus collaboration is very good, also I give them homework in writing and I ask them to swap papers with*

*their friends and everyone corrects it, so this will increase their confidence and they will learn from their mistakes themselves.*

*T4: Actually, collaborative learning is good in specific situations where I think, if we cannot start it from beginning of the semester, we need to have time to be able to group them effectively, so I think collaborative learning should last more than one semester, so I need to cover a certain amount of the textbooks, where sometimes I feel that is a priority and more important.*

As exemplified in the quotes above, the teachers expressed their willingness to implement the CLT approach and agreed it was beneficial for the students. T3 indicated that, by working interactively, the students would be able to build confidence in themselves and each other, increasing their self-esteem. Accordingly, students need the confidence to believe that they can use the language that can be stimulated by the relationship they have with their teachers (Myers and Claus, 2002). Students also do well when they feel that their teacher is passionate about what they are teaching and passes on this enthusiasm to the learners (Myers and Claus, 2002). In the observed classes, even if the teachers were saying that they were unable to use the CLT approach, they were seen to be using such an approach to help the students to use the TL. Through encouraging students to become autonomous learners and making learning more personal and focused in order to achieve better learning outcomes, the teachers tried to focus on the students' needs and preferences. However, because of several perceived obstacles, the teachers denied that they were using the CLT approach. For instance, T4 explained that it is better to use this approach from the beginning of the semester but she was aware that they needed more than one semester to use such an approach and also finish the lessons assigned by the department. She made it clear that she would have been willing to use such an approach if there had been less perceived time pressure. Nonetheless, in her observed classes the teacher was seen to be using CLT approaches to support the students to be engaged within the context of the lesson. This will be discussed in a later section as there was consensus among the teachers that using communicative interactive approaches was too time consuming.

T5, who taught grammar, believed that the use of CLT does not involve any teaching of grammar and she stated that she preferred to use GTM in her teaching rather than the CLT approach. For example, she stated, *'As I have specialized in teaching grammar for many years, I like to use the deductive method in almost every lesson.'* This teacher, because she was teaching grammar, claimed that she focused on the teacher-centred methodology in teaching grammar emphasizes memorizing and mastering the structure of grammar in order to read literature in the language and to benefit from the intellectual development of the learning process (Harmer, 2007; Howatt and Widdowson, 2004). In her observed classes,

however, the teacher asked the students to work in pairs or groups and there was student-teacher interaction in order to help the students to use the TL during the class. She maintained that in order to help the students to achieve their aim of passing the exam she focused on ensuring that they could master the grammatical rules rather than using the target language to communicate. However, the observations showed that she used teaching strategies, which could be described as interactive.

Unlike grammar-based approaches, the communicative approach is built on the idea that language is best learned via communication, not through the presentation and practice of grammatical forms. The communicative approach led to a shift from form-focused teaching to meaning-focused teaching (Fotos and Nassaji, 2011); however, grammar is not ignored. A special focus on grammar teaching has been found to be insufficient in improving the students' ability to present during oral communication (Fotos and Nassaji, 2011). This is because the explicit teaching of grammar does not result in fluency. Hymes' theory of communicative competence (1972) has been very significant in improving communicative language teaching that makes the progress of learners' communicative competence its primary aim. Communicative competence implies that knowledge of a language not only lies in knowing the grammatical rules of that language, but then also of knowing how to apply these correctly in diverse communication settings. However, in T5's response, when asked about collaborative activities, she indicated that she was willing to use them but, because of the aforementioned obstacles, was trying to avoid adopting the communicative approach. For example, she stated that:

*T5: Yes because the student will collaborate and have a lot of time to discuss and participate. The interactive method will help them, but we have a problem related to the number of students, so we would like to use collaborative learning but we find it time consuming. Also, we have a unified final exam and we must follow a specific timetable; therefore, I am not free to teach what I want and my exams have been earlier and time is short.*

There is a misunderstanding within her responses; it appears that even though she said she preferred to use the traditional method in teaching grammar, she was willing to use the communicative approach, as she was aware of the benefits for the students. Nevertheless, when I observed her class, it seemed that she was using the CLT approach to engage her students in the lesson's context. For example, the teacher asked her students to work in pairs or groups to complete the tasks in the textbook. This was possibly because the textbook used specifically guides the teachers to do so. However, even if the textbook guided them to do this, the teachers were scaffolding and motivating their students during the class to participate, using their own intuitive moves in order to provide similar

examples, form sentences from the particular grammatical rule, and encourage the students to contribute.

The issue related to T5, in which she denied using the communicative approach but actually deployed interactive strategies in her classes, could be observed in the classes of the other observed teachers in the study. In every class which was observed the teachers asked their students to work in groups or pairs, and there was interaction in English between the teacher and the students and between the students themselves. In addition, the students in the speaking and listening classes gave joint presentations and were asked to give feedback to their classmates on their presentations. Thus, the teachers used CLT strategies without appearing to recognize that they could be labeled as such providing a positive learning experience in the Saudi EFL context. In the same sense, Wang (1990) points to the specific focus on oral communicative competence in a foreign language school in China and the progress of the four language skills as the success of CLT. Chang (2009) states that Taiwanese teachers have a tendency to implement more communicative activities in their classrooms than they think and this is similar to the teachers' beliefs in this study.

### 5.2.3 Obstacles to Implementing the CLT Approach

As stated above, it was evident from the observations that all the teachers used the CLT approach but tended to avoid what could be termed 'strong' communicative approaches because they were afraid of the difficulties that they might face if they did not focus on grammar at some point in the lesson. During the interviews, the teachers indicated that they were trying to avoid the CLT approach by implementing the traditional method that they thought would help them to finish the allocated syllabus within the specific time before the examination. These obstacles were highlighted in the educational system by some research studies (Aleixo, 2003; Dailey, 2010). All five of the teachers said that they used a teacher-centred approach in class and spoke for most of the time in the class, treating the students as passive learners. The teachers said that in their classes they tried mostly to rely on activities that required repetition, accuracy and the memorization of sentences, in order to control the students and to finish the planned curriculum before the exams. However, as stated above, the observations revealed that a number of communicative learning strategies were encouraged by the teachers, as they aimed to engage the students and make their learning relevant to them.

Common difficulties related to implementing CLT in EFL contexts such as Saudi Arabia include the prevalence of traditional teaching methods, the context of the wider curriculum,

the lack of authentic materials, class sizes, work overload and a lack of teachers trained in CLT (Hall and Hewings, 2001). However, it has become clear that the teachers in this study were using interactive activities and thus employing CLT strategies to help the students to be engaged in the context of the lesson and to use the TL. For example, teachers were seen in the observed classes asking the students to work in pairs or groups and communicate together, as mentioned in the previous section. When the observed teachers employed these communicative strategies, the students seemed happy to work together. Some students were participating with the teachers by providing examples and ideas based on their prior knowledge and daily life settings. It appeared that the teachers had intuitively understood the value of the CLT approach as mentioned in the literature (Chapter 3) and used it to encourage the students to use the TL in their daily life and engage them in the context of the lesson as autonomous learners. Autonomous learning endeavours to address the difficulties associated with a lack of time and specific approach limitations, and develops metacognitive skills that allow students to see the learning from a different perspective and become more actively involved in the learning procedure (Trebbs, 2006).

The interviews presented clearly that although they understood their potential benefits for the students, the teachers were unwilling to use communicative strategies in class. T1 stated that *'It is good but we have the problem of a large number of students and we can't give them equal opportunities to practise their skills and use the interactive method in teaching.'* This teacher also seemed to be more positive in her actual classroom practice. She was concerned that if she used communicative strategies to teach her classes the large numbers meant that she could not ensure that all of the students received an equal amount of attention and that they were all involved in practising the language.

Her concern was echoed by the other teachers, indicating their dilemma, as they endeavoured to be fair regarding the amount of attention each student received, while recognising that interactive practice for the students in a more learner-centred environment might lead to more fluency and confidence but less individual attention. Because of the teacher-centred ethos of the classroom culture in the university, this caused them some issues. As mentioned in the literature, learners who lack personal attention will have little motivation to speak English; however, the teachers in this study were unlikely to be aware of these needs, especially given the more pressing need to pass the final exams (Poza, n.d.). During T1's observed classes, although she had denied using communicative strategies, she asked the students to deliver presentations on the topics that they had covered and to work in groups. As a specific example, when explaining the topic of animals in danger, she



asked the students to work in groups, to create a presentation about any animal that they thought was in danger and present it to the class. By doing so, the teacher was helping her students to work together, exchange knowledge and interact together. The teacher in this listening and speaking class was actually using a CLT approach because she was encouraging the students to improve their ability to use English by themselves, which develops fluency in the target language. This enables learners to be more confident when interacting with other people and they will enjoy talking more (Brown, 1994).

AlHarbi's (2018) study stated that the generation of a collaborative learning environment and CLT appeared to be suitable for learners of English as a foreign language in the higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. In his study, the teachers said that they used the interactive approach, but the observations and student interviews showed that they were not using it. In this study, the teachers denied using interactive approaches, but the observations and student questionnaire responses showed that, in fact, they did. His study contradicts with findings from the present study, which might be because of the two studies were conducted in different geographical locations in Saudi Arabia and with different genders, as his study was conducted with males but this study was conducted in the female department. These factors, or other factors such as the specific instruments used for collecting data, might explain the differences found regarding the implementation of the CLT approach. In both cases, however, there was a similar mismatch between what teachers reported doing and what students and observations revealed.

The use of the CLT approach in EFL settings is often believed to be challenging because of the mismatch between the communicative principles and the embedded classroom practices that tend to be powerfully affiliated with the traditional teaching approaches (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). Similarly, T1 did not recognise that the CLT approaches she used in teaching were actually providing an opportunity for students to practise their skills, as she believed that she was using traditional methods as the only way to give students practice. Coskun, (2011), in his study found an incompatibility between the attitudes of the teachers toward CLT and the application of CLT in the classroom, and pinpointed the challenges that teachers might face when applying CLT techniques in EFL classrooms when using it intuitively. It is believed that communicative teaching approaches have dominated language-teaching theory for the last 50 years but still have not efficiently revolutionized the actual teaching practices (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). In this study, however, the opposite issue occurs, whereby teachers are saying that they do not use CLT approaches but in fact are deploying them in their practice, in order to increase engagement

and overcome perceived obstacles in developing communicative competence during their classes. These obstacles will be discussed in the following sections.

#### 5.2.3.1 Time Consuming

As mentioned previously, the teachers indicated that they could not cover as much course content in class within the time available if they did not use teacher-centred methods. This can be seen from most of the teachers' responses. For example, T1 said: *'so we do not have the time to make all students work in groups'*, T2: *'we do not have enough time,'* and T5: *'but we face the problem that it is time consuming.'* Certainly, the findings of Alkhayyat (2009) and Coskun's (2011) studies demonstrated that the implementation of CLT in the Jordanian and Turkish settings, which might be compared to Saudi Arabia, encountered similar perceived difficulties related to limited time for the preparation of the communicative approach and the actual time for teaching.

Time pressure appears to play an essential role in the limitations of using CLT in the classroom, which is evident from the findings of other studies on EFL teachers who suffered from work overload (e.g., Alzaidi, 2011; Almohanna, 2010). Under such conditions, the EFL teachers believed that they were unable to implement the CLT approach in their classes because they assumed that communicative activities were time consuming, and because they did not have enough time for preparation and instruction. This is also aligned with the responses of the teachers who participated in this study. However, in the observed classes, even if the teachers indicated that they were unable to use the CLT approach because of a lack of time, they were observed by me to be using the CLT approach in their lessons. Their variety of approaches may have been in order to accommodate all learning styles, and not limit the effective learning of a language to systematic learners only, as is normally the case with GTM.

#### 5.2.3.2 Large Classes

Another perceived barrier that restricted the use of CLT, according to the teachers, was the large classes and the perception that it is difficult in a class of more than 40 students to involve all students in discussion or to allow them to work in groups. T1, T2 and T5 agreed that the large number of students prevented them from implementing the CLT approach. The teachers appeared from their responses concerned about their students and were not just thinking of the practicalities from their own organisation point of view, but also how the students would react and learn. They supported their students and tried to consider their students' understanding and perception. They stated that:

*T1: It is good but we have a problem of a large number of students and we can't give them an equal opportunity to practise their skills.*

*T2: difficulties for working groups as I told you for teachers, they will not be inclined or working in the system, where it is little bit noisy and this affects badly and negatively the students themselves due to sounds and voices, moving the chairs and chatting with each other.*

*T5: Because of the limited time and there is no time and the number of students is huge.*

Numerous studies, conducted in contexts, which might be considered similar to that of this study, suggest that the employment of CLT in EFL faces several structural challenges that impede its implementation (Adhikari, 2007; Almohanna, 2010; Coskun, 2011; Ansarey, 2012; Vongxay, 2013). These challenges include the large classes and the layout of the classrooms. The studies showed that, in large classes, educators sometimes find it challenging to implement communicative activities. However, for example, Heppner (2007) and Stanley and Porter (2002) offer excellent ideas on how to teach large classes effectively. They argue that dividing large classes into small groups can lead to productive in-class discussion activities.

It was also noticed from the observation in this study that some of the teachers, even if they had a huge class (e.g., there were 45 students in one of the classes), still managed to use the CLT approach in their teaching; for example, they asked the students to work in groups and included them in discussion. The teachers in this study seemed to be aware of both the usefulness of these methods and the need to go beyond them. The teachers appeared to feel responsible for analysing the structures appearing in the textbook for each lesson in order to decide which methods, approaches and strategies might best promote the students' achievement. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), knowledge of all of the existing approaches is essential for teachers when designing their own strategies and lesson plans. The teachers in this study indicated in their interview responses that it was impossible for them to use the CLT approach, but they had clearly planned carefully to engage the learners in interaction, even if they did not realise that what they were doing could be labelled CLT. They were seen in the observed classes supporting their students to engage and use the target language while communicating together in the class. This enabled the students to be engaged in the learning setting independently, to have the power or right to control their own learning activities and to take charge of their own learning procedures with autonomy through choosing the language that was most appropriate for them and using it for real.

#### 5.2.3.3 Unified Exams and Classroom Materials

Another perceived barrier to implementing CLT according to the teachers was the unified exams and lack of materials needed to support communicative learning. For instance, in the observed classes, the teachers did not use any other tools apart from the standard textbook. In one of the classes the teacher asked her students to work in pairs to write a paragraph about any sport, which was the task provided in their textbook. The teachers' guide, which accompanies the textbook, recommends that students work together and it seemed that the teachers followed the guide without realising that it was leading them to use interactive and CLT strategies. When I observed the five teachers, during the class, each teacher, for certain tasks, would ask the students to correct each other's work or ask them in groups of three or four to write a paragraph about what they had discussed in class. By asking the students to give feedback to each other and work in pairs or groups, the teachers were applying CLT approaches in their classes to enable the students to have the power to control their own learning activities, even though they did not appear to realise that they were enabling their students to work autonomously. Even if the teachers used only the textbook in their classes, as was seen in the observed classes, it was clear that they were using elements of the CLT approach, as has been mentioned earlier.

The teachers stated that when teaching grammar they focused mostly on the textbook, as they mentioned in their responses during the interviews, giving as a reason, the unified exams which were taken by all students (both male and female) at the end of the term, when the exam was the same for all level one students at the same time and on the same day. Therefore, they strongly believed that they should concentrate on the textbook and finish the assigned chapters, as the exams are based on it. As T3 stated: *'the exams are unified and I do not have the time to use interactive activities.'* All the teachers were concerned about preparing their students for the unified exams and so concentrated only on the textbook. This, they considered a factor preventing them from using the CLT approach yet, in the observed classes, the teachers were seen to be implementing CLT strategies. In view of the fact that the teachers were using the textbooks only, it can be assumed that the textbooks supported the teachers to use the CLT approach (see the textbook analysis in chapter 4). Adhikari (2007) and Vongxay (2013) indicated that the EFL teachers in their studies were unable to implement the CLT approach because their teaching systems were restricted by several factors, including the lack of teaching tools and the exams system. Moreover, Almohanna (2010) found that there was a high focus on the use of the textbook, on which the students' final exams are based. Most of the teachers interviewed for this study stated that they believed that they had insufficient time to cover everything on the

syllabus due to the limited number of teaching periods and the high density of the textbook. Four of the interviewed teachers agreed that they used the textbook predominantly, employing other materials when they felt that the students needed more practice in a particular area:

*T1: Yes, presentation is part of the textbook, where presentation in general is within the topic of the book, we don't go outside it.*

*T2: Yes, I used as well as the textbook a projector, PowerPoint; I take something from the internet where that depends on the lesson.*

*T3: I do not rely on different books or websites. I use my own. I use some materials for explaining additional things not really mentioned in the book.*

*T4 Yes, actually, the audio tracks, and I give them extra exercises from other books to practice more, where the extra exercises include worksheets as homework and presentations to help them.*

It is clear from both the teachers' answers and the observations that they used other materials beside the textbook in order to clarify the tasks for the students and engage them in the lesson by using interactive strategies such as brainstorming, pair-share-repeat and QandA sessions. In this study, as noted from the classroom observations, the teachers did not depend on the traditional method alone, engaging in transmission teaching, but used other methods and techniques beside the traditional methodology. For example, in one of the observed classes, the teacher was explaining traditional food of the UK, and she linked the lesson to Saudi culture by asking her students to give examples of the traditional food of Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, she asked the students to work in groups to create a presentation about any kind of traditional food of any country. The students then gave the presentation to the class. The teacher was helping the students to use the target language by using the QandA sessions and socialising their learning, which necessitates the students understanding the benefits of working with other learners and being able to share and negotiate with each other although the teacher would not have been able to articulate that this was what she was doing.

The teachers were aware of the areas of difficulty for the learners and sought to provide a variety of ways to support them in the difficult process of learning English. Similar to this finding, Fat'hi et al. (2015) argued that the post method teaching approach is strongly connected to the instructional approaches for real-life communication in the L2 classroom. Thus, the teachers can choose an appropriate method that suits the learners. According to Smith et al. (2005), collaborative learning in pairs or groups, that takes place within the EFL classroom, can create a high level of engagement when learners work together on certain exercises, as they regulate the tasks to the point where they need to learn as one

learner (Harries, 2005). Thus, the use of pair work, which was noted from the observations of all of the teachers' classes, will be discussed further in the next section (5.3).

### 5.3 Pair and Group Work

Group work is a form of intended association of students to benefit from interactive learning, which improves the total output of the activity compared with when it is done individually (Caruso and Woolley, 2008). It can help students to develop a host of skills that are increasingly important in the professional world (Mannix and Neale, 2005). As mentioned in the literature review (Chapter 3), CLT learning strategies often involve the use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning (Johnson et al., 1991). Two teachers in the interviews stated that they liked their students to work in groups in certain situations. T1 and T3 said:

*T1: Sometimes, if we explain vocabulary in the lesson and practice this vocabulary in sentences, I prefer the students to work in groups, because I want to see how much they understand about a word.*

*T3: Yes, I like them to work in groups mostly in the discussion sections.*

These teachers indicated that they liked their students to work in groups during the discussion parts of the lesson, as this helped them to assess the students' understanding of the topic. Conversely, the other three teachers said they tried to avoid involving their students in any kind of communicative activity (e.g. pair or group work), due to a belief that the use of communicative activities required a high level of class management skill, and that the students would face certain obstacles when working in groups. However, in the observed classes, all of the teachers were seen to ask their students to work in pairs or groups. Although perhaps unintended, it could be argued that by working together, the students were supported to take responsibility for their own learning, set goals, choose language-learning strategies, monitor progress, and evaluate their successful acquisition of the language.

One of the obstacles to successful group work in the Saudi classroom, according to the teachers, is the differentiation in the students' English level and the perception that they prefer not to share their answers with others. As T3, T4 and T5 indicated:

*T3: also, the students' level of English is different so they will not share their answers.*

*T4: The difficulty with collaborative learning is related to the students themselves because some of them don't accept sharing in groups which have different levels and this will affect their rates.*

*T5: not friendly to some students, they have been selfish.*

These quotes show that the teachers believed that their students preferred to work individually because of differences between the students' language levels. In some circumstances, they claimed that the students did not want to share their answers with each other because they were concerned about the marks that the teacher would give them for the class work, or they thought that working with lower level students at English might pull their marks down and they might not do so well in the exam. In addition, as mentioned in the literature, some students can rely on others to do the work. This is one of the most noticeable problems associated with group work. Some students do not help or sufficiently contribute to the group (Freeman and Greenacre, 2011). From the observation, the students appeared happy to work in groups when they could choose their own group to work with and when the teacher was not assessing them, in which case they appeared to be more confident, as they would not lose any marks if the final product were not very good. In one of the observed classes, the teacher asked the students to work in groups of five and write a paragraph about any traditional food they liked that represents any country. The students chose their groups, and then started writing the paragraph together. They seemed happy working together and it could be argued that their collaboration helped to improve their own learning, retention and overall achievement. A wider range of skills can be useful in applied activities, and sharing, exchanging and discussing ideas can play an essential role in extending the students' understanding of a particular area.

The findings point to a further reason that contributed to the teachers' avoidance of pair and group work, as two of the teachers indicated that this type of work might be considered unfair to all of the students, as the teacher might be unable to give them an equal opportunity to practise all of their skills because of the large class sizes, as mentioned in the previous section. They asserted:

*T1: It is good but we have a problem due to the large number of students and we can't give an equal opportunity to practice their skills, because the students are shy or reluctant to speak.*

*T1: Yes, we rely on one student, so we don't have the time to make all students work in one group.*

*T3: They are introverted mostly. They find it difficult to engage, take part in discussions.*

The above quotes showed that the teachers believed that the students were rather shy and unwilling to contribute in the target language. They were keen to be fair to all students when they worked in groups, but the large classes meant that they could not assist every student individually. Only some of the students were willing to speak and participate in the class, as mentioned previously, which indicated that the quieter, more reluctant speakers

did not get an opportunity to practise their language. However, it might be considered ironic that the teachers argued for all learners to have the opportunity to talk, when they favoured the GMT method, which tends to render the learners passive in a non-contributory role.

Moreover, the teachers believed that individual work was better for them as teachers because they feared group work might lead to them losing control and the students wasting time chatting rather than working together, as they have a tendency to abandon the tasks.

The teachers stated:

*T2: individually is better or a group of two girls, whereas if we make the groups larger than two girls, they will be talking and no balance, they will talk all the time, and because of the huge number of students, which is a problem for the teachers and students themselves, as well as the time.*

*T3: they would be there in group discussions but I hope the students will avoid talking about something else as I ask them to feel free and make them feel comfortable.*

*T5: some will not discuss the rules and exercises, they start chatting and enjoying their time, beside the time shortage.*

The teachers indicated that they were concerned that the students might chat while working in groups but in the observed classes the teachers appeared to be giving the students a fixed period of time to do the tasks together and they were circulating round the classroom while the students were working in groups. Moreover, they pointed out that they might assess the students unfairly when working in groups; T1 stated: *'I prefer doing that individually because I want to assess the students' understanding individually rather than working in groups.'* Evaluating a group is a difficult task and the instructor should have a clear idea of how he/she wishes to evaluate group work (Johnson et al., 1991). It was found from the literature review (Chapter 3) that teachers need to monitor each group, provide feedback and assist when necessary. This may prove to be more time-consuming than the traditional teaching formats (Cohen, 1994).

In addition, the teachers agreed that their students may sometimes struggle to make decisions in a group setting and feel shy about working through the exercises together; T3 and T5 stated that: *'thus some of them are introverted and seem shy and unconfident,' 'Some of them are shy and some will not discuss the rules.'* Moreover, similar to what was reported in Johnson et al. (1991), T2 and T4 reported that students have varying attitudes regarding group work in the classroom, as they often appear to prefer to be guided in the class by the teacher. This finding from the teachers is in line with the students' views, which are presented in the next chapter (Chapter 6). Both teachers indicated that:



*T2: Difficulties for students I think, they do not find a guide to guide them in the group work.*

*T4: Some students are reluctant to work with others without the teacher's guidance.*

However, even if the above results suggest that the five teachers did not appear very positive about the use of pair and group work in their teaching, it was clear from the observations that they did use group work. According to the observations, all five teachers asked their students to work in groups in their classes. For example, in the writing classes, both teachers of writing asked the students to form groups of four and write a paragraph about their topic, as mentioned above. In addition, in the listening and speaking classes, the teachers asked their students to create a presentation about any topic that was relevant to what they had studied then present it as a group to the rest of the class. Even the grammar teachers, one of whom insisted that she used a deductive approach, asked their students to work in groups or pairs to answer questions related to certain tasks, as the textbook advised them to do. This finding accords with other studies' findings within a number of EFL settings, which indicate that teachers are actually using CLT even if they do not think that they include any interactive activates in their classes (Almohanna, 2010; Alzaidi, 2011; Shihiba, 2011; Chang, 2011; Vongxay, 2013).

This current study undertakes a more in-depth investigation than those mentioned above regarding the instructional teaching methods that include communicative approaches and whether these can promote interaction in the classroom and create beneficial engagement, even for learners with a lower level of English. By using pair or group work, the teachers were helping their students to improve their overall quality of talk in the target language (Miller, 2010). One of the reasons for stimulating interaction, as Miller proposes, is that the learners discuss with each other, using the target language, and take turns to finish the tasks assigned by the English teacher using the target language. The use of the target language will be discussed in the next section.

#### 5.4 Use of the Target Language (TL)

Using the target language (TL) as the main resource of interaction in the classroom offers learners an opportunity to use the language themselves in their daily life. A number of researchers in modern language teaching and learning, including Little (1995) and Crichton (2009), confirm this opinion. Crichton (2009) proposes that teacher use of a high-level of TL communication is a way of confirming that the learners can function at a particular level. She also suggests that this maintains their acquisition of the language and permits

them first to understand and then communicate in the foreign language. The findings of the classroom observation in this study showed that all five teachers were communicating using the TL with the students in all classes, and that the teachers promoted greater learner autonomy in order to involve the students.

In the interviews, the teachers stated that they and the students attempted to use the language for all essential purposes, even if these were not, strictly speaking, part of the language lesson. All the teachers said that they encouraged their students to use the TL always within the four skills classrooms. One of the teachers stated that:

*T2: Yes I make them speak, in the speaking class, reading sentences, reading paragraphs, by speaking, reading and writing.*

T2 claimed that she makes her students speak English during all of her classes and asks them to do some tasks at home in order to help them to practise the TL. This is supported by the research, which has shown that the extent of TL use will affect students' target language improvement (Larsen-Freeman, 1985; Lightbown, 1991; Liu, 2008; Turnbull, 2001). Moreover, Turnbull (2001) has established a direct and positive association between student achievement and teacher use of the target language in class. T4 pointed out that:

*I encourage my students to practise the language themselves and I give them presentations [to prepare] to encourage them to use the language.*

The quotes above and the overall tone of the interviews showed that all of the teachers were encouraging their students to use the TL both inside and outside the classroom, as well as giving them assignments to do at home or advising them to read English books and watch and listen to English programs. For instance, in one of the observed classes, the teacher, after finishing the lesson, asked her students to listen to the news in English, summarize what they had heard in English then bring what they had written to the next class. Another teacher asked the students to interview anyone who speaks English and ask him or her about their favourite food, then write down the interview. The teacher's role in these classes was to maintain a learning environment that aimed to support students' autonomy within the learning process. The learning setting, as well, is regarded as a place for autonomous performance and this offers another reason for learner-centred education (Trebbi, 2006). Below are some of the teachers' responses when asked how they encourage their students to use the TL:

*T1: To read, because reading is the first thing that will build up vocabulary and understanding, so reading and listening is the best thing I should do at this level.*

*T2: I say you can read it at home if I give them homework, I say do it at home and read these paragraphs at home, think about it and underline the difficult words with the definitions of the difficult words in the next class I ask them.*

*T3: So I like to remind them to read and write and I ask them to go back to the example.*

*T4: I encourage students to practice the language themselves and I give them also presentations to encourage them to use the language.*

*T5: By reading many tasks, listening to audio, speaking in English to their friends and I recommend them to use it most of the time in their daily life.*

From the literature, creating a classroom setting that supports expectations of target language use and maintaining a good relationship with students are important. Thus, in a class where the teacher uses the TL throughout, the lesson should result in more TL use for the students (Song and Andrews, 2009). Even if spoken English is offered via the media, the classroom may be the only place where learners can use the language themselves. Song and Andrews (2009) stated that the teacher's language in the class is the primary model so, if the teacher uses the first language, it can make it even more challenging for the learners to use the TL. In this study, the support from the five teachers had helped the students to use TL, can be considered as good practice in second and foreign language learning and teaching. MacDonald (1993) and Wong-Fillmore (1985) state that consistent TL use will result in improved motivation as learners appreciate the immediate usefulness of TL.

From the interview data and observations, it was clear that teachers normally gave their students instructions in the TL for activities, which would help the L2 learning process. It was evident from the observations that the students were used to this as they followed the teachers' instructions and responded immediately by opening their textbook and reading the task the teacher asked them to do. Nevertheless, in one of the classes observed, one of the teachers tried her best to explain the meaning of a word in the TL, but her students were still unable to understand so she used the students' mother tongue (Arabic) to give instructions and clarify the issue. It appeared to be a rare occurrence as the students' responses were in the TL language, and if it was common for them to use Arabic and give the meaning in Arabic, then they would have used it from the beginning of the class. Several studies have indicated that the first language can be helpful as a cognitive tool that aids in second language learning (Swain and Lapkin, 2000; Watanabe, 2008). Dickson (1992) found that it is not only the quantity of exposure to the TL that is important but the quality of that exposure. It appeared that the example above was a rarity in a TL-rich environment, and it could be that the strategic use of the L1 was also good practice. The teachers might sometimes prefer to use the students' L1 to explain and organize a task in order to simplify the understanding of the material. By doing this, however, it could be argued that they deprive the students of valuable input in the L2 (Lightbown, and Spada,

2006). It could be that it is better to use the TL all the time in class, as the students mainly use Arabic in their daily life. In addition, using the TL provides the students with a range of natural examples of the language in action that extend the language used to teach the language. Nevertheless, sometimes the L1 will be more dynamic, help the students to feel a sense of security, confirm their experiences and lead to a clearer realization of the form and meaning of the language (Borg, 2006).

The English language teachers viewed TL use from different perspectives, but three of the English teachers' responses were surprisingly similar, as they all agreed that they used the TL all the time during their lessons. By doing this, the teachers are following the CLT approach, which does not make use of the L1 so that learners may be stimulated to use the TL only in class. This engagement is thought to be better for learners; hence, the teachers in the observed classes appeared to be trying to create a class setting in which L1 use is forbidden, hoping that the students would use the TL more. The teachers also emphasised that the EFL students should be given an opportunity to speak the TL both inside and outside the class by including a variety of types of tasks that would help them to use the TL, even if they were merely using their own textbook. The impact of the textbook in guiding teachers to use the interactive approach will be discussed in the following section.

### 5.5 Influence of the Textbook in Guiding Teachers to Use the CLT Approach and its Integration of Skills

In this study, the term 'textbook' refers to the book that is used as the main tool for teaching English language skills. As mentioned in the literature review, textbooks can be an influential instrument in English language teaching. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) confirm that the textbook "has become an almost universal element of ELT" (p. 315), playing an important role in language teaching and learning procedures (Rubdy, 2003). Zacharias (2005) states that "whether used in conjunction with other texts or materials or as a sort of surrogate curriculum, textbooks tend to affect the teaching and learning process in the classroom" (p. 23). In most English language teaching settings, "course books are perceived by many to be the route map of any ELT programme" (Sheldon, 1988, p. 238).

Each of the teachers in this study was provided with a textbook on the skill that she was teaching, a guide to the syllabus and guidelines and plans for meeting the course requirements for the annual exams. As part of the study, the textbook was analysed in order to define the proportion of tasks that could be said to be communicative. It was found that the majority of the tasks encourage teachers to apply collaborative communicative approaches to the students' learning, with the TL being used to complete the tasks.

It could be argued that working within such a prescribed system as the Saudi university EFL system may restrict the teachers, limit their freedom and deter them from attempting to change their teaching methods or approaches (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014). Even though the university management selected the textbooks, there were similarities and differences between the five teachers' opinions regarding its use. This section reports their views about the textbook used.

All five teachers said they were satisfied with their textbook, although they mentioned some weaknesses. Thus, all of the teachers reported some disadvantages associated with the textbook, as well as benefits. The teachers who were teaching grammar, listening and speaking thought that the recommended textbook was effective and beneficial for the taught level. T1 claimed, *'I think it is good, so according to their level is very good.'*

Conversely, the writing teachers were dissatisfied with their textbook. It was evident that there was a feeling that it was not deemed sufficient for early students' level and was better for teaching the higher levels, as indicated by T2: *'For the writing book is great but it doesn't describe things very well for level 1, it is more advanced for level 1, but for level 2 it is good.'* In addition, T3 stated: *'Its weakness is the repetition of paragraphs, and then I don't have to cover most of the paragraphs.'* The teacher believed that when there is repetition in the textbook tasks the students will feel bored and she did not want to waste time explaining the same topics and tasks. Hawkes (2009) agrees that repetition of exactly the same task is boring and can result in language students becoming uninterested in continuing the task. Due to the repetition of some of the paragraphs, T2 indicated that *'Sometimes I don't focus on the book, I use sentences and I use my feedback to direct the lesson differently, so I do not have to follow everything in the book.'* The teacher's sense of dissatisfaction is evident, and she pointed out that the repetition of exactly the same tasks decreases the language students' motivation. To solve this problem, the teacher therefore used supplementary materials, carrying out tasks that have the same procedure but which differ in content. This was clear from the observed classes of this teacher. When she asked her students to complete the tasks in the textbook, she skipped over some of the repeated tasks and did not follow exactly what the textbook recommended.

All five of the teachers reported that the textbooks included meaningful and authentic topics; for example, T4 and T5 stated, *'Actually they are meaningful'* and *'They are meaningful.'* These topics were considered reasonably useful in offering meaningful ideas to students, in order to provide them with topics relevant to talk about and thus improve their language skills and understanding based on their prior knowledge and current

learning experiences. This links with what researchers indicate; that authentic topics are intrinsically more active, interesting and stimulating (Lee, 1995, and Peacock, 1997). Guariento and Morely, (2001) state that one of the most significant advantages of using authentic and meaningful topics is that it increases the students' motivation and enhances the learning process. In addition, it is viewed as a kind of learning that can be used in their daily life (Guariento and Morely, 2001). Genhard (1996) believes that authentic and meaningful topics "contextualize" language learning. Additionally, they help to bridge the gap between the language taught in the classroom and the students' mother tongue. In the grammar book, *Grammar Sense 2* (Pavlik, 2004), published by Oxford University, the author clearly states that the reading texts and examples are based on actual English language sources to provide a true picture of natural language use (see figure 5-1).

**Figure 5-1: Authentic text, Grammar Sense 2.**

## Each chapter in *Grammar Sense* follows this format:

The **Grammar in Discourse** section introduces the target structure in its natural context via a high-interest authentic reading text.

- **Authentic reading texts show how language is really used.**

**GRAMMAR IN DISCOURSE**

### A Tales of a World Traveler

**A1 Before You Read**

Discuss these questions.  
Do you like to travel? What are some good and bad things about traveling? Name some countries you have visited. Where else do you want to go?


**A2 Read**

Read this magazine article to find out about world traveler John Clouse.

#### Tales of a World Traveler

According to *Guinness World Records*<sup>TM</sup>, John Clouse has visited more places than anyone else in the world. He has been to 193 countries and almost all of the world's territories. In his travels, he has crossed the Atlantic Ocean at least 100 times and the Pacific Ocean 40 or 50 times. In addition to holding the *Guinness* world record for travel, Clouse is also the most-traveled member of the Travelers' Century Club. All of the members of this club have traveled to at least 100 countries.

All of this traveling has cost John Clouse a lot of money. So far he has spent about \$1.35 million. It has also taken a long time. Clouse started traveling 40 years ago.



Has John Clouse stopped traveling? No, he hasn't. He has continued his journey. There are three places that he hasn't visited yet: the Faroe Islands in the North China Sea; Clipperton, a French island about 700 miles west of Acapulco, Mexico; and Bouvet Island, near Antarctica.

Some of Clouse's journeys have been so difficult. For example, while trying to reach Danger Island in the Pacific, he almost had to turn back just a few yards from the shore because the waves were too high. The real problem was that he didn't know how to go on when another man had to carry him on his back!

Clouse has never publicly stated his favorite country. He doesn't like to be famous, but he has said that Kenya and Tanzania in Africa are both beautiful. What place has Clouse visited the most? Paris. He's been there 35 times. Does Clouse find part of his work tiring? Not at all. In fact, he admits that it's all a bit ridiculous.

"Wanderlust is a sickness that I got from my father. After all, if you've seen one adult, you've seen them all," he says with a smile.

Adapted from The Christian Science Monitor

**Words to Know**

atoll: a very small island made of coral  
journey: a trip  
ridiculous: very silly, foolish

island: a very tiny  
territory: an area of land that belongs to a country  
wanderlust: a strong desire to travel

**A3 After You Read**

A. Circle the places that John Clouse has not visited.  
Bouvet Island    Danger Island    the Faroe Islands  
Clipperton    Kenya    Tanzania

B. Match each number with the correct description.

1. 100	a. the number of times Clouse has visited Paris
2. 1.35 million	b. the number of countries Clouse has visited
3. 35	c. the number of dollars Clouse has spent on travel
4. 193	d. the number of times Clouse has crossed the Pacific Ocean
5. 40 or 50	e. the smallest number of countries each person in the Travelers' Century Club has visited

Grammar in Discourse • The Present Perfect

- **Structured reading tasks help students read and understand the text.**

On the other hand, even if these textbooks included what were intended to be meaningful topics, three teachers (T3, T4 and T5) indicated that these topics were not interesting to the female students and do not reflect the students' culture. Thus, they tried to make them interesting and link it to the learners' culture in order to make the topic easier for their students. For example, in one of the observed classes, the topic was the weather in the UK. The teacher started the lesson by asking the students about any country that they would like to visit and the reasons for this. Most of the students stated that they would rather travel during the summer as it is so hot in Saudi Arabia and the weather in other countries is cooler. Based on the students' answers, the teacher started to explain the main topic to the students. The teacher skilfully introduced the topic by eliciting the students' opinions and leading them indirectly but in a logical fashion to the topic in the textbook. This type of framing of the topic within the students' interests was noted in all the teachers' classes

and perhaps could account for the positive evaluations of the students when asked about their learning. The students' responses to the questionnaire will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

*T4: they are not interesting to the students, because they are not from other cultures and they don't make the students feel very interested.*

*T5: some of the topics aren't interesting to these students, they don't match their interests. sometimes I need to link this topic to attract their attention by using some examples, comparing what is related to something, I relate something to their daily life for example, girls like fashion, cooking, something related to ladies.*

The teachers' comments above showed that they were aware that a number of the topics in the textbook were unrelated to the students' interests and culture. They pointed out that the content or examples were irrelevant or inappropriate for the students and did not reflect Saudi female students' needs, since textbooks are often written for global markets and often fail to reflect the interests and needs of all learners. Despite the recognition that many of the texts were 'authentic' or based on meaningful topics, teachers claimed that the students felt bored and struggled with irrelevant tasks. The tasks contained inauthentic language as the text, dialogue and other features of content often aimed to incorporate the teaching of facts and were often unrepresentative of real language use, of which the students did not have any previous experience about the topic given in the textbook. In the observed classes, the teachers gave the impression that they were supporting the students to use the TL outside their classes asking students to read English articles and watch TV and video for real authentic language. T2 stated, in agreement with the other teachers, that in order to attract the students' attention to the topic, she used other materials to simplify the topics and relate them to the students' daily life. By doing this, the teacher could be said to be motivating the learners to learn, gain more satisfaction from the material and be more active in their learning than those who study in environments that are more restricted:

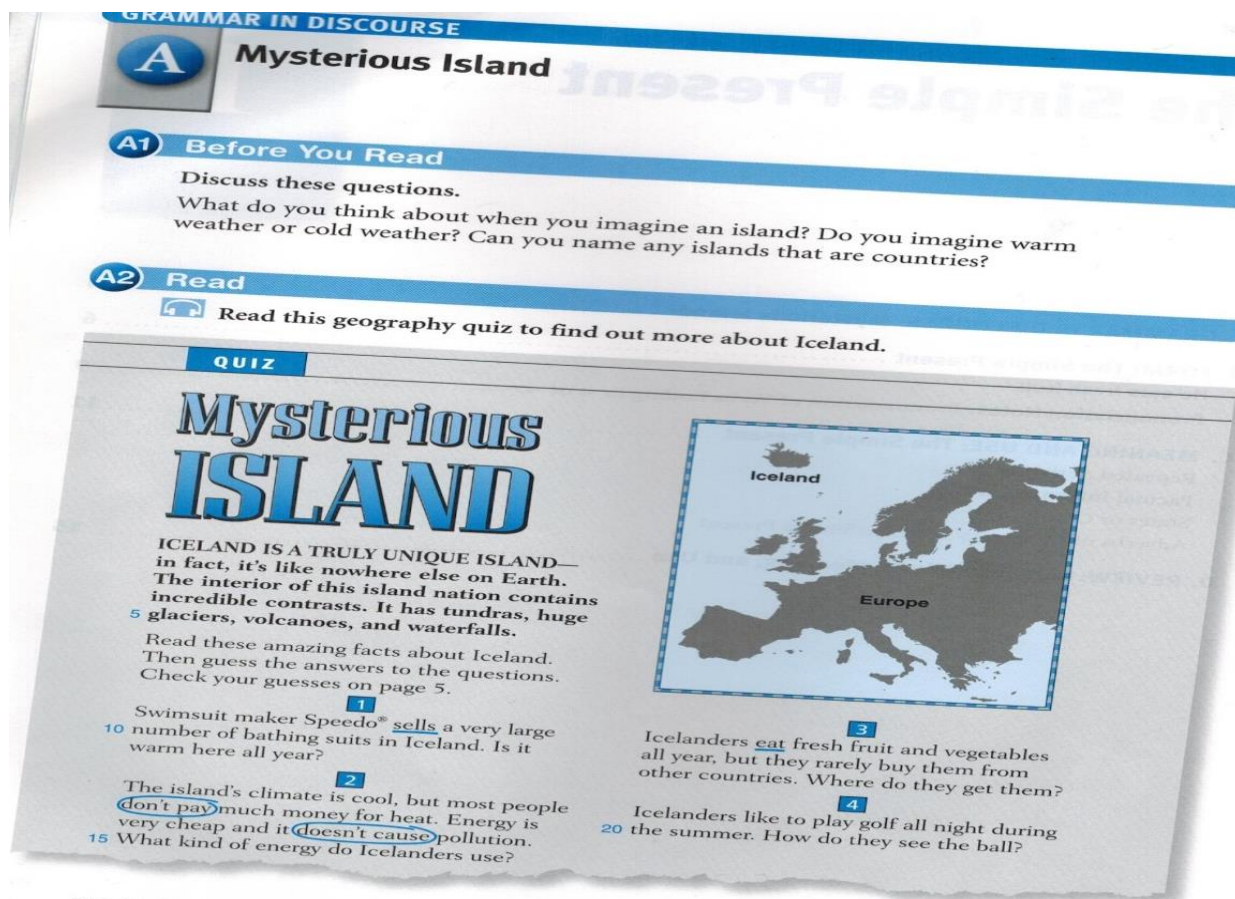
*T2 I can add something from outside, like papers, notes, handouts, to clarify the book, but on how to attract the students, I think by relating everything to real life, giving some example from reality, when examples touch on reality, you can see that the information enters their minds more easily.*

The teachers' opinions are supported by Constructivist Theory that asserts that students use their prior knowledge of the world as a primary frame for relating to new information (Chamot, 1999). Consequently, students may be unable to understand or create meaning from information, which is irrelevant to their context. It was evident from the classroom observation that the teachers tried to link their students' prior knowledge to the new knowledge and used the textbook as a resource for students, but not the only resource. By



involving the students implicitly in the decision-making and evaluation of learning achievements, it helped them to improve their language learning and intercultural skills. As an example of a topic, which is unrelated to students' interests and culture, see figure 5-2.

Figure 5-2: Irrelevant topics, Grammar Sense 2.



Such a topic of a mysterious island might not be very interesting to Saudi female students since it is irrelevant to their interests and unrelated to their culture. Saudi female students are likely to be interested in fashion and the media according to the teachers' indications, so if students do not find a particular activity interesting, relevant, or within the scope of their understanding, they will probably feel bored with the topic. Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) argue that a foreign culture and the learners' own culture should be located together in order for students to recognise a foreign culture. Moreover, what teachers should always bear in mind when including culture in language education is the requirement to increase their learners' awareness of both their own culture and the target culture in order to develop a cross-cultural analysis (Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996). This cultural approach appeared to occur in the observed classes. For example, the topic was the traditional food in the UK so, in order to link it to the students' culture, the teacher asked the students about the different kinds of traditional food in Saudi Arabia. She asked them about their favourite

food and which type of food they like, before explaining the given topic in the textbook. The teachers, by linking the two cultures together, encouraged interaction among learners throughout the teaching period. Thus, when teachers informed the learners about basic knowledge, ideas and culture, they were helping the students to experience the need to investigate and grasp new ideas in order to appreciate new concepts and understand new phenomena. All of the teachers suggested that it is better to link the topics to the students' culture. This was seen in the observed classes and in the teachers' statements below:

*T1: we give an example of our culture to understand the topic and to see how that it is applicable to our culture.*

*T3: When it isn't linked to the culture, I try to ask them before if that relates they talk about if not they do describe what is about, how usually people feel, how is it, is it cheap, dirty and so on.*

*T4: I try to make it related by applying it to something related to our daily life.*

*T5: sometimes I need to link this topic to attract their attention by using some examples, comparing what is related to something, I relate something to their daily life for example, girls like fashion, cooking, something related to ladies.*

It was clear from the observed class that all of the teachers accepted the students' answers openly, encouraged them to participate, and offered their own ideas about the topic based on their prior knowledge that reflects Saudi culture. For example, when the students were discussing the learning system in Saudi Arabia, the teacher invited them to compare it with other educational systems about which they had heard. One of the students opened the discussion by talking about the American system and started comparing the two educational systems, after which the other students offered their own ideas and information about other educational systems in other countries. The teacher was happy with the discussion. This corresponded to what T4 and T5 stated:

*T4: Actually, by welcoming any answer, accepting any point and anything, they feel always welcome and we welcome any ideas that the students bring from their experience as long as it is related to Saudi culture.*

*T5: By giving them the chance to participate, to state their opinions and their ideas they have.*

The observations and interviews gave the impression that all the teachers worked really hard to make their English classes meaningful and relevant to the learners and showed great creativity and ingenuity in doing so, so that the links between cultures could be explored and developed. From the teachers' responses, it is evident that the textbooks they used integrated the other skills but some of the teachers indicated that they only taught

their students the skill that they were teaching, as the students have their own textbook for every subject.

*T1: Actually, we have already a grammar course and we are limited by the time and we focus on listening and speaking.*

*T2: Sometimes, when I have time and I see the grammar is associated and connected in one way or another to our lessons I do reflect them but I don't focus a hundred percent on it; as I said, they have their own grammar class.*

*T4: I try to link it to writing as much as I can but I can focus on speaking and reading.*

From the observations, even if the teachers were not focusing on the other skills, it was obvious that they did integrate the other skills together. It is mentioned in the literature that all of the skills and grammar are important in learning a language. Therefore, it could be said that it is impossible for an educator to focus a class on one or two skills alone, since they are all interlinked (Nasr, 1994). As seen from the observation, for example, the teachers who were teaching the grammar skills asked their students to write a paragraph, read the text in their book, listen to a conversation, and state what they had heard. Thus, the teacher during the class was integrating the four skills with the grammar focus.

This also happened when the other observed teachers were teaching the other skills. For instance, during the writing, listening and speaking skills, the teachers included the other skills and corrected the students' grammar. Even though they stated that they tried to concentrate only on their subjects, they integrated grammar and the other skills with the skill that they were teaching. Commonly, professionals demonstrate strategies as though they are linked to only one particular skill, such as reading or writing (Peregoy and Boyle, 2001). However, it can be unclear or misleading to consider that an assumed strategy is related to only one specific language skill. Common strategies help to unite the skills together. Teaching students to increase their learning strategies in one skill area can often improve performance in all language skills (Oxford, 1996). Thus it can be argued that it is better to integrate the four skills when teaching a language as it will help the learning of real content, not just the dissection of language forms (Oxford, 1996). This is what happened in the teachers' classes, as they integrated all of the skills together in order to help the students and use the TL.

Through analysing the grammar book, it was clear that the author's intention was to integrate the teaching of grammar with the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). Integrating these four skills might improve communicative competence since it emphasises realistic communication, which is the major focus of teaching and learning in modern society (Wang, 2002). The vital goal of foreign language teaching is to enable

learners to use the foreign language when needed in work or life (Wang, 2002). In the observed classes, all of the teachers were integrating the four skills together with grammar, possibly because they had been influenced by the textbook used for their skill, which integrated all of the skills to help the students to better collaborate together during the class. Even when they were not using the textbook, they tended to include all the skills together. As can be seen in Figure 5-3, the author of the textbook used different types of tasks for the students in order to integrate the four skills with grammar teaching.

Figure 5-3: Integrating the four skills

**A2 Read**

Read this geography quiz to find out more about Iceland.

**QUIZ**

## Mysterious ISLAND

ICELAND IS A TRULY UNIQUE ISLAND—in fact, it's like nowhere else on Earth. The interior of this island nation contains incredible contrasts. It has tundras, huge glaciers, volcanoes, and waterfalls.


Read these amazing facts about Iceland. Then guess the answers to the questions. Check your guesses on page 5.

1 Swimsuit maker Speedo® sells a very large number of bathing suits in Iceland. Is it warm here all year?

2 The island's climate is cool, but most people don't pay much money for heat. Energy is very cheap and it doesn't cause pollution.

3 Icelanders eat fresh fruit and vegetables all year, but they rarely buy them from other countries. Where do they get them?

4 Icelanders like to play golf all night during the summer. How do they see the ball?



**B1 Listening for Form**

Listen to this paragraph. Write the verb forms you hear.

Many people in Hawaii live in two different worlds—the world of traditional Hawaiian culture and the world of modern American culture. Keenan Kanaeholo \_\_\_\_\_ a typical Hawaiian. He \_\_\_\_\_ on the island of Oahu. Like many Hawaiians, Keenan \_\_\_\_\_ two languages. At home he and his family \_\_\_\_\_ English. They \_\_\_\_\_ to each other in Hawaiian. Keenan \_\_\_\_\_ in a large hotel. At work he \_\_\_\_\_ English. Keenan's wife, Emeha, \_\_\_\_\_ in the hotel. She \_\_\_\_\_ at an elementary school. Both Keenan and Emeha \_\_\_\_\_ to dance. They \_\_\_\_\_ to discos on the weekends. Emeha also \_\_\_\_\_ the hula, but Keenan \_\_\_\_\_.

**B2 Working on Affirmative and Negative Statements**

**B3 Pronouncing Verbs Ending in -s or -es**

A. Listen to the pronunciation of each verb. What ending do you hear? Check (✓) the correct column.

	/s/	/z/	/ɪz/
1. lives		✓	
2. practices			
3. works			
4. closes			
5. arranges			
6. tells			

B. Work with a partner. Take turns reading these sentences aloud. Be sure to pronounce the verb endings correctly.

- Pablo lives in San Diego.
- The team practices every day.
- The computer works just fine.
- My mother closes the window at night.
- Tony arranges all the meetings.
- Sara tells everyone's secrets.

**D2 Editing**

Find the errors in this paragraph and correct them.

Which large American city is on three islands? New York City! New York is on Manhattan Island, Long Island, and Staten Island. Most people thinks of Manhattan when they think of New York City. This is because Manhattan have the tall buildings that New York is famous for. Sometimes people travel from Staten Island to Manhattan by boat. However, most people in New York not use boats to go from one part of the city to another. Large bridges connects the islands. Trains and cars also uses long tunnels under the water to move between the islands. In fact, New Yorkers usually forget that they lives on an island.

As shown in figure 5.3, the textbooks appear to encourage the teachers to use a CLT approach in teaching each skill and this can be demonstrated from the teachers' statements about the textbooks.

T1: *It has several methods, sometimes; some of the exercises encourage group work or to work with partners or being interactive, like the discussion part.*

T2: *I think the communicative approach is mostly used because, as I told you, in the writing class and listening class, where there are some grammar parts but not focusing on that.*

T3: *I think it supports the integrative method, like when we teach kids, we usually integrate many skills together, for example listening, writing, reading, the most kind of book.*

T4: *I think it supports the interactive approach.*

T5: *Yes, we have some parts where I need to use audio and listening and discussion and speaking when they write some sentences, so writing is supportive, they should read texts that cover the rules.*

The teachers' comments showed that the textbooks they used influenced them to use a CLT approach when teaching each subject. As a result, despite the teachers' comments noted earlier, that they did not use any CLT approaches in their teaching, it can be concluded that the textbooks have had a great impact in guiding the teachers to use CLT approaches in their classes and motivate the students to participate. The teachers' beliefs regarding the views of the students' motivation and engagement will be discussed in the next section.

## 5.6 Teachers' Views of the Students' Motivation and Engagement

The motivation of students is a significant concern in education, mainly due to the importance of academic performance on their professional life. Correspondingly, it is important to identify the issues that will help teachers to discover learners' opinions towards learning, as well as barriers and what supports the practice of learning English. Thus, understanding students' motivation from their participation will help the teachers to develop the learners' academic level and help them to improve their learning outcomes (Ryan and Deci, 2009).

From the findings, the teachers indicated that they encouraged their students to participate even if they gave an incorrect answer. The teachers indicated that they did this in order to encourage their students to participate in, and engage, with the lesson; as T2 mentioned '*so we encourage the students to participate and there is no problem if they make mistakes in*

*this part of learning and we give them the time they need.*' As mentioned in the literature, participation and engagement predict learners' achievement and understanding of educational material (Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2003).

However, even if the students are highly motivated, as noted earlier, the teachers pointed out that some of their students feel shy and nervous. As T1 and T5 stated: *'because students are shy or reluctant to speak' 'they will not participate and they will be shy and they will not work.'* This could be a result of previous learning practices that led to a lack of motivation and engagement. All five of the teachers stated that they always encouraged their students to participate and tried to make them feel comfortable. It was clear from the classroom observation that all of the teachers aimed to foster student participation and encouraged them to say whatever they wanted, as long as it was related to the subject. In the listening and speaking class, the teacher encouraged her students to participate and offer their own ideas about the topic and, if the students' answers were excellent, she gave them an extra mark. The students appeared very excited, tried to think critically and give the teacher their answers by creating a competition between them. For example, one of the students talked about the education system in an unfamiliar country and how it is hard to go to school. The teacher praised the student and encouraged her. After that, the students appeared to think deeply then give answers to inspire the teacher and students. The class was animated and the students were engaged with the topic, using the TL to interact together. Studies have shown that, when learners are involved in listening, the class setting is more productive and facilitates learners to contribute to the discussion taking place (Reeve et al., 2004).

T3: *because open discussion can help everyone.*

T4: *by welcoming any answer accepting any point and anything, they feel always welcome.*

T5: *giving them a chance to participate and enjoy the classes.*

The teachers' responses are aligned with other findings from the 'Developmental Psychology' field that have clarifications for policy design. Researchers have confirmed that how learners think about their own ability to learn can affect how motivated they are (Barry, 2007; Murray, 2011). If a learner believes, for whatever reason, that he or she lacks ability for learning or feels unlikely to be successful, that learner will feel unsuccessful and will not be academically motivated (Pintrich, 2003). During the observed classes, some of the students appeared happy and confident about participating in the observed classes. The students gave their own opinions about the topic and added some information from their experiences. The teachers' positive attitude to their students' contributions aimed to help



the students to believe in themselves as English speakers. As a result of the teachers' intuitive awareness, and the fact that their actions seemed designed to address this, the students appeared interested and engaged.

Similarly, learners need to identify the association between effort and success. Learners who feel that they have no power over the outcomes of their attempts are less likely to make any effort initially (Murray, 2011; Barry, 2007; Pintrich, 2003). Two teachers were concerned that some of the students did not participate because of their language proficiency levels. *'Other girls don't want to participate as much, maybe their language is weak or maybe they are shy' (T1), 'groups which have different levels and this will affect their rates' (T4).* All of the teachers insisted that, even if the students refused to participate, they encouraged them by giving them an opportunity to discuss the topic together.

Teachers should consider that in order to increase students' participation in academic activities, learner motivation should be based on the students' needs and interests in the class (Pintrich, 2003). All five of the teachers' responses were in agreement with Lepper (1988), indicating that a learner who is intrinsically motivated will carry out an activity for its own sake, for the pleasure it delivers, the learning it offers, or the sense of achievement it produces. Consequently, when students are intrinsically motivated, as T1 and T4 suggested, they tend to engage in tasks that require more effort, which enables them to process information more deeply. From the class observations, it was noticed that the students appeared involved with the content, engaged with their classmates, they seemed to be able to use what they had learnt in the class, and able to discuss with the teacher and their friends what the teacher had explained to them. For example, in the writing class, the students wrote a paragraph about a new topic, and then discussed their answers together with the teacher, writing their ideas on the board. Through the students' answers and the teacher's encouragement, they were able to work together to write a 'good' paragraph about the educational system in Saudi Arabia.

T4 said: *like when one answered, she will get a bonus and, if she failed and committed certain mistakes, common mistakes, I ask one of them to explain it to clarify it to her friend so, if she understands from her, then she will get a bonus, as a way of delivering information to a classmate.*

T4 encouraged her students to be engaged in the class by giving them extra points as a bonus. She encouraged them to be reflective and use what they knew in order to correct their mistakes. The approach she used aimed to increase her students' extrinsic motivation, but may also have had the effect of increasing their intrinsic motivation (Lepper, 1988).

The teachers in this study highlighted the kinds of interactive activities they used in order to engage and motivate their students. For instance, they used group presentations as well

as group and peer discussions. All of the teachers indicated that they used group and peer discussions in class, but only T1, T2 and T4 used presentations in their classes:

*T4: Yes, in presentations, I encourage them to include all of their opinions and what they think even when they talk about facts and information, where I encourage them to tell me what they think about that.*

Although the teachers stated that they used presentations, this was not observed in their classes. At some point during their classes, some of the students worked in groups but seemed unwilling to engage in presentations and discussions in some occasions. They also did not always respond in a communicative manner, as will be discussed in the next chapter that focuses on the students' perceptions (Chapter 6).

Moreover, sometimes, despite the best efforts of the teachers, there was a lack of engagement and when this happened; they took action to force students to respond, T2 said that:

*T2: Yes, like writing on the board, when sometimes I see that the students are sleepy, I pick names randomly to wake them up, suddenly, while in the middle of an exercise, I just call out her name and ask her to answer.*

In this situation, the students will be alert to the teacher during the lesson. Calling on students by name is a direct and effective way of encouraging them to participate in the class (Rogers, 1997). However, these strategies were not applied in the classes observed, even though they might have been employed in other lessons. Likewise, T3 acknowledged that the students in the classes often preferred writing together from the board:

*T3: We have strategies like writing together, them and me, on the board and, if it's small class, I ask the students to go the board and write different paragraphs and, if it's a large class, I'll write and ask them give me their suggestions, and they like doing so.*

This was noticeable in the class observation as when this teacher was writing the students' answers with them together on the board, and the students answered the teacher and contributed their own ideas in order to form the paragraph. Moreover, T4 indicated that she asks her students to deliver presentations in class to engage and motivate them to use the TL. She said: *'by including worksheets as homework and presentations to help them, whereas I ask them to present any exercises they want to break the routine of the class.'* Again, it seems as if the teachers were applying the CLT approach unwittingly in their classes although the strategy mentioned above was not noted during the observed classes because of the restricted time limit for the observations so that I did not see the full range of the teachers' work.



The participants also underlined the importance of feedback to the students. The teachers' beliefs about the feedback they give to their students will be discussed in the following section.

### 5.7 Teachers' Views of the Given Feedback

Feedback is an important aspect of effective learning. It supports learners to understand the subject being studied and gives them clear guidance on how to improve their learning (Peterson, 2003). Research has proven the benefits of feedback. The kind of feedback, the timing of its use, and way it is used can have positive effects on learners in the classroom (Burnett, 2002). All five of the teachers agreed on the importance of feedback for students, as they maintained it would help them to improve their learning, as Peterson (2003) suggests, and acquire the TL.

The teachers indicated that they normally used indirect methods of giving feedback to correct the students' errors but, in some situations, the students needed to be corrected directly. As T5 stated: *'It depends on the situation whether to use the direct or indirect way of correction.'* This supports the idea of Hattie and Timperley, (2007) who stated that, if there is a challenging task, getting feedback could prompt learners to make more efforts in future work. Feedback can advance achievement when there is a clear aim set. The more specific the aim, the more effective it is, since it demands more focus and feedback from the learners.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) list four types of feedback that will be discussed in the following paragraphs. The first type is feedback about a task and can include direction from the teacher on how to improve the work; for example, when a teacher hands back a paper with notes about how to improve written on it. As T3 claimed: *'I write it on the board, sometimes I like to use her own words, but I change the way that works, I can sometimes hand them their work with my comments.'* As evidence of this method of feedback, it was noted, while observing her classes, that the teacher asked her students to swap their work and correct each other's work by writing their feedback on it, implementing peer assessment. Lladó et al. (2014) assert that learners have a positive point of view towards peer-assessment methodology before and after its application. It encourages learner performance and facilitates the acquisition of learning at different levels. In addition, at the end of the class, she handed them their written work with the teacher's feedback on it. Peer assessment is a creative way for the students themselves to gain knowledge via exchanging knowledge and scrutinising others' work. The teacher in

this situation is also supporting the students by writing down how to improve on their work.

The second type of feedback that Hattie and Timperley (2007) identify concentrates on supporting learning to assist learners to understand the tasks more clearly, such as answering the students' questions or correcting their errors directly. T3 stated: *'I would like to correct the students' errors orally and directly.'* During the class observations, all five of the teachers sometimes gave direct feedback to a student by writing the correct version on the board or stating it orally. For example, in one of the observed classes, the teacher asked the students to give them examples of the future tense, and one of the students answered by saying: *'tomorrow I go to the mall to buy new bag.'* The teacher asked the student to repeat her answer and the teacher wrote it on the board. The teacher then asked her students to read the sentence and figure out the mistakes, then, after their contributions, wrote the correct sentence on the board. The teacher engaged all of the students in the error correction and wrote the sentence on the board to help her students to think critically and improve their comprehension. This is linked to what T1 said: *'I write the errors on the board and discuss them together.'* They believed that this would help the students to avoid making the same type of error in the future. The way that this was done was in a friendly, collaborative and non-critical way and in that classroom the students seemed to accept and welcome the analysis of mistakes, even when it was their mistake that was being analysed. The third level of feedback can be considered individual feedback. This can emphasise the self-evaluation part of a task to see if a learner can work on an assignment or test themselves by using methods that he/she has already been taught (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). This level can raise the learner's self-efficacy and improve his/her self-esteem (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). All of the teachers mentioned in their responses that they gave their students tests and then corrected their answers, giving them written feedback as to how to improve their skills and not grading them. It was noticed that at the end of one of the observed classes, the teacher handed her students their exam sheet that had been corrected by her with written feedback.

The last level of feedback is personal feedback that is unconnected to a task. This is usually a general form of encouragement, such as saying: "You're a great student!" (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). According to the classroom observations, all of the teachers used this kind of feedback to encourage their students to engage in the lesson and participate, using words such as 'great job,' 'excellent answer,' etc. T2 mentioned *'I really say 'excellent', 'good', 'very good', 'thank you', when I say 'excellent', everyone will be looking.'* Instructor appreciation is a common supportive method that lies within the

personal feedback category. Burnett reported that it is suggested that educators offer praise because it can promote self-esteem and provide encouragement. Thus, feedback is a significant issue in today's classroom, and should be implemented in every class (Burnett, 2002). Generating a positive classroom atmosphere with regular feedback is one of the most powerful instruments teachers can use to encourage students' learning and prevent problematic behaviours from occurring (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

## 5. 8 Conclusion

This chapter began by looking at the English teachers' perceptions of the CLT approach and the methods they preferred to use or assumed were appropriate to use in the language classroom at university level. It also identified the teachers' view of communicative approaches including interactive activities in class. The teachers expressed a positive view of the CLT approach and willingness to use such a method if they were able to avoid the difficulties that they perceived they faced. They mentioned some of the obstacles that they believed led them to avoid implementing the CLT approach in their classes, such as it being time consuming and their need to cover a large number of lessons within a particular time. Additionally, the large classes and lack of suitable materials were also factors they identified as preventing them from using the CLT approach.

However, even though the teachers stated that they did not use the CLT approach and said that they tried to avoid using such an approach, the findings showed that the teachers were, in fact, using CLT strategies. The teachers employed several learning strategies, such as pair and group work, in their classes that are recognised as features of the CLT approach. The strategies used by the teachers were believed to help the students to be engaged to use the TL. According to the teachers, interaction was a successful approach to use, however, they underlined that it depended on the time available and the students' willingness to work together.

This chapter also presented the approaches that the teachers used to reflect the students' Saudi culture and real life situation instead of relying solely on textbook materials. It explored how the teachers used these materials to generate interaction and engagement among the students all of which could be said to be elements of the CLT approach. However, the teachers felt pressure to rely on the textbooks that their educational institutions provided rather than use materials and resources which might be considered more relevant for their students, because the exams are based on the textbooks and, thus, they had to complete the syllabus. They felt this limited the possibilities for implementing the CLT approach in their language classrooms.

The views of the teachers of their learners' motivation and engagement were also discussed in this chapter. The teachers highlighted some of the techniques that they used in order to motivate the students to participate in class and use the TL. Moreover, the teachers discussed some of the strategies that they used to engage their students' attention while teaching the class. In addition, the teachers' views on the feedback given regarding their Saudi EFL students' errors were considered. The teachers highlighted several types of useful feedback that they offered to their students, which they believed might help the students to use the TL in the classroom.

The next chapter will examine in more detail the practices observed in the classrooms of the students in the study, along with the responses from the students' questionnaires. Although the students' questionnaire was one of the main data collection instruments, observations in the English language classes were also considered essential data to support the teachers' and students' perceptions of the CLT approach in the Saudi classrooms involved in the study.

## CHAPTER SIX: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CLT APPROACH

### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the teachers' and students' perceptions of CLT in the English language classes in Year 1 of university study in the Saudi context. The previous chapter discussed the teachers' perceptions of CLT and the interactive approaches that they employed in their classes, as observed during the observations of their lessons. The findings of chapter 5 indicated that although the teachers maintained that they were not using CLT approaches, they were seen to be using interactive learning strategies in the observed classes. The observations showed that they used several teaching strategies, such as pair and group work, in addition to teacher-student interaction in their classes, which can be considered features of the CLT approach.

This chapter explores the students' perceptions of CLT in the Saudi context, through presenting the themes that emerged from the student questionnaires. The themes will be combined with information from the classroom observations to support or challenge the interpretation of the questionnaire data. As a reminder, the questionnaire investigated 100 Saudi EFL year one-university students' perceptions of their experience of English learning in their first year, as well as their opinions on the CLT approach and interactive methodology. The students who answered the questionnaires were all students had been observed in the classes. It should be noted that the questionnaires comprised closed questions and did not gather any qualitative responses, which could have illuminated the students' responses in detail. In addition, as the questionnaire was anonymous and the students' skill classes cannot be identified. Furthermore, despite careful piloting of the questionnaire and wording of the items, respondents may have interpreted a question differently from what was intended by the researcher, with no opportunity to seek clarification (Cohen et al. 2007).

The classroom observations were conducted before the questionnaire in order to provide a clear picture of the students' behaviour in class. The observations were undertaken in 4 classes for each skill, 12 classes in total over a period of 3 weeks as explained in chapter 4. The observations focused on the language teaching features (e.g., teaching and learning approaches, communicative interaction, teachers' feedback, use of the target language) that were used in the classroom. After the observations, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire to supplement the data of the classroom observations to contribute to answering the research questions from a variety of perspectives. The questionnaires were used to give a wider perception of the issues that the research questions were addressing

(Popper 2004). However, it is impossible to explore possible meanings of the students' responses, without drawing on the information from the observations, which focused strongly on the teachers' actions in the classroom as a stimulus for the students' responses in the lessons.

A number of themes emerged from the students' perceptions of the CLT approach. Before discussing the themes, first the variation in the background knowledge of the students' English will be discussed in order to clarify understanding of the students' level of English and their English learning background experience before they progressed to university level English learning. The first theme that will be considered is the students' language preferences and the use of the L1 in the classroom. The second theme, which will be discussed, is their perceptions of what helped them to learn and use English. From the findings related to the students' perceptions of teaching and learning, a further three themes emerged, which will also be described. These are the students' views of the teaching approaches used in the classroom, interactive learning and CLT approaches and the students' perceptions of the textbook.

## 6. 2 Variation in the Students' Background Knowledge of English

In the current study, it was deemed essential to investigate the number of years of learning English, and how this enabled the students to use the language in a communicative setting or not to meet requirements during real-life communication. The students in this study come from different backgrounds, with different life and learning experiences. The participants began learning English from the first, fourth, or sixth year of primary school, depending on the school they attended. Some students attended government schools, which means that they started studying English from sixth grade, while others attended private schools and so had started to study English from their first or fourth year of primary school and some, who attended international schools, had studied English from their first year of primary school.

The differences in the number of years for which the students had been learning English before they reached university can pose a challenge for EFL teachers in the classroom, as mentioned in Chapters 1 and 5, because the teachers need to take into account the variability across the students' proficiency levels in the classroom. Each additional year of language education might help the students to have acquired more of the target language (TL), feel more confident about using it, and so have a higher level of proficiency (Hess, 2002). Students with one or two years less language education than their peers may face more challenges in using TL such as Saudi female students in this study. For that reason,

teachers needed to plan to address these differences in order to meet the needs of all of their learners. If teachers disregard these differences, some learners are likely to struggle with learning the language (Tomlinson, 2014).

The class observations confirmed that the students had different levels of English. Some spoke more proficiently than others did. It is possible that the differences between students' proficiency might affect the less proficient students' participation in the class and make them feel reluctant to participate. Research shows that learners' participation in their lessons is critical to their learning level (Carini et al., 2006). Some students will feel shy due to their perceived language level and avoid participating in order to avoid making errors while using the TL (Alghamdi, 2014; Bawazeer, 2015; Vermunt and Vermetten, 2004).

Learners with fewer years of language experience need help in this respect, since the setting wherein they learn already poses many challenges, as identified by the teachers: insufficient time to prepare for the examination, excessive content, an inflexible syllabus and large classes. Thus, it may not be easy for the students to use the TL without their teacher's help if they face such difficulties, because they have been used to receiving support from their teachers at school. However, the students who have studied English for longer than the others also need support from the teacher (Tomlinson, 2014). In order to interest the higher-level students and maintain their attention, it is recommended that different types of activities should be used during the lesson in order to create a positive working environment, which is all part of promoting learning (Hess, 2002). During the classroom observations, it could be seen that the students with a higher level of English were helping the other students and appeared happy to support their teachers. For example, the teacher asked the students to work in groups and write a paragraph about their favourite food. The students were seen to be working together as a team and asking each other about their ideas. If one of the students seemed to be struggling, the higher-level students helped her to form the sentences.

In the observed classes, some of the students did not appear keen to participate in class, possibly because they lacked confidence in their English level and felt shy about making errors but, with their teachers' encouragement, they often participated and could be seen using the TL. This aligns with what Harper (2007) indicated: that students participate more when they are encouraged by their teachers. The teachers in the observed classes encouraged their students to participate by choosing individuals to respond or initiating an interesting discussion, as mentioned in chapter 5. They accepted students' answers even if they made errors in the TL. For example, one of the teachers moved round the class

selecting students at random to give answers, then gave positive feedback regarding their contributions. This support from the teachers seemed designed to enable all of the students to participate and feel more confident during the lesson (Cook-Sather, 2006).

From the classroom observations, the students used English all the time in class seemingly without being afraid of making mistakes. This could be because, in the observed classes, the teachers acted as facilitators, who assisted the classroom interaction and created situations and settings that are likely to encourage communication. The interaction that took place between teachers and student and between the students themselves appeared quite normal. It did not seem as if the teachers were putting on a show in front of the observer, because the students seemed to be very familiar with the strategies that the teachers used and responded well. The coming section will discuss the students' language preferences in the classes.

### 6.3 Language Preferences in the Classroom

As illustrated in the literature review, learners in EFL classrooms prefer to use and respond to the target language in order to increase their opportunities to practise English (Al-Hazmi, 2003). As the students' mother tongue is Arabic, mother tongue interference could be a barrier to the students in learning English. The sounds in the Arabic alphabet are very different from those of English, so the students sometimes feel confused about pronouncing some of the sounds, such as "P and B" because, in Arabic, there is a single sound (Al-Nofaie, 2010). 63% of the students agreed that that they felt that they could speak Arabic during the lesson, if they felt this was necessary, 18% disagreed, 18% were neutral, and one piece of data was missing (see table 6-1 below). It may be that Arabic was used more in the classes that I did not observe, because during the classroom observations, the students used the TL all the time and Arabic was not used at all. The teachers' responses indicated that they rarely used Arabic and then only in certain situations, in order to give the students confidence and lead to a better understanding, (for example, when discussing a grammar point, when comparing English with Arabic or explaining the meaning of words) (Al-Hazmi, 2003). This also aligns somewhat with what Al Seghayer (2014) states: teachers often use Arabic, their mother tongue language in the state, when teaching and managing English classrooms. However, in this study, the teachers used Arabic rarely and they were doing their best to use the TL all the time in their classes as has been mentioned earlier.



**Table 6-1: Students response to: We can speak Arabic during the lesson if needed**

Response	Percent
Agree	63
Neutral	18
Disagree	18
Missing	1
Total	100

From the students' responses as shown on table 6-1, it seems that using Arabic during the lesson may be a common practise amongst students, as Al Abdan (1993) suggested. The teachers in the present study, as noted in chapter 5 and from the class observations, encouraged their students to use English all the time during their class and use the language for a range of diverse purposes. This contradicts the findings of other studies from Middle Eastern countries, which focus on students' responses. In this study, Arabic was seen to be used only once by one teacher when she was explaining the meaning of an abstract word that the students were unable to understand. These findings were in accordance with Franklin's (1990) view that students should be allowed to use a balance of both English and Arabic.

The exclusive use of English in the observed lessons may be because the students did not encounter any of the difficulties mentioned related to using Arabic in class, or may have felt obliged to use the TL because of the observer. It is also possible that the teachers preferred to avoid using Arabic in front of the observer. Several researchers have investigated problems experienced by EFL students in Saudi Arabia, including Rabab'ah (2003), Sultan (2003) and Liton (2012), which include first language interference in classes as well as the cultural, educational and personal inhibitions of Saudi students.

The teachers had indicated (see chapter 5) that they support their students to use English outside the class and in their daily life, when chatting with friends or engaging with media, as it is better to use English during these activities in order to help them to practise the TL and vary their use of the language according to the setting. This was reflected in the students' responses, as they generally agreed that the teachers supported them to use English outside the class: 65% agreed, 18% disagreed and 17% were neutral (see table 6-2).

**Table 0-2: The students' responses to: the teacher supports me to use English in my daily life.**

Response	Percent
Agree	65
Disagree	18
Neutral	17
Total	100

Encouraging the students to use the TL in their daily life can support them to use the TL more effectively, and learn by themselves (King, 2011). It can also help the learner to feel more confident when communicating in English and enable him/her to cope with different life situations and occupations. Moreover, it is important for EFL students to acquire contextual knowledge because it will improve not only their learning skills but also the practice of the English language both inside and out-side the classroom (Liton, 2012). The teachers in the observed classes encouraged the students to use English outside the classroom, however, there was not any evidence as to whether the students actually used English outside the classroom or not.

Teachers' support for students to use the TL in their daily life lies at the very heart of what it means to be capable of using the TL (King, 2011). With regard to their confidence communicating in English, 70% of the students said they felt confident about communicating in English, 11% did not, and 19% were neutral (see table 6-3).

**Table 6-3: Students' response to: I feel confident when communicating in English.**

Response	Percent
Agree	70
Neutral	19
Disagree	11
Total	100

This could be a result of the years that they had already spent learning English, or a result of mixing students from different levels of English and also the teachers' strategies to get them talking and using the TL. In order to investigate further possible reasons for the confidence of the majority of the students, I ran a further test and there appeared to be a correlation between the number of years they had been learning English and their professed confidence (as shown on table 6-4).

**Table 0-4: A comparison of the students' response to: I feel confident when communicating in English with years of learning English.**

Years of Learning	% Agree	% Neutral	% Disagree	Total
- 8 years.	57.9	26.3	15.8	100
8 years	75.9	17.2	6.9	100
+ 8 years	78.8	12.1	9.1	100

I did this with all my responses and found that there were some interesting results, some of which are touched on in this chapter, but which will be fully discussed in detail in chapter 7. Consequently, it could be argued that the number of years for which the students had been learning English had affected their confidence regarding using the TL, as seen in tables 6-2 and 6-3. The figures in Tables 6-2 and 6-3 indicate that the teachers in these classrooms seemed to be supporting their students well to use the TL, since the literature suggests that, if learners feel confident in class, then their language learning is likely to be enhanced (Dörnyei, 2001). The teachers in this study stated that they worked hard to reduce students' anxiety about using English. However, as can be seen above, a minority of students stated that they did not feel confident about using English.

Nonetheless, the findings of the current study suggest a far more positive classroom environment in Saudi Arabia for EFL in contrast to previous research. For example, the current study finds a higher preference for the use of English in the classroom by teachers and learners compared to Al-Nofie (2010), who found that 80% of the EFL educators and 70% of the students preferred Arabic to be used for instruction in the English classroom. Alshammari (2011) and Mahmoud (2012) similarly found that Saudi students' insufficiencies in the four basic language skills were due to the dominance of Arabic in the classroom. These findings also contradict what Franklin (1990) stated about the use of both languages in class, where the most commonly-cited causes for the continual use of Arabic in English classes were to clarify new words and explain grammatical concepts.

Al Seghayer (2014) also asserts that teachers often use Arabic, their mother tongue, when teaching English in class and they depend heavily on translations. Al Seghayer (2015) states that the most widely used methodology in Saudi Arabia is the traditional one, implying translating to and from Arabic. These studies' findings appear to differ from the current study's findings. As they relate to male teachers and students, it is possible that female students have different interests and are keener to learn a language. This aligns with Mat Teh et al.'s (2009) finding of significant gender differences in the overall use of TL, with female learners having a tendency to use the TL more often than males. They claimed that women would perform better than men on speaking and writing skills, because productive skills require active access to all of the verbal and verbal-related resources available. They found that women have a more positive attitude toward studying a foreign language than male language learners. It has been suggested that, from early childhood, females might learn to meet difficulties via social communication, whereas males may learn to meet difficulties through spatial exploration and independent achievement

(Dewaele, 2005). In addition, Tannen (1993), suggests that women are supportive in their discussions, whereas men concentrate more on the practical aspect of their conversations. In a class setting, it is proposed that males should be taught the language both visually (with a textbook), and orally (through a lecture) to get a full understanding of the topic (Tannen, 1993), while a female might be able to pick up the ideas by either method. Females might be biologically better at handling words and so might find it easier to use language than males (Tannen, 1993). Whatever the reasons were, my study showed some interesting findings that related to the interaction that takes place in English in the EFL classroom as mentioned above.

#### 6.4 Perceptions of Effective English Language Teaching and Learning Styles

In Saudi Arabia, a noted problem among students is their deficiency in communication in English (Al Seghayer, 2014). Saudi students, like many Arab students, have difficulty in expressing their ideas in English (Rababah 2003). Rababah claims that Arab speaking learners' main challenge is that they cannot transfer the grammatical structures studied in the classroom to real interaction outside the classroom. He affirms, "Students' failure in using English is related to the students' deficiencies in communicative competence and self-expression" (p. 17). However, in this study, the majority of the students indicated through the questionnaire that they felt confident about using the TL.

In the interviews, the teachers claimed that they preferred to control their students by using teacher-centred methods. However, this was countered by the observations and the students' responses regarding their teachers' guidance during the lesson, which indicated that the teachers guided their students and coached them in the skills they needed by using a student-centered approach. 71% of the students said that their teachers were coaching them during the class, 16% were neutral and 13% disagreed (see table 6-5).

**Table 6-5: Students' response to: the teacher is guiding us during the lesson.**

Response	Percent
Agree	71
Neutral	16
Disagree	13
Total	100

According to the students' responses, and from the classroom observations the teachers helped their students to increase their knowledge in order to facilitate the transfer of their learning to new settings and use their learning to address open-ended challenges, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and design, as was seen in the classroom observations.

In a learner-centered setting, McCombs and Whistler (1997) state that students are co-creators in the learning procedure, as they contribute ideas and issues that are given attention and consideration. Learner-centered settings acknowledge that the prior knowledge of learners strongly influences their future learning and thus teachers should attempt to guide the learning process by building on their prior knowledge to improve their students' learning (Cooper and Robinson, 2000). This appears to be a good way to focus on the learners which allows teachers to guide students along their learning journey and develop their awareness (Cooper and Robinson, 2000). Thus, teachers should encourage students to take control of their learning by helping them realize what they are skilled in. It could be argued that it is the teachers' responsibility to guide learners at this time to improve self-awareness.

Table 6-6 indicated that 71% of the students agreed that their teachers provided them with an explanation of what they were doing correctly, 9% disagreed and 20% were neutral (see table 6-6).

**Table 0-6: Students' response to: My teacher provides us with an explanation of what we are doing correctly and what we are doing that is not correct**

Response	Percent
Agree	71
Neutral	20
Disagree	9
Total	100

From the observations and the teachers' interviews, the teachers encouraged their students to ask questions in class. Most of the students, when observed, appeared confident and asked their teachers questions using the TL about anything that they did not understand or the tasks provided and homework. Asking questions in class not only provides students with explanations, but may also help them to gain a sense that they are taking responsibility for self-learning rather than depending on their teacher (Freiberg, 1999). The level of comfort seen regarding asking questions in the observed classes suggests a learner-centered approach and contributes to Cotton's (2001) claim that by asking questions students will improve their learning. The students, when they reach this stage and become interdependent participants are considered to be in a communicative process regarding learning and teaching. Evidence from the observations indicated that CLT approaches were used during the observed classes. As already noted, it is possible that the number of years that the students had been learning English was one of the factors that increased students' confidence to ask their teacher questions in class. Comparing students' responses to

question 10 and the number of years of learning English, 93.9% of those who had been studying English for more than 8 years agreed that they felt confident to ask their teacher questions. Of the students who had studied English for 8 years, only 55.2% felt confident to ask questions, whereas interestingly of those who had studied English for less than 8 years, a higher proportion (76.3%) felt confident to do so (see table 6-8).

#### 6.4.1 Students' Views on the Teaching Approaches

Savignon (2002) observes that educators have initiated varying approaches to teaching language. However, as times and settings change a fashionable technique is rejected and becomes no longer appropriate to a specific time or setting. In the following section, the students' views of the teaching approaches used in their classroom and how these were organised will be discussed according to their responses to the questionnaire.

The majority of the students (76%) stated that they felt free to ask the teacher questions during class. This could be said to show how confident the students were. Only 9% felt unconfident and 15% were neutral (see table 6-7).

**Table 6-7: Students' response to: I feel free to ask my teacher a question**

Response	Percent
Agree	76
Neutral	15
Disagree	9
Total	100

From the observations and the teachers' interviews, the teachers encouraged their students to ask questions in class. Most of the students, when observed, appeared confident and asked their teachers questions using the TL about anything that they did not understand or the tasks provided and homework. Asking questions in class not only provides students with explanations but may also help them to gain a sense that they are taking responsibility for self-learning rather than depending on their teacher (Freiberg, 1999). The level of the students comfort in asking questions in the class was seen in the observed and it contributes to Cotton's (2001) claim that by asking questions students will improve their learning. The students, when they reach this stage and become interdependent participants are considered to be in a communicative process regarding learning and teaching. Evidence from the observations indicated that CLT approaches were used during the observed classes. As already noted, it is possible that the number of years that the students had been learning English was one of the factors that increased students' confidence to ask their

teacher questions in class. Comparing students' responses to question 10 and the number of years of learning English 93.9% of those who had been studying English for more than 8 years agreed that they felt confident to ask their teacher questions. However, 55.2% of the students who had studied English for 8 years felt confident to ask questions, whereas interestingly of those who had studied English for less than 8 years, a higher proportion (76.3%) felt confident to do so (see table 6-8).

**Table 0-8: A comparison of the students' response to: I feel free to ask my teacher a question with years of learning English.**

<b>Years of Learning</b>	<b>% Agree</b>	<b>% Neutral</b>	<b>% Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>- 8 years.</b>	76.3	13.2	10.5	100
<b>8 years</b>	55.2	31	13.8	100
<b>+ 8 years</b>	93.9	3	3	100

It might have been expected that those with fewer years of exposure to English learning would be more reluctant to speak out in class; however, this was not the case. The relatively high figure for those students with less than 8 years' experience of English language learning may have been because the students were aware that they had less experience of learning and wished to catch up, however, without interviewing the students it remains unclear if this was indeed the case. Nonetheless, it could be argued that the collaborative atmosphere that the teachers had created as part of the teaching and learning process enabled students to ask for clarification about points of language.

One of the interesting techniques that was used by all the teachers during the observed classes was the 'warm up stage'. All five of the observed teachers agreed on the importance of warming up their students before starting the lesson. According to Robertson and Acklam (2000), a "warm up is a short activity at the beginning of lesson" (p.30). A warm up stage is an introductory step that helps learners to feel comfortable and establishes a confident setting for learning (Rushidi, 2013). Velandia (2008) believes that warm ups are diverse kinds of activities that help the learners to start thinking in English, recall previously introduced resources and become interested in the lesson.

From the questionnaire, 65% of the students stated that the teachers assisted them to recall what they had learned previously, 24% were neutral and 11% disagreed (see table 6-9).

The use of a warm up activity allows the teachers to collect evidence of the overall student readiness to start the lesson. Additionally, it permits the students to establish a context for the lesson and offers teachers an excellent chance to focus on several sources of knowledge in order to make teaching more meaningful to the students (Hattie and Yates, 2014). However, the number agreeing dropped, which indicates that the students may not have recognised the teachers' aim to stimulate recall.

**Table 6-9: Students' response to: the teacher helps me to recall what I learned previously and use it in the class.**

Response	Percent
Agree	65
Neutral	24
Disagree	11
Total	100

It seems that over a third of the students did not agree. However, many of the students seemed to be unaware that they were reusing and recycling language. The findings in table 6-10 show that 68.4% of the students who had studied English for less than 8 years agreed that their teacher was helping them to recall what they had learned previously and use it in class. 75.5% of the students, who had studied English for more than 8 years also agreed with this response, whereas 51.7% of those who had studied English for 8 years agreed and they seemed the least likely to agree perhaps for the reason mentioned above. However, during the observed classes, most of the students seemed happy to respond when the teacher asked them about what they had learned before and appeared to express confidence in using the TL.

**Table 6-10: Comparing Students' response to: the teacher helps me to recall what I learned previously and use it in class with years of learning English.**

Years of Learning	% Agree	% Neutral	% Disagree	Total
- 8 years.	68.4	21.1	10.5	100
8 years	51.7	37.9	10.3	100
+ 8 years	75.5	15.2	9.1	100

Conversely, many warm up activities have been found to be unsuccessful in helping students, as the organization of the language of the warm up activities may seem dissimilar to the language organization in the students' minds, which may hinder effective language learning (Nemati andand Habibi, 2012). It is therefore essential that the activity used for students be connected to their cognitive target as was seen in some of the observed classes.



Some warm up activities, which revisit previously learned language or structures might be unsuccessful in helping students, as the association of the language of the warm up activities appears different to the language association in the students' minds.

The students who were neutral and disagreed may have been unable to discern that the teacher was actually assisting them to recall what they had learned previously, or may have thought that she was simply completing the previous lesson. Moreover, it is possible that the students were unable to understand the purpose of this question in the questionnaire. Saunders et al. (2003) claims that some questions in questionnaires might not be understood easily by the participants.

When the students were asked if their teachers explained to them what would happen at the beginning of the lesson, 76% agreed, 13% were neutral and 11% disagreed (see table 6-11).

**Table 0-11: Students' response to: at the beginning of the lesson, the teacher explains what we will do.**

Response	Percent
Agree	76
Neutral	13
Disagree	11
Total	100

The level of disagreement with this statement was the same as for the previous question. It may be these were the same students, who were assessing one of the teachers in a specific class but, as the questionnaire included 100 students from different classes and they did not specify the teacher that they had and which class they were from, it was impossible to identify if indeed they were the same students, as the responses were anonymous, in accordance with the ethical guidelines. From the observations, all of the teachers explained to the students what they had planned for the class at the beginning of the lesson. Some of the students were seen telling each other that the teacher would explain the simple present tense, for example.

Joshi's findings showed that, when learners are told at the beginning of the class which information and skills they will gain, their attainment level would be high (Joshi, 2006). Students who are aware of the topic of the lesson may also be more inclined to participate with the teacher, as seen in the observed classes. From the teachers' statements in interviews and the observations, it was clear that they encouraged their students to participate in class and welcomed any participation from them that was related to the topic. The responses to the two questions about student participation in class showed that 74% of

the students agreed that their teachers give them the chance to think up new ideas and share them with the class, 14% were neutral and 12% disagreed (see table 6-12).

**Table 6-12: Students' response to: we have an opportunity to think about new ideas and practice**

Response	Percent
Agree	74
Neutral	14
Disagree	12
Total	100

It seemed from the observations that the teachers were happy to listen to their students' opinions about a topic and gave them opportunities to contribute new information. For instance, some students in one of the observed classes were able to share their knowledge about other educational systems in other countries. The majority of the students in the observed classes took on a positive, participatory role. They seemed to appreciate each other's contributions, which could be considered to be an element of a student-centered approach.

Table 6-13 showed that 70% of the students agreed that their teachers gave them an opportunity to share their own experiences and opinions about the topic of the lesson, 17% were neutral, 12% disagreed and one piece of data was missing. Giving them a chance to share their opinions and exchange their knowledge can help to create self-belief among the students in their own skills and ability to communicate confidently with each other (Brophy, 1998).

**Table 6-13: Students' response to: we have a chance to share our own experiences and ideas about the topic of the lesson.**

Response	percent
Agree	70
Neutral	17
Disagree	12
Missing	1
Total	100

For both questions (see tables 6-11, 6-12 and 6-13), 12% of the students disagreed with the two statements; the same number of students who replied negatively in the previous statements were probably not all the same 12% of the students who responded negatively

to these statements. In accordance with the ethical guidelines, it was impossible to identify the students, as they were anonymous, and the questionnaire included 100 students from different classes and they did not specify which class they were from or which teacher they had. It was noted in the observed lessons that certain students were not participating; possibly due to shyness or disengagement from the topic. However, the majority seemed happy and confident when they had a chance to share their own experiences and views about the topic of the lesson.

The cooperation that happens in the classroom indicates that all of the students, not just the teachers, may have some element of power. Rather than the traditional methods, where the teacher is the only source of class control, a relationship of joint power between most learners and educators now exists, as the findings of this study also suggest. Pauly (1991) suggests that, "Reciprocal power exists in a group when each member achieves a degree of control over the others and is simultaneously subject to control by them" (p. 57). Awareness of different ideas and information through class discussion can be viewed as necessary in understanding the new topics presented in the class. When the students were encouraged to introduce information of their own choice, it was obvious in the classroom observation that they felt confident when contributing their own experiences and understandings. As McNiff and Whitehead (2002) claim, when students feel free to participate, this will strengthen their commitment, and commitment often engenders confidence. It seemed that their university teachers were trying hard to build an effective communicative learning setting. Such a setting needs a great deal of comprehensible input from the teacher, but it is also important that learners become producers of the language. From the above, it can be concluded that most students recognised that teachers were helping their students to engage in classroom interaction with a communicative purpose.

#### 6.4.2 Interactive Learning and Communicative Approaches

In this section, the students' views of interactive approaches will be presented, focusing on the following two points: collaborative work (that is, pair and group work) and teachers' feedback and motivational efforts.

##### 6.4.2.1 Pair and Group Work

As stated in the literature review, group work is a method of interactive learning in which a number of people work together to complete a certain activity or accomplish a certain learning aim (Adams and Hamm, 1990). According to Wasley (2006), "Students who participate in collaborative learning and educational activities outside the classroom and who interact more with faculty members get better grades, are more satisfied with their

education, and are more likely to remain in college” (p. 39). In the questionnaire data, the students’ responses about working in-group or individually were identified. When they were asked whether they preferred working individually or in groups, their answers were 62% of the students stating that they preferred to work individually, 25% being neutral and 13% disagree working on their own (see table 6-14).

**Table 6-14: Students’ response to: I prefer to work on my own**

Response	Percent
Agree	62
Neutral	25
Disagree	13
Total	100

However, when the students were asked if they liked to work in groups, 37% agreed, 35% were neutral and 28% preferred to work individually (see table 6-15).

**Table 0-15: Students’ response to: I do like to work in groups**

Response	Percent
Agree	37
Neutral	35
Disagree	28
Total	100

The findings for these two questions showed that there was a clear contradiction within the students’ answers, as 62% indicated that they prefer to work individually, but only 28% disagreed that they liked working in groups (see tables 6-14 and 6-15). When the students were observed, they seemed happy to work together in pairs or groups and none of the students refused to work together. After the questionnaires had been completed, there was some informal conversation with the students about the research study and it became clear that they like to work together under certain conditions. For example, it appears that if they thought that the teacher was going to assess every student individually and give each student a mark, then they thought that it was fair to work in groups (Davis, 1993). Researchers suggest that, if group members’ work is to be graded as a whole, the task or presentation should not count for more than a small percentage of each learner’s final grade (Cooper, 1990; Johnson et al, 1991). From the informal conversations, students liked to work in groups together but because the questionnaire comprised closed questions, the students were not able to give their opinion on the question and were not able to give more

information or reasons about their answer that could have illuminated their overall thinking.

This might be aligned with the students' views that it is better for the teacher to grade each student individually or make the group work grade count for only a small percentage of their final grade. Moreover, the students stated that they preferred to choose their own fellow group members, but this has some disadvantages. Self-selected groups often drift towards friends and colleagues (Csernica et al., 2002), which can result in learners self-segregating and spending more time chatting than working on the group project (Cooper, 1990). Research suggests that groups that are allocated by the teacher tend to perform better than self-selected groups (Felder and Brent, 2001). In this study, the observations revealed that, in some classes the teachers allocated the groups (this happened in the speaking and listening subjects), but in most of the classes the teachers asked the students to select their own groups. The groups that were chosen by the teacher performed better than those whom the students allocated.

From the literature, it seems that group work could address the problem of the different levels that the teachers and the students had identified, simply because of the number of students involved, each with different experiences, knowledge, opinions and values; thus, a larger number and diversity of ideas for solving a problem can be discussed. The exchange of ideas can act as a stimulus to the imagination, encouraging individuals to explore ideas they would not otherwise have considered. Generally, effective learner contributions during group work results in significant learning, as it can help to solve the problem of the students' different levels (Johnson et al, 1991, 2007). Even if many learners feel that they could complete tasks better by themselves rather than in a group, teachers find that group work supports the students to apply their knowledge (Johnson et al, 1991, 2007). This may also correspond with what was mentioned previously in section 6.2 that focused on the students' different levels and previous experience, that weaker students could be supported and stronger students could consolidate their learning through working together.

As far back as the 1980s, Long and Porter (1985) recommended that students should be involved in more discussions for meaning in small groups than in teacher-centred, whole-class settings. However, some groups may lack motivation, strong leadership, or simply have personality conflicts. 48% of the students agreed that it is easy to work in a group and agree on one answer, 27% disagreed and 25% were neutral (see table 6-16).

**Table 0-16: Students' response to: it is easy to agree on one answer or idea with my group**

Response	Percent
Agree	48
Neutral	25
Disagree	27
Total	100

48% of the students said they were happy to work in groups and appeared able to agree on one solution in their group to maximize their own and each other's learning, but over half of them disagreed or were equivocal about whether it was easy to agree on one idea and answer within their group. This might be due to different reasons; perhaps one student in the group might dominate the discussion, rendering the other members dissatisfied and isolated regarding the decision taken. Alternatively, they might be afraid of receiving low grades if they felt that the quality of the group's product was not of a high enough standard. Additionally, it might be that some students may have stayed neutral because they did not want to appear critical because of the Saudi conventions regarding politeness. Since the questionnaires included closed questions only, lacked much interesting data from the students and did not provide any qualitative responses as it included questions only. It could not illuminate their overall thinking, which resulted in speculation. The possibility of using these findings as a base for future research could occasion a much richer understanding of the students' views.

One method for avoiding conflict because of group members who do not contribute is to keep the groups small (Davis, 1993). In addition, the corresponding work task should support the students to work together as a team and share their answers and opinions (Freeman and Greenacre, 2011). It is also helpful for the students to work in groups, become involved in disagreements, and find solutions by explaining their views and thoughts to the other group members (Freeman and Greenacre, 2011). According to the responses to the questionnaire, 60% of the students agreed that it was easy for them to explain their opinion to the group, while 23% disagreed and 17% were neutral (see table 6-17).

**Table 6-17: Students' response to: it is easy to explain my thoughts or opinions to the group**

Response	Percent
Agree	60
Neutral	17
Disagree	23
Total	100

However, table 6-16 shows that over half of the students indicated that it might not be easy for them to share one answer or idea when working in groups. As indicated by the responses set out in table 6-17, most of the students said they were confident within their groups and were able to explain their thoughts easily to the other group members. However, 23% disagreed, and it was noted in the class observations that some students appeared to be relying on the other members of the group, remaining silent most of the time. This perhaps could be attributed to the differences of the students' level of English. As illustrated in table 6-18, 63.21% of the students who had studied English for 8 years or less agreed that they were able to explain their ideas to their group easily, but only 57.6% of the students who had studied English for more than 8 years agreed, possibly because their English level is higher than the other students. It is possible that they were bored and felt that others did not understand them. It seems counterintuitive that better English speakers find it more difficult and it may be that their greater exposure to English learning before the students come on the course does not necessarily mean that they are better communicators in English. Research on the use of group work in education supports the view that students who participate in group work exchange either academic or group knowledge and learn from each other. Group knowledge indicates learning how to work in groups (Gillies and Boyle, 2011; Payne et al., 2004).

**Table 6-18: Comparison with the students' response to: it is easy to explain my thoughts or opinions to the group with years of learning English.**

<b>Years of Learning</b>	<b>% Agree</b>	<b>% Neutral</b>	<b>% Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>- 8 years.</b>	63.21	18.4	18.4	100
<b>8 years</b>	58.6	13.8	27.6	100
<b>+ 8 years</b>	57.6	18.2	24.2	100

They might find it difficult to explain their thoughts to their group or feel unwilling to embarrass their group members by using a higher level of English, as mentioned previously in chapter 5. Such a reason would be in line with Beebe and Masterson's (2003) theory that there may be pressure from the group to adopt the majority opinion, as shown before in table 6-13. Some students dislike conflict and attempt to prevent it whenever possible (Masterson, 2003). In this study, this can be linked to the Saudi culture of politeness and avoidance of disagreement between each other and the teacher and the

perceived need for respect for the teacher. By readily acceding to the majority view, the individual can come to an agreement in order to avoid conflict, but may feel alienated from the decision-making procedure, which explains the relatively large minority who disagreed with the statement in table 6-18 or remained neutral.

Regarding knowledge exchange, 55% of the students agreed that they were able to exchange their knowledge and experience easily when working together, 21% disagreed, and 24% were neutral (see table 6-19). While it is impossible to assign a definite meaning to these responses, it is possible that in a group situation they felt less confident or under pressure from more dominant members of the group, as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

**Table 6-19: Students' response to: I can exchange my knowledge and experience easily when working together**

Response	Percent
Agree	55
Neutral	24
Disagree	21
Total	100

Despite more positive responses to other parts of the questionnaire, group work seemed to divide the students. 45% of the students indicated that they did not agree that they were able to exchange their ideas with others, even though, in the observed classes, the teachers were seen to encourage their students to work together and exchange ideas. For example, in the listening and speaking class, the students were seen to be working together to create a presentation about the traditional food of a chosen country. The students exchanged their knowledge by sharing their opinions about the traditional food in the country that they had chosen to speak about and seemed to be working cooperatively. One of the students in one of the groups was talking to her group members about her visit to China and the traditional food there. She said she did like to try the food and she liked some of their traditional food. The members of the group were interested and started asking her about the kind of food that she had tried.

From the findings above and the literature, a variety of academic and social benefits of group work is documented. In addition, by working together, the students may feel independent and responsible for their teaching and learning strategies (Gillies and Boyle, 2011). The majority of the students (65%) indicated that they felt more responsible when working in groups, while 13% disagreed and 22% were neutral (see table 6-20). In the observations, the students supported each other if any problems or questions arose during



the lesson, rather than asking their teacher for support or advice, trying to resolve the difficulty themselves. They sought the help of the teacher only after they had tried to find the answer themselves, in pairs or groups.

**Table 6-20: Students response to: I feel more responsible when working together**

Response	Percent
Agree	65
Neutral	22
Disagree	13
Total	100

In informal conversations after the questionnaires had been completed, many of the students said that working in a group facilitated their learning, either academic knowledge, collaborative skills or both, therefore confirming previous research (Johnson et al, 2007; Gillies and Boyle, 2011) and the questionnaire responses of the majority of students.

However, even if the students responded that they were able to exchange knowledge, 45% of them suggested that working together was a waste of time, 36% thought the opposite and were happy working together and 19% were neutral (See table 6-21).

**Table 0-21: Students' response to: it is a waste of time explaining the task to others.**

Response	Percent
Agree	45
Neutral	19
Disagree	36
Total	100

It is possible that the 45% of the students who said that group work was a waste of time might have had difficulties in contributing their ideas or, alternatively, had been placed in groups where there were some tensions regarding the exchange of ideas in the group, resulting in conflict between the students or some students opting out, as mentioned before. It may also be that in the prevailing traditional methodological culture, with high stakes exams on the horizon, the students also felt that nothing other than transmission teaching and rote learning was valuable to them.

The review of the literature highlighted that along with the advantages of group work, it is important to note that there are also some negative features that may be related to group work. For instance, McGraw and Tidwell (2001) state that learners must often deal with challenging concerns, such as: students getting marks without doing equal work, poor communication, and a lack of leadership. These disadvantages are seen also in the

students' responses in this study and could be a reason the majority said they prefer working individually rather in pairs or groups and feel it is a waste of time trying to explain or discuss the task.

#### *6.4.2.2. Motivation and Feedback*

Hattie (2012) has written widely about the power of feedback and the significance of feedback with regard to the motivation of learners. As was mentioned earlier, according to Hattie, feedback has one of the most powerful impacts on learning. In the students' responses, 74% stated that the teachers in this study gave them helpful comments about their work that enabled them to improve their English, whereas 11% disagreed, 13% were neutral and two answers were missing (see table 6-22).

**Table 6-22: Students' response to: I get helpful comments from my teacher to improve my English**

Response	Percent
Agree	74
Neutral	13
Disagree	11
Missing	2
Total	100

This finding can be combined with the observations and teachers' responses, both of which indicated that the teachers provided helpful feedback about the students' work that could create a more motivated, engaged group of learners. For instance, in the writing class, the teacher was seen to be giving formative comments to her students. In class, the teacher wrote a paragraph on the board together with her students. She formed the paragraph from her students' sentences and corrected errors by giving them examples and helpful comments, but without drawing attention to individual students.

In addition, table 6-23 indicated that 62.1% of the students who had studied English for 8 years agreed that they received helpful comments from their teachers that improve their English, whereas 76.3% of the students who had studied English for less than 8 years agreed and 81.8% of the students who had studied English for more than 8 years agreed that they received helpful comments from their teacher to improve their English (see table 6-23). It was clear from the observed classes that the students requested their teachers' feedback about their work.

**Table 6-23: A comparison of the students' response to: I get helpful comments from my teacher to improve my English with years of learning English.**

<b>Years of Learning</b>	<b>% Agree</b>	<b>% Neutral</b>	<b>% Disagree</b>	<b>% missing</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>- 8 years.</b>	76.3	5.4	16.2	2.6	100
<b>8 years</b>	62.1	27.6	6.9	3.4	100
<b>+ 8 years</b>	81.8	9.1	9.1		100

As clarified in the literature, immediate feedback is important for ensuring that students are engaged in the lesson rather than feeling bored. Feedback offers information that supports students to improve or rethink different types of knowledge, approaches and beliefs that are linked to the learning aims (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). In relation to this, 52% of the students agreed that their teacher allowed them to copy the answers immediately from the board. For example, in one of the observed classes, the grammar teacher wrote the correct answers on the board after discussing the homework task together, and then asked her students immediately to copy down the answers from the board.

The teachers argued that it helped students to reinforce their understanding and ensure they did not repeat incorrect language structures or vocabulary. In Saudi learning culture, it is also deemed useful to have a note of correct language for revision purposes, as the examination is such a strong driving force for learning. However, 18% disagreed and 30% felt neutral (see table 6-24).

**Table 6-24: Students' response to: during the class, our teacher allows us to copy the answers from the board immediately**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agree	52
Neutral	30
Disagree	18
Total	100

In addition, 66% of the students revealed that their teacher marked their work immediately after the lesson, 14% were neutral and 20% disagreed (see table 6-25).

**Table 6-25: Students' response to: my teacher marks my work immediately after each lesson**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agree	66
Neutral	14
Disagree	20
Total	100

From the observations and the teachers' interviews, it was clear that the teachers tried to give the students feedback as soon as possible about their work in class or their assignments. However, one third of the students stated that their teacher did not mark their work immediately, so it is possible that all the teachers did not always give their students feedback immediately or that the students received face-to-face oral feedback from their teacher. It has been noted that speaking to someone in person can make it much easier to motivate him or her and can be much more effective for those who struggle with written feedback (Hattie, 2012), although it may not have been recognised by the students as 'marking work'.

Feedback must be given to the students by the teacher or each other in an appropriate way and with the specificity needed to support the student to control effectively the next steps in learning.

The majority of the students (60%) agreed that their teachers involved them in practical activities to help them to understand the task, while 23% disagreed and 17% were neutral (see table 6-26). As 23% of the students disagreed with this response, it is possible that they disliked doing interactive exercises or had other reasons, as mentioned previously regarding the students' responses. Since the questionnaire, as mentioned above, comprised closed questions, it did not provide any qualitative responses, which could have illuminated the overall responses. It was also impossible to identify which subject or teacher the students might be talking about, as it was an anonymous questionnaire with no indicators for each subject area.

**Table 0-26: The students' response to: the teacher involves us in practical exercises to help us to understand the task**

Response	Percent
Agree	60
Neutral	17
Disagree	23
Total	100

Individual perceptions as expressed in questionnaires without qualitative supporting data must always be viewed critically, as each person's perception of a particular situation may be different from another's. Therefore, it is important to reiterate that the questionnaires, while very helpful in supporting the interview and observation data, can only reflect general themes regarding students' perceptions.

Asking questions, seeking opinions, involving the students in practical tasks as mentioned by the teachers, are examples of active classroom participation that were supported by the students' responses in the questionnaire. This supports the argument that the teachers used elements of CLT without realising they were doing so, as they employed a number of different strategies to meet the students' learning needs. According to Davis (2009), students' eagerness and willingness to contribute in class via oral engagement will produce a positive classroom setting. In the observed classrooms, when students appeared uninterested in the topic the teachers linked the topic to the students' daily life, then asked the seemingly uninterested students to participate and give their opinion about the Saudi education system, for example. By relating the topic to students' life experiences, their teacher worked to personalise the topic, thus drawing them in. Research has shown that learners are more engaged when they feel that what they are learning is linked to life outside the classroom as this will equip them with practical skills to address topics that are related and appropriate to their life outside the classroom (Chamot, 1999).

Peer feedback is an effective educational approach to teach learners the skills of critical thinking, giving and receiving feedback and taking responsibility for their own learning (Brookhart, 2008). It is more effective when it complements teacher feedback, peer tutoring, collaborative learning, meta-cognition and self-regulation (Brookhart, 2008; Hattie and Timperely, 2007). In the classroom observations, some of the teachers asked the students to work together to correct each other and write comments about their partner's work. Of the students, 62% agreed that this took place, while 20% disagreed and 18% were neutral (see table 6-27). This was mostly observed in the writing and speaking classes, so it is possible that the 20% of students who disagreed were focusing on the grammar class.

**Table 0-27: The students' responses to: my teacher encourages us to correct each other's mistakes while working in groups.**

Response	Percent
Agree	62
Neutral	18
Disagree	20
Total	100

Moreover, 61% of the students agreed that they liked to receive comments and feedback from their partner or group, while 17% disagreed, 21% were neutral and one piece of data was missing (see table 6-28). Peer feedback offers benefits not only to the learner receiving the feedback but also to the learner giving it. Learners usually experience peer feedback as a non-threatening procedure that enhances their learning by receiving recommendations

from their peers about how to develop their work and assisting them to understand the principles that will be used to assess their work (Wood and Kurzel, 2008).

**Table 6-28: The students’ response to: I like to receive comments from my group**

Response	Percent
Agree	61
Neutral	21
Disagree	17
Missing	1
Total	100

From the findings, it appears that feedback may be comforting for most of the students, and could help them to feel more confident. As seen in the observed classes, when the teacher gave formative feedback to the students, they seemed to become more confident about their answers and participated more. The degree of confidence that learners have in their teacher’s responses can affect their receptivity to and seeking of feedback. Therefore, personal feedback, such as “Good girl” or “Great effort,” naturally expresses positive evaluations, which will encourage the students to work harder and improve their learning (Hawkins and Heflin, 2011).

Accordingly, 70% of the students agreed that the teachers gave praise or motivational comments, while 10% disagreed and 20% were neutral (see table 6-29). In the observed classes, the teachers used encouraging language towards the students by saying “great job,” “well done,” etc. However, it should also be noted that praise might be counterproductive and have negative consequences on learners’ self-evaluation of their capacity if overused or not focused on a particular learning outcome (Hawkins and Heflin, 2011).

**Table 6-29: The students’ responses to: my teacher motivates our efforts to work hard by saying, ‘I appreciate your hard work,’ ‘Well done,’ ‘Great’, ‘Good job,’ etc.**

Response	Percent
Agree	70
Neutral	20
Disagree	10
Total	100

Praise statements, in which there is an absence of a particular account of student behaviour in obvious terms, can also fail to give learners performance feedback that will enable them to control their learning. For instance, a praise statement, such as “Good job!,” while welcomed as positive encouragement is considered insufficient because it lacks a behavioural explanation (Hawkins and Heflin, 2011). In contrast, such a statement turns

out to be suitable when extended to contain a behavioural component, such as: "You located eight strong source documents for your essay. Good job!" (Hawkins and Heflin, 2011). Student confidence is a significant feature of educational achievement. Thus, building confidence in learners is one of the most significant steps that teachers and parents can take to create an atmosphere for learning, since when a student lacks self-esteem he/she may lose the motivation to learn. In the observed classes, the students appeared to be confident and it could be argued that this was because of the teachers' creation of a positive learning ethos in the class.

#### 6.4.3 The students' perception of the textbook

As mentioned in the literature review, textbooks are an important element of most language programs. In some settings, including the context of this study, they form the basis for much of the language input that students access and the language practice that takes place in the classroom (Cunningsworth, 1995). The textbook for the students in this study, was the main basis of the interaction in the language, apart from the input provided by the teacher.

It has been stated in chapter 5 that some of the teachers indicated that they thought that the chosen textbooks were good but that certain conditions decreased their efficacy level. The teachers' views were not similar to the students' answers, as only 52% of the students liked the textbook, 22% disagreed and 26% were neutral (see table 6-30).

**Table 6-30: The students' response to: I like my textbook**

Response	Percent
Agree	52
Neutral	26
Disagree	22
Total	100

From Chapter 5, it is clear that all five teachers were happy with the textbook, despite the weaknesses mentioned. The teachers who were teaching grammar, listening and speaking thought that the recommended textbook was good and benefitted the taught level. However, the writing teachers were dissatisfied with their textbook and indicated that it was not sufficient for the early students' level. Therefore, one could speculate that the 22% of the students who disliked their textbook might be from the writing class, agreeing with their teacher's view about the textbook. The teacher may have transmitted this to her students unconsciously; for example, she might have said something about the textbook regarding thinking about a topic or task. In addition, another reason for the relatively low

approval rating of the textbooks by the students may be that they do not reflect the students' Saudi culture or the fact that the same textbook is used for male and female students. Students may not be able to relate to certain important concepts in the textbook. These causes will be discussed further in reference to the following tables.

As shown in Table 6-31, 58% of the students preferred doing the tasks in the textbook together with their classmates, 25% disagreed and 17% were neutral.

**Table 6-31: Students' response to: I prefer to do the tasks of the textbook together with my classmates**

Response	Percent
Agree	58
Neutral	17
Disagree	25
Total	100

This finding contradicts what they revealed when asked about working in groups, as 62% of them stated that they preferred working on their own (see section 6.4.2.1). The paradox might be because the students in the observed classes felt more confident when working together to complete the tasks in the textbook, as they knew that their teacher would not assist them and grade them while working on tasks in the textbook in a group (Cunningsworth, 1995). Relying on the textbook alone may not be the best way of teaching English communicatively (McWhorter, 2001). However, the organisation of the textbook could be considered the main guide for the teachers to use communicative activities, as mentioned by the teachers (see chapter 5).

The textbooks in this study had not been chosen by the teachers, but were selected by the university. From the textbook analysis in chapter 4, and the teachers' responses in chapter 5, some of the topics were unrelated to the students' interests and were not considered easy. This is shown by the students' responses when asked whether the textbook was easy, as only 47% agreed that the topics and language in the textbooks (such as favourite food and the education system) were easy, 27% disagreed and 26% were neutral (see table 6-32).

**Table 6-32: Students' response to: the topics in textbook are easy**

Response	Percent
Agree	47
Disagree	27
Neutral	26
Total	100



Table 6-33 showed that 60% of the students agreed that the topics found in the textbook, such as Iceland and sports were understandable, 21% were neutral and 19% disagreed (see table 6-34). According to these two findings, although the majority of students found the textbook topics understandable, they did not find them easy, possibly because they could not relate the vocabulary or the topics to their situation. This could be explained by what the observation showed: that the students understood the topics but might face some difficulties with the vocabulary used to describe the topics, as it was not relevant to their language use in everyday life.

**Table 6-33: Students' response to: the topics in textbook are understandable**

Response	Percent
Agree	60
Neutral	21
Disagree	19
Total	100

Table 6-34 showed that 52% of the students agreed that the topics in the textbook were interesting and meaningful, whereas 25% disagreed and 23% were neutral.

**Table 6-34: Students' response to: the topics in textbook are interesting and meaningful**

Response	Percent
Agree	52
Neutral	23
Disagree	25
Total	100

From the textbook analysis in chapter 4 and the teachers' views in chapter 5, it seems that the topics in the textbooks did not match the students' interests or reflect their daily lives, as mentioned previously, with the example of the mysterious island topic. 25% of the students stated that the topics in the textbook were not interesting or meaningful to them. It is acknowledged in the literature that students require to be exposed to language that is demonstrative of the actual language employed by the users of that language, so using real examples related to the students' everyday life may help learners to engage with the topics provided (Cunningsworth, 1995). It can be noted that, because of their experience of learning the TL for more than 8 years, 52.9% of the students indicated that the topics in the textbook were easy, understandable and meaningful. Moreover, 54.4% of the students who had studied English for less than 8 years agreed that the used textbooks were easy, understandable and meaningful. However, 62.1% of the students who agreed with these statements had studied English for 8 years (see table 6-35). This indicates that the high-

level students did not find the textbook as usable as those who had studied English for 8 or less years.

**Table 6-35: A comparison of the students' response to: the topics in textbook are easy, understandable, interesting and meaningful with years of learning English**

Years of Learning	% Agree	% Neutral	% Disagree	Total
- 8 years.	54.4	25.4	20.2	100
8 years	62.1	27.6	6.9	100
+ 8 years	52.9	20.7	26.4	100

From the textbook analysis and the teachers' responses, it was clear that the textbooks do not reflect the students' culture and are unrelated to it. The students' perceptions were similar to those of the teachers. According to the students, only 37% agreed that the topics in the textbook were related to their culture, while 33% were neutral and 29% disagreed (see table 6-36).

**Table 6-36: Students' response to: the topics in the textbook are related to my culture**

Response	Frequency
Agree	37
Neutral	33
Disagree	29
Total	100

The students who agreed that the topics in the textbook related to their culture might have considered the way in which their teachers presented these topics in order to reflect the students' culture as much as possible, as the teachers claimed. During informal conversation with the students, some of them indicated that some of the topics were related to Saudi culture while others were not. As a result, they might have been unable to make a clear response to this question.

The teachers stated (see chapter 5) that they worked hard to integrate the topics in the textbook with their students' culture by introducing different cultures to their students and comparing them. For example, in one of the observed classes, the topic was about working and finding a job in the UK. The teacher started asking the students about their opinions about working and the job system in Saudi Arabia; the students were happy to give their views and thus started comparing the job system in Saudi Arabia with other countries' career structures. The students engaged with the teacher and appeared confident about using the TL. Following their responses to the familiar cultural references, the teacher introduced the new topic to her students. Of the students, 60% agreed that they gained

knowledge about the other cultures introduced in their textbook, whereas 15% disagreed and 25% were neutral (see table 6-37).

**Table 6-37: Students' response to: I gain more ideas about the different cultures introduced in the textbook**

Response	Percent
Agree	60
Neutral	25
Disagree	15
Total	100

This finding corresponds with the recommendation in the literature that language teachers should enhance cultural awareness to create an intercultural debate in the classroom (Alptekin, 2002). The integration of culture into language teaching is a condition that permits general humanistic knowledge (Alptekin, 2002). If the effective integration of the foreign culture takes place, students of English as a second language will be able to perform flexibly and reasonably according to the social standards that they encounter within the TL culture (Alptekin, 2002).

## 6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the students' perceptions of different aspects of the CLT approach in the context of Saudi Arabia are discussed. The chapter has presented the students' responses to questions: about the textbook, the way their teachers taught them English, and what they liked. These responses informed the researcher's interpretation of how they perceived CLT approaches and also other teaching strategies. The chapter also focused on the students' background and prior knowledge of the TL, and aimed to establish whether the background of the years of learning English had any impact on certain responses and preferences. This will be discussed in chapter 7.

The findings were based on the students' responses to the questionnaire, supported by the classroom observation, to produce as accurate as possible a picture of the classroom and their roles and perceived roles within it. Since the questionnaires included closed questions only, it did not solicit any qualitative responses, which could have illuminated the students' overall responses. Moreover, the questionnaire was designed to investigate particular areas of teaching and learning but did not take into account the fact that there might be differences in the responses depending on which subject or class the students were drawn from. These are some of the recognised limitations of the questionnaire, but nonetheless, it

did give a clear picture of the general trends of student beliefs regarding the way they were taught English.

Results from the questionnaires showed that 70% of the Saudi students felt confident about using the TL throughout their English classes, even if they did encounter some difficulties. The students tended to agree strongly that they wished to avoid using the Arabic language in class even if they indicated in table 6-1 that they were able to use the Arabic language during the class. This could be due to their teachers' encouragement to use the TL during the whole class and giving them tasks to do outside class after their lessons. This appears to have led the majority of students to appreciate the need to engage with English both during class and outside it.

Moreover, this chapter also discussed the students' perceptions of effective English language teaching and learning styles. The students indicated in their responses that the teachers in their classes used the CLT approach and this was supported by the classroom observations. However, although the teachers (see chapter 5) indicated that they wished to avoid using the CLT approach in their classes, they were observed to be using this approach in their classes and the students' responses endorsed what the observations showed. From the classroom observation, in this study, it seems that the teachers preferred to use teacher-centered activities when the noise levels increased. However, the students' responses regarding their teachers' guidance during the lesson indicated that the teachers were coaching them and scaffolding their learning in the skills they needed in order to perform successfully by using a student-centered approach. Nonetheless, from their responses, some of the students clearly preferred the teacher-centered methods. This may be because of the students' educational background and the use of the teacher-centered methods for many years in schools. Deckert (2004), Al-Hazmi (2003) and Rababah (2003) attribute students' inability to communicate in English to the methods used in the teaching and learning environment. However, from the observations, the students spoke English quite confidently and the majority did not appear reluctant to use it to communicate with others in the class and the teacher. This might be a result of the teachers' motivation to be most effective for their students and the use of the post method approach, that is, an eclectic mix of strategies designed to be a 'best fit' for their learners in their teaching.

The majority of the students stated they preferred to work on their own rather than in groups, even though the teachers directed them to work in pairs or groups during the classes, as was clear from the classroom observations and the teachers' interviews (see chapter 5). According to the students' perceptions of group work, 55% indicated that they were able to interact easily together and exchange their ideas. However, although some of

the students showed that they felt confident about working in pairs or groups, a sizeable number of them were opposed to pair/group work and suggested that working together was a waste of time, possibly as it might lead to conflict, but also because they could not see a direct relationship to the examination.

In their responses the students also highlighted that the teachers encouraged them to use the TL and that they were provided with appropriate feedback. Most of the students stated that they liked to receive comments and feedback from their teachers and peers. The majority of the students preferred to receive immediate feedback from their teacher, as they agreed that teacher feedback motivated them to feel more confident and consequently this helped them to think critically about their learning. From the findings, it is clear that feedback may offer a sort of comfort to most of the students, who liked to get feedback about their performance in order to feel more confident, as seen in the observed classes. In addition, the students indicated that they liked to be supported by their teacher when participating in activities together in order to come up with an answer.

52% of the students stated that they were satisfied with the textbooks. However, even if by a slim majority they appeared happy with their textbook, they also indicated that the topics included did not reflect their interests or culture. Most of the students agreed that they gained knowledge about the other cultures introduced in their textbook but this was probably because of their teachers' support. It was evident from the teachers' statements and the observations that the teachers made considerable efforts to raise their students' intercultural awareness in the classroom.

In reviewing the findings, it is clear that some of the students indicated that they were motivated to work interactively in class by working in pairs or groups. In the informal conversations, some of the students revealed that they disliked group work because they were afraid of the teachers' assessment or because they did not like or know the students with whom they were working. Moreover, the topics they had to work on were unrelated to their interest or culture. Additionally, as mentioned previously, some of the students had predominantly been used to GMT.

To sum up, the last two chapters have reported the findings arising from the data with regard to the teachers' and students' perceptions, supported by data gleaned from the observations and the textbook. The final chapter will now pull the different strands together to provide answers to the research questions and explain the decisions regarding the conclusions.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter will begin by summarising briefly the purpose and main findings of the study. Then, it will discuss the teachers' and students' contradictory responses and actions related to the CLT approach. It will also discuss the situational and the socio-cultural features of the classroom because of the importance of the cultural environment in Saudi Arabia and its influence on the way students and teachers are expected to interact. Regarding the situational features, the following issues will be discussed: teaching style and communicative activities, motivation and error correction, the examination system, large class sizes and limitation of time, lack of communicative resources and the nature and recommended teaching style of the textbook. The socio-cultural features will include the following: the influence of the cultural view of teaching on implementing CLT in Saudi Arabia and the influence on the teachers' and students' roles. This chapter offers several recommendations, which may be helpful for developing English Language Teaching education in the Saudi context. The last two parts outline the main limitations and offer suggestions for further research and study.

### 7.2 Summary of the Research

The aim of this study was to investigate how the CLT approach was used to teach each of the three skills (listening, speaking and writing) and grammar. In addition, it investigated to what extent the features of this approach link the three skills and grammar to facilitate the learning of English, make it more interesting and develop the students' ability to speak the language. Accordingly, the research questions were:

- i) To what extent is the CLT approach used in developing each of the oral and written skills (listening, speaking and writing) and teaching grammar?
- ii) What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the opportunities and the limitations associated with implementing the CLT approach in teaching oral and written skills (listening, speaking and writing) and grammar?

In order to answer these research questions, I used a variety of methods to gather the data such as interviews, questionnaires, classroom observations and textbook analysis. The interviews were conducted with five English language teachers from a Saudi university who were teaching first year university students. The second method that I used was the

questionnaire. Data were collected from 100 first year English language students from the English department of a Saudi university. The classroom observation was another method, which covered 12 classes taken over a three-week period. Finally, the textbook analysis entailed analysing the grammar textbook, as it is the core text which is used throughout the first year English programme and lays the foundation for effective communication. The textbook used was *Grammar Sense 2*, by Cheryl Pavlik (2004).

This study is significant as it was carried out in a setting that appears to have been often overlooked in the literature. The Saudi Arabian government aims to encourage Saudi people to strive for societal and economic improvement and globalization. Accordingly, it has recently paid significant attention to the area of English teaching. Consequently, revealing teachers' understanding of the contemporary CLT approach to EFL and investigating the extent to which they were already applying this approach were crucial. Even though the findings of this study may not be generalizable to more than the sample they represent, the findings confirm much of the literature written about CLT implementation in different EFL settings. Therefore, what the teachers in Saudi Arabia stated about their classroom may well have implications for those attempting to implement the CLT approach in other countries where English is taught as a foreign language. From the study's findings the post method approach to EFL featured in the Saudi classrooms investigated will reassure teachers who are concerned that they cannot use or are not using CLT because of examination and other pressures.

The study showed clear differences between the teachers' beliefs, as indicated in the interviews, and their practice, as indicated by the student questionnaires and classroom observations, suggesting that they were using CLT approaches even if they maintained they were not. The study also revealed some of the challenges that the teachers and students associated with attempting to use the CLT approach. These difficulties fell into three categories based on their influence on: the teachers, the students, or the educational system. Below is a detailed description of the findings for each of the two research questions.

#### 7.2.1 To what Extent is the CLT Approach used to Develop each of the Oral and Written Skills (Listening, Speaking and Writing) and Teach Grammar?

According to the findings of the study, as shown in Chapters 5 and 6, it may be concluded that all the observed teachers used the CLT approach during their classes. It is clear from the teachers' statements during the interviews that they believed that they were unable to teach communicatively in their classrooms, but the observations indicated differently, suggesting that the teachers were, in fact, using CLT strategies for the majority of their

classes. However, it could be seen to be an adapted version of CLT that combined methods deemed suitable for Saudi students. The teachers used what they felt were appropriate teaching strategies for their students during the class, which suggests that they were using a post method approach, although they would not have been able to name their practice as such. Through their prior and ongoing knowledge of learning and teaching, the teachers had gathered an intuitive awareness of what could be considered good teaching (Akbari, 2005). In a post method approach, teachers adapt their teaching based on the needs of the students and the teaching context rather than rigidly sticking to one teaching method (Akbari, 2005). Furthermore, although the teachers claimed that they were not using CLT approaches, the observation suggests that they were doing so to a large degree.

#### 7.2.2 What are the Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of the Opportunities and the Limitations Associated with Implementing the CLT Approach in Teaching Oral and Written Skills (Listening, Speaking and Writing) and Grammar?

The findings of the study, outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, reflect the teachers' and students' perceptions of the opportunities to implement the CLT approach when teaching or learning oral and written skills. It was clear that the teachers and students believed that CLT approaches could be valuable in an EFL classroom. However, there were some challenges, perceived by the teachers, which they claimed prevented them from teaching for communicative purposes such as unified exams, large classes and other issues that were discussed in chapter 5. Many of the students also saw difficulties in working together as mentioned in chapter 6. There were two main perceived challenges, which were felt to hinder the application of the CLT approach in the classroom. Section 7.3 will discuss these challenges, drawing on the findings, which indicated situational and the socio-cultural features as two areas where issues arose.

In addition, the findings outlined in Chapters 5 and 6 suggest that the teachers integrated all of the skills together in their teaching approach, even if they stated in interviews that they were focusing solely on the specific skill that they were teaching. They stated that they were unable to integrate all of the skills into their teaching practice because they did not feel confident about doing so and were concerned that they should only concentrate on the specific skill their class was concerned with, because of the limited time available and the final exams. The data, however, showed that, despite these expressed views, the teachers were actually integrating the skills to help their students to gain knowledge of the TL and use it meaningfully. It also appeared that the textbooks used in class were influencing the teachers to integrate the skills and use CLT approaches in their classroom.



Chen (2007) suggests that reading and writing as well as speaking and listening should be integral aspects of all language classroom activities because all of these procedures interact with one another, and that teachers should integrate opportunities through reading to enable learners to improve their learning by replying orally as they read, write, and learn in English. She argues that the integrated use of oral and written language for functional and meaningful purposes most effectively promotes the full development of a second language skill. Su (2007) argues that, during language learning, listening, speaking, reading, grammar and writing should be treated as integrated, interdependent, features of language. According to Su (2007), the traditional approach to teaching English as a foreign language teaches reading, writing, speaking, listening and grammar separately by stressing skill coordination and memorization, where teachers pay great attention to reading and writing instruction. Although the context of this study is different to that within which Su was working, traditional approaches, such as he describes have been the norm in Saudi Arabia and the teachers believed that they were still applying these approaches. The unwillingness of the teachers in this study to implement CLT, as they understood it and integrate the four skills together in their teaching practice could be said to be because of their prior experience. However, it was clear from the observations, student questionnaires and remarks made in the interviews that teachers were following largely the main principles of CLT, as will be discussed in the following section.

### 7.3 Teachers' and Students' Contradictory Attitudes toward the CLT Approach

As shown in Chapter 2 and above, teachers and students who come to the teaching and learning profession from a background such as that of Saudi Arabia, are likely to adopt teaching strategies that match their previous experience of teaching and learning English using the traditional methodology. They may accordingly resist any practice that contradicts their previous experience. This suggests that part of the teachers' and students' reluctance to implement CLT in their classes is related to the issues that stem from the context in which they work. These contextual features include situational factors as well as socio-cultural factors. These features are discussed below.

#### 7.3.1 Situational Features

##### 7.3.1.1 *Teaching Style and Communicative Activities*

The results of this research study show a difference between the practice in the classroom and the teachers' and students' perception of the CLT approach in teaching and learning English. Currently, the students learn grammatical patterns and receive separate practice in

writing, reading, speaking and listening classes. The teachers indicated that they focused on the subject that they were teaching and avoided integrating all of the skills together. However, during the observed classes, the teachers could be seen integrating all of the skills together even though they were concentrating on a particular skill. For example, in the grammar class, the teachers asked the students to listen to a conversation, write a conversation, present it in class, and read their classmates' conversations.

At present, many specialists see traditional methods where the four skills are taught separately as problematic and believe it necessary to shift the emphasis to a more integrated and communicative approach (Derwing, et al, 2004; Zhang, 2009). This offers numerous advantages, such as adding variation, developing learners' different abilities, and forming interactive opportunities by focusing on learner-centred exercises, language experience and interactional skills (Thornbury and Slade, 2006; Zhang, 2009). Accordingly, a change to a more communicative and integrative teaching style is essential in order to create more opportunities to talk and interact together to improve learners' skills. This was what was observed. In the classrooms the teachers worked hard in order to help the students to acquire proficiency in the TL and at the same time pass their final exams successfully. It could be argued that the teachers in this study integrated all the skills together as seen in the observation because they had been heavily influenced by the prescribed textbook. Although the grammar book was the only textbook analysed in depth, the others related to the other skills were equally communicative in approach and underpinned the integrated approach used by the textbooks employed by the teachers of each subject.

In this study, the majority of students agreed that their teacher often planned activities that encouraged them to interact in English, although most of them claimed that they did not like to work with their peers or in groups in the classroom. However, in the observed classes, when the students were asked if they would like to work in groups while completing the textbook tasks, most of the students seemed happy to work in groups. A possible reason that the learners might avoid interaction is that they were concerned about their grades and the possibility of weaker members of a group pulling down marks. Therefore, it may be necessary to consider the kind of communicative activities that teachers set up and see if they have a real communication purpose, which includes a facility to mark the students individually. From the observations and from the teachers' responses in the interviews, the teachers were working hard to engage the students' attention to the class and make learning more active and enjoyable. For instance, they

asked students for their opinions and linked topics to their prior knowledge and experience, all of which might be considered interactive strategies.

#### *7.3.1.2 Motivation and Error Correction*

Exploring the teachers' attitude towards error correction was an essential part of the research, which should be taken into account when aiming to increase interactive engagement in the EFL classroom, as it has an important relationship with students' motivation and their general progress (Gardner, 2010). Most of the students agreed that their teachers often corrected their errors in class and most of the teachers stated that they liked to correct their students in order to develop accuracy. In the observed classes and from the interviews and questionnaires, different types of corrective techniques were identified in this study, such as explicit correction, when the teacher provides the correct form to the students. For example, as noted in chapter 5, in the observed classes, one of the teachers was seen to be giving the students the correct form and correcting their errors immediately.

The students stated that they wanted to be corrected in their language learning process. However, sometimes corrections could be discouraging, as constant disruptions may depress learners (Savignon and Wang, 2003). As shown by the teachers' and students' responses and the observations, the teachers made it clear that mistakes are natural in the learning process and that students should not feel deeply concerned about such errors, as long as they learned from them.

#### *7.3.1.3 Examination System*

Perhaps the most important situational factor influencing English teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia is the washback effect of the final written examinations. It was claimed by the teachers that language testing played a considerable role in the language teaching and learning process. The washback effect can be divided into two main kinds, positive and negative depending on the teaching system (Hughes 2003; Cheng 2003).

The study's findings showed that the examination for English language in the Saudi setting is at odds with the purpose of teaching and learning English as a foreign language, which, as stated, is to develop the learners' communicative skills. The washback effect of the written examination in the Saudi context is very strong; it was clear from the interview data that it raises anxiety regarding the examination objectives, leading to teachers teaching only the skills tested. Teachers, in such circumstances, consequently teach in an

examination-focused way, adapting their teaching preparation to match the exam objectives (Shohamy, 1996). Moreover, under the powerful influence of the examination, teachers are unlikely to highlight knowledge and practice that can be adopted for the use of language in real life conditions; their aim is to make learners to do well in examinations (Ahmad and Rao 2012). The strong washback effect encourages learners to focus on learning specific skills that are likely to feature in the exams, for instance reading and writing, and discourages them from learning English for the sake of communication. Consequently, teaching emphasizes reading and writing skills via exercises that include repetition, memorization, reading comprehension and grammar.

The findings showed that the perceived need for examination-focused teaching and the focus on teaching and learning particular skills and sub-skills had had a negative effect, leading the teachers to use a variety of methods so that they could satisfy the requirements of the exam. However, they also worked hard to promote students' effective communication. The teachers argued that they needed to use these traditional methods but also felt it important to engage the learners through a variety of activities, many of which were personalised and interactive. Therefore, the teachers were working hard to fulfil the needs of the syllabus and at the same time develop communicative interaction in their classes.

These findings, related to the exam's influence on the implementation of CLT in the Saudi context, confirm the findings from other contexts that show that teaching content and methodology is affected by the exams. For instance, Pizarro (2009, in the Spanish context), Aftab et al. (2014, in the Pakistani context) and Cheng (1997, in the Hong Kong context) refer to the washback effect. It could be argued that, in the Saudi context, there has been a discrepancy between the English curriculum creators' objective to teach English for communication purposes and the exam that aims to test linguistic skills, such as grammatical and textual analysis abilities. It appears that the English language examinations in the Saudi context are inconsistent with the current aim of the field of language teaching and testing; that is, to encourage communicative proficiency as the educational policy of Saudi Arabia indicates, which is discussed in chapter 2.

#### *7.3.1.4 Large Class Sizes and Limitation of Time*

The teachers stated that they found the large number of students in their classes one of the most significant challenges to implementing the CLT approach. As Todd (2012) showed,

there is an association between class size and learning, whereby learners in larger classes experience less effective learning.

Thus, the effectiveness of reduced class sizes is built on the idea that decreasing the number of students per class changes the entire classroom ethos, creating a more positive learning environment. The teachers in this study indicated that they could not implement the CLT approach because they might not be able to monitor the individual progress of all students and would concentrate on the high-level students only. Din (1999) has confirmed that in smaller classes students received more individualized help from their teachers. Accordingly, the teachers found it hard to evaluate each student's requirements and give individualized, interactive instruction that relates to all students' needs (Din, 1999).

Class management was seen as fundamental by the teachers in terms of offering appropriate instructional time to all of the learners in the class and the teachers said that they tended to avoid implementing interactive activities and CLT in their classes, considering that such tasks might lead them to lose control of their class. It seemed very striking, however, that their words were not supported by their actions in class. All of the teachers used aspects of the CLT approach consistently in the observed classes. Bahanshal (2013) studied the effect of large class sizes on English teaching and learning and found that the outcome of the learners was unsatisfactory due to the large number of learners per class. However, other research shows that what affects the learning process is the teachers' quality and practice, not the class size (Maged, 1997, O'Sullivan, 2006). During the observed classes, the teachers were seen to be using the CLT approach even in their large classes, asking the students to interact together, so they had clearly developed strategies for engaging large numbers of learners, perhaps without realising it.

An additional situational factor at the level of the class, which was identified by teachers as a challenge to applying communicative activities in their teaching, was their teaching load and lack of time. Teachers asserted that it was hard to apply communicative activities within their busy teaching schedule in addition to other work because the use of interactive communicative type activities in their classes could prevent the completion of the syllabus and preparation for the examinations.

#### *7.3.1.5 Lack of Communicative Resources*

A further factor that teachers identified as influencing their perceived lack of usage of CLT was the lack of communicative resources. It has been claimed that, since the purpose of language teaching is to train learners to interact in real life circumstances, the classroom activities should reflect real life conditions and use real world or authentic resources

(Richards, 2005). It has also been maintained that these authentic materials should offer learners the opportunity to be exposed to not only the TL but also its culture, in order to help the teachers to implement advanced teaching approaches (Richards, 2005).

To some extent, the materials that the teachers used in their classes could be considered traditional tools, such as worksheets and flash cards, even though during the observations, the teachers were seen to organise communicative activities most of the time in their classes. The lack of authentic communicative tools in the Saudi context may have a cultural rather than a financial cause, as many authentic language-teaching materials, such as magazines, films, songs, and stories, can contain features that offend Saudi culture. Hence, one teacher indicated that, due to religious issues, she tried to avoid presenting any topics in class which did not reflect the students' religion and might appear controversial from a religious point of view. She argued that discussing these topics in class was unlikely to promote efficient language learning due to the upset that they might cause the learners. However, in the observed classes, other teachers adapted a number of topics to suit Saudi culture, simplifying them for the students and generating interesting discussion that was related to that used in their textbook.

#### *7.3.1.6 The Nature of the Textbook and Teaching Style*

There is a further source of contradiction related to applying CLT in the Saudi context in this study. This type of paradox arises from the contradiction between the teaching styles that the teachers said they apply in their classes and those that are recommended in the English language textbooks in Saudi Arabia. The tasks in the textbooks are interactive in nature and designed to be performed via teaching styles that accommodate the principles of CLT, such as pair or group work, role-play and problem-solving. The findings showed that, because large classes are the norm in Saudi universities, the teachers indicated that traditional teaching and learning methods were used, such as lectures, memorization, and repetition. However, as seen in the observed classes, the teachers employed group work and problem solving regularly, possibly because the textbook, which was the basis for the unified examinations, had influenced them to use these CLT approaches.

As mentioned above, materials such as movies, magazines, newspapers and stories are suggested to be used to increase students' language experience (Richards, 2005). According to the findings, the teachers depended mainly on the provided textbook and, only on some occasions, used other activities in order to facilitate their teaching practice. The textbooks included topics that do not reflect female Saudi students' interests and culture, related to what might be considered male rather than female interests.

Consequently, it was noted that the teachers made efforts to make the topic more interesting, either using other materials or by linking the topic to another which might be of greater interest to the students.

It is clear from the findings that the cultural view of education in the Saudi context has also affected the methods of teaching and learning that the Saudi teachers and students have accepted. In general, the findings of the study suggest that teachers in Saudi Arabia apply a combination of both the traditional and communicative approaches in their classes, a methodology, which could be designated the current post method approach where teachers choose the most appropriate methods for their students (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Liao, 2004). The post method approach is a popular approach to language teaching as it allocates a voice to the teachers and respects the kind of knowledge they possess (Akbari, 2005).

### 7.3.2 Socio-Cultural Features

Leading on from the previous section, which identified several issues related to the situational features of the language classroom, some of which could be considered cultural, the discussion in this section will concentrate on the socio-cultural features, which highlight the cultural perspectives of education and the position of English language in Saudi Arabia.

It seems that the difficulties for the teachers in implementing CLT in the Saudi context are not limited to situational features alone, but also appear to have deep roots in the traditional view of education in the Saudi context. The CLT approach was actually seen to be used to a great extent in the classroom, but it seems that it could never be implemented fully, and so it may be that an adapted version would be suitable for Saudi Arabia which takes into account cultural norms. This is aligned with the current post method approach, where teachers choose the most appropriate methodologies for their learners, depending on their needs and the context, as was seen in the observed classes and is mentioned in the literature. The discussion will highlight these options in the following sections.

#### 7.3.2.1 *The Influence of the Cultural View of Teaching on CLT Implementation in Saudi Arabia*

As mentioned in Chapter 2, it could be claimed that the leading view of teaching in the Saudi context is the use of the traditional method (Alseghayer, 2011). Currently, the belief is that this method is used in certain Saudi universities, as found in the interview and questionnaire responses but, from the observations, the CLT approach was actually being used to a much greater degree than expected in the classroom. The findings showed that this belief was not the reality in English language classes in this Saudi university and possibly others.

There is an essential difference between the philosophy of language teaching in the traditional teaching approaches, which have been dominant in the Saudi teaching system, and that of the CLT approach. In this study, it was clear that the teachers had adapted their practice and that they were flexible in their teaching methods, even though they believed that they were not implementing the CLT approach. It seems that the teachers intuitively adopted the post method approach, where they could choose the most appropriate methodologies for their classes, so that they could adhere to religious and cultural requirements as well as creating an interactive, student-centred classroom.

By comparing Saudi culture with other cultures' use of the CLT approach, these Saudi Arabian university teachers might be considered to be leading the way in EFL in adopting a mixture of teaching strategies, which are used flexibly to take into account cultural and religious imperatives and ensure they are met but within a learner-centred, interactive environment. Similar conclusions have been made in other contexts where there has been a traditional approach. The CLT approach in countries such as China, Cambodia, Indonesia and Southeast East Asia appears to be rather unsuccessful. This could be said to be because of the confusion surrounding its theory and practice among EFL teachers and strong cultural influences regarding teaching and learning.

#### *7.3.2.2 The Influence on the Teachers' and Students' Roles*

The traditional view of education in the Saudi context has also had an effect on the role that the teachers and students play in class. Elyas and Picard (2010) claim that, for teachers of other subjects in Saudi Arabia, traditional teacher led transmission teaching is the norm and English teachers follow suit. However, from the findings of this study, it appeared that the teachers were not giving the students lessons in lecture form, as might have been expected, but were using CLT approaches to teaching.

The findings of this study showed that a teacher's role is still more active than the student's role, as the teachers, corresponding to the cultural view of education in the Saudi context, are seen as the main sources of knowledge, while learners are viewed simply as knowledge receivers. Generally the types of roles that the teachers and students play in English language classes in Saudi universities are influenced by the traditional view of education, and do not seem to suit the roles that are attributed according to the language theory underlying CLT. However, in this study, teacher-student interaction was prevalent in the observed classes and the teachers focused mainly on creating an environment that was centred on the learner rather than on the teacher.



According to Prieto (2008), when choosing a teaching method, teachers should prepare with the attitude of being a component of the class instead of the leader. The teachers should consider the teaching-learning process as a community matter, wherein all of the students in the group should participate. In this way, Prieto claims that: “communication between the students and the teacher will be enhanced, resulting in greater interaction and, certainly, a greater quality in the formative process of the group as a whole” (Prieto, 2008: 334). As the findings of my study revealed, there was a great deal of interaction between the teachers and the students in the observed classes. The teachers were working to a considerable degree as facilitators for the students rather than being the leaders of the class and lecturing the students as one group.

To sum up the discussion in this part, the teachers claimed that they did not use the CLT approach in their classes, but the findings suggested that they were actually implementing CLT for the majority of the time in their classes. Observations revealed that the students appeared comfortable with and used to the CLT approaches that the teachers used in class. The reasons teachers said they did not want to implement the CLT approach in their classrooms might be related to their own learning experiences; it could also be that they had been taught about the ‘strong’ CLT approach but had never been given any actual training in the use of CLT so they did not quite understand how to use such an approach in their classrooms and had a false idea of what it entailed.

In many contexts, EFL teaching has moved on from a purely CLT approach to a more nuanced, flexible style, which reflects the context and adopts a variety of teaching strategies. In this study, the teachers appear to have done this intuitively with the best interests of the learners at heart, leading the way for others who may be less intuitive to learn to be confident to take decisions that support students’ learning best. It can be concluded that in this study, the teachers have shown an intelligent adaptation of CLT that combines the important cultural elements and the language learning.

In the following sections, I will propose some suggestions and recommendations that may help to build teachers’ confidence in their skills and abilities in implementing the CLT approach, while at the same time, ensuring that teaching in Saudi Arabia is predominantly learner centred and meets students’ needs and expectations as well as the cultural imperative.

## 7.4 Recommendations

### 7. 4.1 Associating the Main Parties Involved in EFL Teaching and Learning in the Saudi Setting

In the Saudi setting, the change that is now happening in the EFL curriculum is not a project that can be achieved efficiently by the efforts of the governing body alone (MoE). Therefore, introducing any change in the educational field, such as implementing a predominantly CLT approach in English classes in Saudi schools and universities, requires creating a very collaborative and interactive system that includes all main parties, for example, the MoE, universities, training centres and schools (Pansiri 2014). Collaboration could help the involved parties to comprehend and manage change, adapt their strategies to achieve it, reduce the resistance to the change, and work within a combined plan to implement it.

In this study, it is seen that the MoE only has supported change in the Saudi EFL setting at the level of designing a new communicative curriculum for all the educational levels promoting teaching for communicative purposes and adopting the CLT approach. This was done, however, without making other changes at other levels, for example in teachers' preparation, training, the examination system and school settings, and without taking into account the influence of the socio-cultural features of the Saudi setting. In other words, it seems that there has been a lack of communication between the MoE and the universities, the Saudi MoE failing to take into account the fact that any changes to the EFL curriculum and the way it is taught may result in challenges and the need for special preparation of those who are going to implement these change in schools and universities. Teachers who are expected to implement the change may not have been effectively prepared to do so.

If the MoE take into account this potential obstacle, it may be possible to create an innovative network and cooperation between the MoE and the universities. Through such a network of collaborative communication, theoretical understanding underpinning the innovation may be delivered to the English departments who could then modify their plans to match the new changes. Through communication networks, the planners of the EFL curriculum in the Saudi setting could define the key features of the curriculum and discuss these with the English departments regarding training for EFL teachers to have confidence to teach in an interactive way to ensure the communicative competence of the learners. Branden (2009, p. 662) claims "gaining knowledge about an innovation constitutes the crucial first step in a process that may ultimately lead to the implementation of the innovation in the language classroom."

In addition, creating a system of communication between all main stakeholders would ensure that there was support through sufficient information channels. This study could be

taken as a starting point for in-depth consideration of the applicability of an adapted CLT approach to the Saudi setting to which the MoE might refer. In order to implement a change such as introducing CLT or an adapted version thereof, in the Saudi setting, there are two main necessities. Possibly the most important is strengthening the confidence of those teachers who could be considered as ‘good’ practitioners of EFL, such as the teachers in this study. Teachers such as these, who are using this variety of techniques intuitively, could be given training so that they would be able to mentor other less confident/experienced teachers. The strengthening of the teachers' self-confidence is necessary through on-going support, which enables them to reflect on the way that students learn. In addition, to increase understanding of the theories underpinning language and teaching methodologies, particularly those that emphasis interaction and enable the implementation of CLT strategies in the Saudi setting, these could be incorporated in teacher education programmes, both at initial teacher level and on-going professional development.

#### 7.4.2 Teacher Training

It appears that the CLT approach, which was recommended by the MoE, has not yet been fully implemented in the Saudi context. Thus, the Ministry of Higher Education, which is responsible for universities in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter Two), might consider incorporating training focused on supporting all students, and the teachers at all universities, to be able to interrogate their own practice at university level in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the training programmes, focusing on the materials, that is, the textbooks that the teachers are using can reassure them that the activities in the textbook can be adapted to specific interests or contexts by providing examples, in order to increase teachers' confidence to modify the mandatory resources.

In this study, we have seen that the textbook used for EFL at this Saudi university promotes a CLT approach, which contrasts with the more traditional approaches in the textbooks used in the past. The curriculum designers who selected such syllabi and textbooks, which have influenced the teachers and students in this study to use CLT strategies, have implicitly underlined the importance of teaching for communicative purposes.

It could be claimed that, in the Saudi setting, English teachers need on-going training to help them in their efforts to implement the CLT approach, to reflect on their current actions and reassure them what they are doing is in accordance with the curriculum. On-going training can provide teachers with the skills and knowledge that are essential in improving

the evaluation and adaptation of the current materials, so that the teachers may ultimately design their own resources to suit the unique requirements of their teaching context. Additionally, the training should increase their awareness, permit them to take more control over their teaching and raise their level of self-sufficiency. El-Laithy (1989) mentions educational training programmes (i.e. training programmes in pedagogic knowledge) that could be presented to English teachers including, for instance:

- a) Courses that introduce English teachers to new curricula, new syllabi, and new methods and approaches.
- b) Courses that offer English teachers techniques for evaluating and assessing learner performance;
- c) Courses that inform English teachers about the latest knowledge regarding psychological, sociological, and cultural development.

The training courses outlined above could be adopted effectively if two models of teaching are used: the site-based and self-directed teaching models (Gaible and Burns 2005). The site-based teaching model is commonly used in the workplace, in this case a university, with teachers working collaboratively with their co-workers to acquire and practise new skills. The model often emphasises specific, situational problems that individual teachers encounter when trying to implement new methods in their classroom (Hooker 2008), such as the introduction of CLT approaches. This model of training may contain a range of methodologies, such as peer observation, open lessons, study groups and mentoring (Hooker 2008).

In the self-directed teaching model, teachers design their own teaching courses corresponding to their individual requirements and can share challenges and resolutions with their colleagues (Hooker 2008). Teachers can observe each other in peer observation, perhaps videoing each other if this were possible and then they can give and discuss their feedback in order to learn more from their experiences and exchange their knowledge (Hooker 2008). Videoing each other can provide many unique advantages for understanding the classroom activity. It can be likened to live classroom observation, as well being instructive to the teacher doing the teaching. This kind of activity supports teachers to become long-life initiators and can include watching video examples of classroom teaching, reading books, writing papers or diaries, taking online courses, or observing classes taught by their peers (Hooker 2008). However, video recording cannot be used in Saudi Arabia in the female section for religious and cultural reasons. Nonetheless, 'live' peer observation, although there can be no recorded evidence can be considered as helpful. The literature shows (e.g. Tsui, 2003), it could be beneficial to

teachers to engage in peer observation regularly with their colleagues in a facilitative way instead of a perceived threatening one, that would reveal to them new teaching methods, ideas and approaches and form a basis for discussion.

Teacher training and professional development are realised as an essential mechanism for the development of teachers' knowledge and their teaching skills and performances in order to meet high educational standards (Tsui, 2003). Teachers' training and professional development are two broad goals in education according to Richards (2005). Correspondingly, collaborative teaching in some classes might be helpful for the teachers to meet and discuss aspects of practice, teaching and learning (Richards, 2005). Thus, based on findings emerging from the observations and the interviews, it is suggested that more teachers would benefit from engaging in site-based, self-directed teacher training in order to learn more about the CLT approach and its features. Personal observations and reflections by the teachers about the teaching session are important but can be biased, therefore, working together to discern a variety of approaches through non-judgemental observation can lead to rich and fruitful discussion, taking into account perceived challenges and potential resolutions, so that the learners achieve the best results, both linguistically as communicators and in examinations.

To sum up, it could also be very helpful for teachers if the educational authorities and language experts were to organise more colloquia, workshops and extensive interactive, practical training programs in order to provide the valuable opportunities for teachers to share their experiences on how to address perceived issues related to teaching the English language. It is essential to keep in mind that cultivating or institutionalising the CLT approach in Saudi Arabia or in any other nation, is impracticable without sufficient education and training for all language teachers and instructors. Post method pedagogy offers a new perspective on studying English language teaching and learning in schools and can allow teachers to use more traditional methods when deemed appropriate, within a general CLT framework. Regarding CLT it is better for the teachers to create a variety of learning experiences for the learners, perhaps using 'real life' resources and materials, as long as they do not offend Saudi cultural values. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), supporting students to learn not only includes using specific classroom techniques, but also correspondingly includes linking the students' thinking with action. An interactive, engaged classroom develops via determined hard work. As each teacher participates in training sessions and collaborative interaction themselves, including peer observation and discussion, there will be the opportunity for them to try new strategies and construct their own theory of practice, as is suggested by post method approaches

#### 7.4.3 The Educational System

It is clear that there are areas of the Saudi educational system, which do not help the successful implementation of more interactive methodologies. Thus, it might be useful to reflect on some changes that might be made in order to suit the purposes of teaching by using a CLT approach. At the same time, it is acknowledged that decisions about changing systems can only be taken after a wide ranging nationwide consultation and it is unlikely that a small scale study such as this one will have an influence on decision-makers at national level. Nonetheless, this study may be viewed as a starting point for discussion. It seems that the English language teaching context in Saudi Arabia may need certain revisions to make better use of CLT within existing opportunities. These are outlined below:

- a) Although the teachers in the study managed to use communicative, interactive strategies successfully with the majority of students in their large classes, inevitably there were some students who did not engage. Smaller class sizes, for example 30 maximum, would ensure that all students' needs could be better addressed.
- b) One of the major institutional limitations mentioned by the teachers in this study was the lack of time available for them to improve their knowledge and skills in order to respond appropriately to their students' requirements. It is suggested that it would be helpful if teachers had increased preparation time within their education load in order to arrange interactive activities, attend workshops and training courses, and observe and exchange visits with colleagues. This could yield enormous benefits in terms of effective practice.
- c) Regarding the matter of overloaded English classes and the shortage of facilities and materials, as found in this study, there are implications for the physical layout of classrooms that at present are not designed for group-work activities. There is also an issue regarding materials which may help engage students effectively. It would be very useful to have access to authentic resources, such as stories, magazines, and films, as well as other media, including internet that can help the teachers to connect what they teach with real life situations and the cultural aspects of countries in which English is the first language.
- d) Language teaching is a theoretical as well as practical activity; it may not work efficiently if it is inflexible. Thus, it is valuable for the Saudi teachers to adapt their practice to meet the needs of their learners, combining the traditional approaches with a variety of communicative interactive activities and tasks, as the teachers in the study did, within a post method paradigm.

#### 7.4.4 Examination System

If the examination system were to be reviewed critically and adapted to include productive skills, this might encourage teachers to use more interactive strategies with confidence. Consequently, within the examination schemes it would be helpful to assess all of the language skills holistically rather than to examine every skill individually. Furthermore, there might be a range of assessment activities that are linked to the learning objectives of the teaching that examine learner development through features such as oral presentations, discussion, role-play and problem solving.

#### 7.5 Limitations of the Study

Although the study has some strengths, for example employing a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, and identifying teachers' ingenuity and creativity in engaging students in learning English within a strict curricular structure, by adapting their teaching strategies, there were also some limitations. The study set out to investigate the teachers' and students' perceptions of the interactive approach with a focus on the first-year program at a university's English Department in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the research findings may be relevant to this group only. However, given the similarity of some of the themes within this study to those in the broader research literature, the findings may have implications for other universities in the KSA as well as TEFL teaching in other countries, where there has been hitherto a focus on traditional methodologies.

A second limitation is that, due to the segregation by gender within the education system in Saudi Arabia, this study was limited to female teachers and students only, and excluded male participants, as the researcher did not have access to them. Furthermore, due to limited resources, the results of this study reflect the views of only 100 female students. Therefore, the findings may not fully reflect the experience of male students and teachers in Saudi Arabia. This is a gap in the existing research, and the views of both genders need to be explored in Saudi Arabia. Since the research and theoretical literature has identified important differences in linguistic practices between male and female learners, it may be appropriate to frame future research as comparative, as well as exploratory.

Another limitation to acknowledge is that it was difficult in the Saudi cultural context to obtain the permission of female EFL teachers, and only five teachers agreed to participate in the current research. This means that a fully random sample of teachers did not participate, so there could be selection bias. For example, perhaps only teachers who feel more comfortable about being observed volunteered to take part in the study, meaning that the results may not represent the full range of TEFL experiences at the university.

Moreover, in the interviews and student questionnaires, there is the possibility of response bias. This means that the participants may represent the situation as more favourable than it actually is. Alternatively, there might be other reasons, such as cultural ones, particularly the Saudi cultural norm of politeness, why they may have been unwilling to provide accurate answers. Correspondingly, it is possible that the teachers and students did not fully understand the principles of CLT and therefore had not realised that their practice had actually changed. This might explain why there was a difference between what I observed and what the students and teachers said or reported. In addition, because the questionnaires were quantitative, it was difficult to identify reasons for student choices. There is also the methodological limitation within the student questionnaires related to the fact that I did not consider the differences between classes, which limits both what I can infer from these data and also my ability to note the differences across different types of English courses. For example, the level of the students' disagreement with some statements in the questionnaire was the same as for a number of questions. It may be that these were the same students, who were reflecting experiences with one of the teachers in a specific class but as the questionnaire included 100 students from different classes and they did not specify which class they were from, it was impossible to identify them, as they were anonymous.

A further limitation is that, during the observations, there was a possibility that my presence in the classroom influenced the lesson. Perhaps the teachers prepared more carefully for the lesson or the students may have behaved better, knowing that a researcher was watching them. One limitation in the observations was that I did them by myself, so I could not get interrater reliability.

I was a sole researcher, so I made every effort to avoid judgement throughout the analysis when presenting the findings of each different set of data. It was difficult to stay completely neutral in the analysis because of my previous work as an English teacher and my belief that CLT is effective. In order to compensate for this limitation, I triangulated my data, using different sources of data collection to explore the phenomena from different perspectives.

### 8.5 Suggestions for Further Research

During the analysis stage, several areas arose that might be worth exploring in future research. The scope of the topic of the CLT approach is wide and its definitions are broad. More research on teachers' and students' perceptions of implementing CLT approaches in English teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia would be useful in order to determine how



such an approach should be applied in language teaching, particularly in the university system.

Research could also be conducted on what types of classes or training would be most useful in order to support teachers on how to best use, adapt and supplement the CLT approach. Since the CLT approach is considered helpful for language teachers and learners, it would be beneficial for researchers to focus specifically on understanding the issues faced by teachers with less experience.

One of the limitations of the study is that it cannot be generalized due to the sample size, the gender of the participants, and the limited location. However, due to the special cultural context in Saudi Arabia, it might be fair to say that the findings from the research, while unable to be strictly replicated, may resonate with other teachers and learners in the Saudi university setting. Therefore, in order to understand more broadly the problems that the teachers and students face with regard to implementing the CLT approach, further study could be conducted with a larger group of Saudi EFL teachers with both male and female teachers and students. The similarities in findings to those of research studies undertaken in different cultural contexts, where traditional methods have been accepted as the norm and where good examination results influence what is taught, indicate that although this study is not generalizable there are significant areas of convergence that would be worth exploring.

This study specifically focused on EFL at the higher education level. Further research is also needed, located in Saudi primary and secondary schools, as well as comparisons between secondary schools and higher education. In addition, it is suggested that further research could be conducted in order to investigate the issues facing the implementation of CLT in the Saudi education field. This issue in Saudi Arabia is under-research as it might develop a high number of school and higher education students.

To sum up, this research has been an inspiring and valuable experience at both an academic and personal level. It explored the teachers' and students' perceptions of the CLT approach in teaching and learning English. The analysis of the data attempted to find answers to the research questions and represent an important source for practical improvement for myself as a researcher and for my future academic career in the area of English teaching.

On a personal level, this research, involving the analysis of the textbook, interviews with the teachers, students' questionnaires and my observations of their classes, which has provided a better understanding of their perceptions of implementing the CLT approach in teaching and learning English, has been an enlightening and life enriching experience. This

has enhanced my knowledge of the CLT approach to teaching English and my understanding of what needs to be done to improve the implementation of such a method in EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia. Besides, it is found that post method pedagogy is very popular among the teachers in this study, Although the teachers did not appear to recognise that their practice might be considered interactive or communicative, the teachers were combining the traditional approaches with a variety of communicative interactive activities and tasks, within what can be viewed as a post method paradigm to improve their teaching outcomes. The fact that the teachers keep trying diverse approaches in their classes is in line with teachers' autonomous decision-making suggested by post method pedagogy.

This research has investigated the potential of the teachers' and students' perceptions of using the CLT approach in teaching and learning English. However, the data analysis of the study, the links with the behaviours, and the opinions of the participants and links to theoretical aspects, as well as the attempts to find answers to the research question, have all represented a significant source of practical development for me as a researcher and for my future academic job in the area of language learning.

The main general finding of this research has shown the important issues that are provided by teachers' and students' perceptions of the CLT approach in teaching and learning English. Additionally, most teachers perceived considerable benefits of CLT approach even though they had difficulties in implementing such an approach.

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## Appendix A

## Plain Language Statement- Instructors

### Study title and Researcher Details

Investigating Saudi Arabian Teachers' and Students' Perspectives on Teaching English Grammar.

Researcher: Ms. Nouf Almohideb

Supervisor: Dr. Esther Daborn and Dr. Hazel Crichton

Course: Ph.D. in Education.

### Invitation paragraph

You are invited to participate in the above research project, which is to investigating your views on how grammar is taught in English classes in this university. You are being asked to take part because you are involved in teaching grammar or the other skills (writing, listening and speaking). This project will form part of my PhD thesis.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand, why the research is being done. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

### What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to investigate the teachers' and students' perspectives on teaching English grammar at level one in the university.

### Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are involved in teaching grammar or the other skills (writing, listening and speaking) and can share your experience of learning and teaching in Al-Imam Muhammed bin Saud University.

### Do I have to take part?

Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice. I would like to assure you that it would have no effect on teaching or work in the university.

### What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, I would arrange to observe some of your classes to see how you teach English and then talk to you about them in an interview. You would be one of the 6 teachers I would like to invite to take part in my study

I will ask each participating teacher if I can observe two classes for your subject. Then, I will interview you after my observation of your two classes. Each interview will take 30 to 45 minutes and it is a face-to-face interview. You will be interviewed individually. The interview will be arranged at a time to suit you. I will audio-record the interview; a transcript will be returned to you for checking before I use it in my analysis.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

I intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent. All information and data, which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

When I have gathered all the data, I will write about what I have learned in my PhD thesis. A summary of the results will be available when the study is completed for you and the other teachers who have taken part.

**Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)**

This research is fully sponsored by the Saudi Cultural Bureau.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

**Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this was the case we would inform you of any decisions that might limit your confidentiality.

**Contact for further Information:**

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact my supervisors Dr. Esther Daborn ([esther.daborn@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:esther.daborn@glasgow.ac.uk)) and Dr. Hazel Crichton ([hazel.crichton@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:hazel.crichton@glasgow.ac.uk)).

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee Officer Dr Muir Houston ([Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk)).

**Thank you for reading this.**

## Plain Language Statement- Students

### Study title and Researcher Details

Investigating Saudi Arabian Teachers' and Students' Perspectives on Teaching English Grammar. Researcher: Ms. Nouf Almohideb

Supervisor: Dr. Esther Daborn and Dr. Hazel Crichton

Course: Ph.D. in Education.

### Invitation paragraph

You are invited to participate in the above research project, which is to investigating your views on how grammar is taught in English classes in this university. You were chosen randomly from your class, with the permission of the Dean of the English Language Department. This project will form part of my PhD thesis.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand, why the research is being done. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

### What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to investigate the teachers' and students' perspectives on teaching and learning English grammar.

### Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are a student in Level one from the English department and can share your experience of learning grammar and the other skills.

### Do I have to take part?

Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice. I would like to assure you that it will have no effect on your grades and level of your study.

### What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, I will ask you to answer a questionnaire to ask your views about learning English grammar and skills and how you learn in classes. You will be one of the 100 students that will participate in this study. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. This will take about 10-20 minutes of your time and we will do this during class time.

Apart from asking your views, I will also observe and attend some of level one lectures to see how grammar and the other skills are taught in the University over a period of up to six weeks.

### Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

I intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent. All information, which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

### What will happen to the results of the research study?



When I have gathered all of the information from everyone who is taking part, I will write about what I have learned in my PhD thesis. Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available for you and the other students who have taken part.

**Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)**

Fully sponsored and funded by the Saudi Cultural Bureau.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

**Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this was the case we would inform you of any decisions that might limit your confidentiality.

**Contact for further Information**

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact my supervisors Dr. Esther Daborn ([esther.daborn@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:esther.daborn@glasgow.ac.uk)) and Dr. Hazel Crichton ([hazel.crichton@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:hazel.crichton@glasgow.ac.uk)).

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee Officer Dr Muir Houston ([Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk)).

**Thank you for reading this.**

## Appendix D



University  
of Glasgow

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College of Social  
Sciences

### Teacher Consent Form

**Title of Project:** Investigating Saudi Arabian Teachers' and Students' Perspectives on Teaching English Grammar.

**Name of Researcher:** Nouf Almohideb

**Name of Supervisors:** Dr. Esther Daborn and Dr. Hazel Crichton

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent to interviews being audio-recorded and classes to be observed by the researcher.

I acknowledge that participants will be anonymous.

The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

#### Signature Section

Name of Participant ..... Signature  
.....

Date .....

Name of Researcher ..... Signature  
.....

Date .....

## Appendix E



College of Social  
Sciences

### Student Consent Form

**Title of Project:** Investigating Saudi Arabian Teachers' and Students' Perspectives on Teaching English Grammar.

**Name of Researcher:** Nouf Almohideb

**Name of Supervisors:** Dr. Esther Daborn and Dr. Hazel Crichton

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent to answer the questionnaire.

I acknowledge that participants will be anonymous.

The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

#### Signature Section

Name of Participant ..... Signature  
.....

Date .....

Name of Researcher ..... Signature  
.....

Date .....

## Appendix F

### Observation Sheet Proforma (Grammar lessons)

#### 1- Classroom context:

Number of students.....

Teacher.....

Length of the lesson.....

Topic.....

Unit.....

Language Area:.....

Stage,	Timing	Input: (Telling; eliciting; Recall knowledge/ build on previous experience; Modelling)	Materials/ Cultural background/ meaningful topic/ Integrate Skills	ST engagement / participation	Output Interaction: (T/Ss: T/S; S/S; Ss/Ss; Ss/TB )	Types of Feedback
Warm up activities						
Presentati on / tasks						
Practice Tasks given						
Present / Closure activities / homework						

## Appendix G

### Semi Structured Interview (Grammar Teachers)

#### A- Personal Background

- a. How long have you been teaching English as a second language?
- b. How long have you been teaching English grammar in the university?
- c. Which levels have you taught?

#### B- Experience and satisfaction:

*Thank you for your interesting lessons that I have observed I really enjoyed them. From these lessons, I would like to ask you the following questions:*

1. Which part of the lessons did you like best? Were there any problems that you have faced during the lessons?
2. Is there anything in the lessons that you would have done differently?
3. How do you like to teach English?
4. Tell me about the textbook. What do you think are its strengths? Does it have any weaknesses in your view?
5. What do you think about the topics in the textbooks for example do you think they are meaningful or interesting for the students? Why?
6. What do you do to attract the students to the topic?
7. What do you think about the topics are they connected to the students' culture? If no how will you link it to the Saudi culture?
8. What kind of teaching style does the textbook support?
9. Do you think that this textbook supports the other skills rather than grammar?
10. Do you use any materials as well as the textbook? If yes, what are they?
11. I noticed that you started your lessons by (warm up or immediately starting with the lesson) why? ( this question will depend on my observation of the lessons)
12. What are the ways you use to engage the students?
13. When do you like your students to work in groups, pairs or their own?
14. How do you help the students to process new ideas and information?
15. How do you encourage the students to share their own experiences, and ideas about the topic of the lesson?
16. How do you like to encourage the students to practise the language?
17. What is your view about collaborative learning in the classroom?
18. What difficulties, if any, do you think students might encounter when asked to work in groups?
19. What kind of feedback do students' value?

#### C- Do you want to add any other points about how you teach grammar?

**Thank you so much for taking part in my study.**

## Students' Questionnaire

**Dear Participant,**

This questionnaire is part of my PhD thesis at the University of Glasgow. The aim of this study is to investigate the teachers' and students' perspective on teaching English grammar. The questionnaire consists of two sections: the first section is about your personal information, and the second section is about your personal opinion of learning English. It might take you 10-20 minutes to answer this questionnaire. It will be appreciated if you could answer all the questions honestly, as your answers will not affect your grades.

**Part A: Personal and background Information:**

How old are you?

- ☐ Under 20    ☐ 20-25    ☐ 25+

For how many years have, you studied English.

- ☐ Under 8 years    ☐ 8 years    ☐ 8+

**Part B: Personal Opinions:**

How well do these statements describe your perspective on learning English?

Kindly **Read the questions and tick the appropriate answer:**

❖ **How I feel working in groups and my own:**

Questions	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I prefer to work on my own.			
I do like to work in groups.			
It is easy to agree on one answer or idea with my group.			
It is easy to explain my thoughts or opinions to the group.			
I can exchange my knowledge and experience easily when working together.			
I feel more responsible when working together.			
It is a waste of time explaining the task to the others.			

❖ **My opinion of the textbook:**

Questions	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I like my textbook.			
The topics in the textbook are related to my culture.			
The topics in the textbook are easy.			
The topics in the textbook are understandable.			

The topics in the textbook are interesting and meaningful.			
I prefer to do the tasks of the textbook together with my classmates.			
I gain more idea about the different cultures introduced in the textbook.			

❖ **What kind of feedback I value:**

Questions	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I like to get comments from my group.			
I get helpful comments from the teacher to improve my English.			
The teacher involve us in practical exercises to help us understand the task.			
My teacher encourages us to correct each other's mistakes while working in groups.			
During the class, our teacher allows us to copy the answers from the board immediately after the task.			
My teacher provides us with an explanation of what we are doing correctly and what we are doing that is not correct.			
My teacher marks my work immediately after each lesson.			
The teacher motivates our effort of hard working by saying 'I appreciate your hard work', 'well done', 'great,' 'good job' etc.			

❖ **How the teacher guides my learning:**

Questions	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I feel free to ask my teacher a question.			
I feel confident when communicating in English.			
At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher explains what we will do.			
Teacher helps me to recall what I learned previously and use it in the class.			
We can speak Arabic during the lesson if needed.			
Teacher is guiding us during the lesson.			
We have the opportunity to think about new ideas and practise.			
We have the chance to share our own experiences, and ideas about the topic of the lesson.			
Teacher supports me to use English in my daily life.			

**Thank you so much**

## Appendix I

### The first interview

## **Semi structured interview**

Thank you for interesting lessons

### **A. Personal background**

- a. How long have you been teaching English as a second language?

I have been teaching English for ten years now.

- b. How long have you been teaching English grammar in the university?

In university four years now.

- c. Which levels have you taught?

First level

### **B. Experience and satisfaction:**

Thank you for your interesting lessons that I have observed I really enjoyed them. From these lessons, I would like to ask you the following questions:

- a. Which part of the lessons did you like best? Were any problems that you have faced during the lessons?

I like discussion part and unfortunately I don't have a lot of time to do that just I have three hours and three hours have been divided to listening and speaking, also huge number of students isn't helping in this field, also I like discussion part, because I can talk and speak in the listening part.

Do you face any problem during this lesson? As I told you the major problem is huge number of students, where I can't give opportunity equally to a lot of them, So they have no the same opportunity to speak or even to encourage one speaks and practices language.

- b. Is there anything in the lessons that you would have done differently?

Yes I wouldn't include pronunciation part with part of speaking, because it is useless, we never practice it enough, we don't include it in exams, so I think there are no benefits a lot of, also for the grammar section, we study grammar but grammar section in the listening course is very useful if it has grammar course.

- c. How do you like to teach English?

As I told you already I prefer speaking discussion part to express this ideas to be critical about what are saying and reading, maybe as a teacher I prefer this kind of teaching.

- d. Tell me about the textbook. What do you think are its strengths? Does it have any weaknesses in your view?

Textbook I think it is good, so according to their level is very good except as I said before I wouldn't include pronunciation part or for example the grammar part, maybe I would like to do more exercises in the discussion part because I would like to know about the topic question, I would also like to have more exercises.



- e. What do you think about the topics in the textbooks for example do you think they are meaningful or interesting for the students? Why? What will you do to attract students to the topic?

For attracting students for the topic I would like to ask them first about their opinion related to being agreed on how they do differently to be critical in observing topic for meaningful and interesting topic, so it is interesting, there was very interesting topic , but it has been deleted I don't know why .

- f. What do you think about the topics are they connected to the students culture? If no how will you link it to the Saudi Culture?

I think there are applicable to our culture, because they talk about our education nutrition, food, affective life and to choose the part of our success.

are you speaking about education for example in general and do you link it to Saudi system? No there is no a specific topic, but in general, sometimes we order them to understand idea, we give example for our culture to understand the topic and to see how that is applicable to our culture.

- g. What kind of teaching style does the textbook support?

It has several methods , sometimes, some of exercises encourage group work or to work with partners or being interactive like discussion part.

- h. Do you think that this textbook supports the other skills rather than grammar? And how? Actually we have already grammar course and we are limited by the time and we focus on the listening and speaking, where the group needs a lot of work in this field , so that's why we give grammar part in the book.

- i. Do you use any materials as well as the textbook? If yes what are they? "No only texts of textbook , but I realized that you do presentation"

Yes presentation is part of textbook, where presentation in general is within the topic of the book we don't go outside.

- j. I noticed that you started your lessons by (warm up or immediately starting with the lesson) why? ( this question will depend on my observation of the lessons).

That really but sometimes we have no time to warm up but usually yes where I would ask questions about what do you think of the topic and what are going to discuss.

- k. What are the ways you use to engage the students?

Yes asking questions about this opinions , what are they talking about , how do you see it in our culture , how can we use it in their life.

- l. When do you like your students to work in groups , pairs or their own?

Sometimes if we explain vocabulary in the lesson and exercise this vocabulary in sentence, I prefer work in group, because I want to see how much they understand of word but in some discussion part also when answering listening like listening questions , I prefer doing that individually because I want to assess understanding , but for discussion part I prefer work in group.

m. How do you help the students to process new ideas and information?

I encourage them to be critical with their reading and to explain their opinion agreeing or not agreeing.

n. How do you encourage the students to share their own experiences and ideas about the topic of the lesson?

Yes in presentation I encourage them to include all their opinions what they think even they talk about fact and information , where I encourage them to tell me what do they think about that.

o. How do you like to encourage the students to practice the language?

To read, because reading is first thing will build up vocabulary and understanding , so reading and listening is the best thing I should do in this level .

p. What is your view about collaborative learning in the classroom?

It is good but we have problem of large number of students and we can't give the equal opportunity to practice their skills, because students are shy or reluctant to speak and other groups are usually participating in the class. Other girls don't want to participate as much maybe their language is weak or maybe they are shy, so we encourage them to do so and no problem to do mistakes in this part of learning and we give them the time they need.

q. What difficulties, if any, do you think students might encounter when asked to work in groups?

Yes we rely on one student, we will write and speak for, so we don't have the time to make all students in one group, I like to have each group with five students, so I don't have time.

r. What kind of feedback do you students' value?

Yes I correct sentences and I see the sentence again and correct the words.

E. Do you want to add any other points about how you teach grammar?

As I said I love to have less students in the class and we can give them all opportunities to practice that , so this not easy one as listening, speaking , where girls here need to have more time and efforts , in order to perfect these skills and also maybe we would have less lessons, in state of having five , where we give four or three as a maximum , we can have more time to practice the speaking part.

**Thank you so much for taking part in my study.**

### **The second interview**

#### **Semi structured interview**

Thank you for interesting lessons

### **C. Personal background**

- b. How long have you been teaching English as a second language?  
I have teaching six or seven years.
- d. How long have you been teaching English skills in the university?  
May be three years
- e. Which levels have you taught?  
Level one , level 2. Level 3 and level 4 in skills, grammar , reading , listening, writing etc.

### **D. Experience and satisfaction :**

Thank you for your interesting lessons that I have observed I really enjoyed them. From these lessons, I would like to ask you the following questions:

- s. Which part of the lessons did you like best? Were any problems that you have faced during the lessons?

Firstly I in the listening I like discussion with student “ the part of discussion is vocabulary , vocabulary meaning, they give me example like vocabulary discussion like giving me example of new vocabulary that we discussed in the class for the writing , where I ask the part that describes the type of the paragraph that we study and the techniques of this writing paragraph what we use to your opinion , as narrative and other type we took.

- t. Do you face any problem during this lesson?

Yes sometimes students get confused and they can't understand at the beginning but by clarifying more example and by writing something in the board giving them test a thing a little bit they can understand by taking more exercises in the book, So this is very helpful for them.

- u. Is there anything in the lessons that you would have done differently?

Yes the listening audio is sometimes long , therefore students get bored in the class so we cut listening audios to be like five minutes then students will have no any problem

- v. How do you like to teach English?

Discussion with students , reading with students , making them in groups, some exercises need to be individually , I make them individual or in groups like two three girls in each group, where writing on the board is very important for girls to be concentrated words you have to write, so I believe when teachers write anything students will focus on what he will write too.

- w. Tell me about the textbook. What do you think are its strengths? Does it have any weaknesses in your view?

For the writing book is great but it doesn't describe well for level 1, it is more advanced for level 1, but for level 2 is good , where for level1 there are more basics should be included in the book before going to curriculum as more important thing.

For the listening book I think it is good and clear, where it has listening part, vocabulary part and grammar part and it balanced and good.

- x. What do you think about the topics in the textbooks for example do you think they are meaningful or interesting for the students? Why? What do you do to attract the students to the topics?

For the book as I told you from university I can't change it , but I can add something from outside like papers, notes , handouts to clarify the book, but for how to attract the students, I think by relating everything with life reality, giving some example from reality , when example touches reality you can see information get easier to their minds.

- y. What do you think about the topics are they connected to the students culture? If no how will you link it to the Saudi Culture?

Yes book is associated to our customs and I didn't see anything against religion and culture so it is close to our culture.

- z. What kind of teaching style does the textbook support?

I think communicative approach is mostly used because I told you as writing class and listening class, where there are some grammar parts but not focusing on that.

- aa. Do you think that this textbook supports the other skills rather than grammar? And how?

Yes it is supporting but not enough for grammar skills, but it supports that where some listening has a specific section on grammar. Sometimes when I have time and I see grammar is associated and connected in a way or another to our lessons I do reflect them but I don't focus hundred percent on it as I said they have their own grammar class, they will be confused for writing class or grammar class.

- bb. Do you use any materials as well as the textbook? If yes what are they?

Yes I used as well as textbook, projector, PowerPoint, I take something from internet, where that depends on the lesson if there is a chance to use this thing, students will agree with this.

- I noticed also you ask students do presentation, do you ask presentation?

Yes I do presentation, every girl comes and does her presentation individually, so I let them do presentation as open subject and I don't specify any subject for them, because I believe this presentation represents creativity of girls and to show her creative for what she does.

- cc. I noticed that you started your lessons by (warm up or immediately starting with the lesson) why? (this question will depend on my observation of the lessons).

I think warming up is very important, where I should relate the listening (if continuous) to previous lessons and making quick revision for being sure that students are with me and for remembering what they took, in the new lesson, I relate to the life for example relating education like company and institute with its college to attract their attention.

- How do you do engage students in the class and attract their attention to the lesson?

Yes like writing on the board, when sometimes I see students sleepy I pick up the names randomly to wake up, today two girls were talking and laughing I pointed them and knocked the tables then I told them be with us, suddenly while in the middle of exercise I just called her name (unheeding girl) and asked her to answer, really she was confused and embarrassed, she lost marks.

- dd. When do you like your students to work in groups, pairs or their own?

I think maybe I am wrong or right I don't know, individually is better or group of two girls, where if we make them more than two girls they will be talking and no balance, they will talk all the time, and because of huge number of students which is very problem for the teacher and students themselves, as well as the time and we have rushing gab everything to finish final book and the final exam is earlier.

- ee. How do you help the students to process new ideas and information?

Sometimes I put that in her bonus, where I will ask a question if she gives a brilliant idea I really say excellent, good, very good, thank you, when I say excellent everyone will be looking at, because excellent I think appreciative word where that is said only for excellent girls.

- ff. How do you encourage the students to share their own experiences and ideas about the topic of the lesson?

I actually I say you can read it at home if I give them homework, I say do it at home and read these paragraph at homes , think about it and underline the difficult words with definition of difficult words in the next class I ask them they should do it, some of them they did and some didn't, sometimes in general they prepare themselves.

gg. How do you like to encourage the students to practice the language?

Yes I make them speak , speaking class , reading sentences, reading paragraphs, by speaking by reading and writing, when I give them homework for writing , writing paragraphs in a certain subjects , they write it then I correct it, I find some structural mistakes and grammatical mistakes I underline it then I call her and tell her what are the mistakes and if she didn't put a verb or subject ..etc. where she can focus more on language than writing.

Do you advise them to listen to BBC , other English channels or read more books in English?

Yes I advise them and tell them read a lot for writing , where they can read a lot by writing they can see the techniques of writing and for the listening class I give them an application online where they enter their code and listen all the audios in the book and give them British council audios which are suitable for their level, where they are still in level 1 so they can increase talent in their listening

hh. What is your view about collaborative learning in the classroom?

I believe it is very important and it good for students, where it gives student a trust in herself and confidence when they teacher works with them and collaboration between them will increase even they trust each other and help each other, thus collaboration is very good , also I give them a homework in writing and I ask them swap paper to her friend and everyone correct it , so this will increase her confidence and she will learn mistakes from her own self .

ii. What difficulties, if any, do you think students might encounter when asked to work in groups?

Difficulties for students I think , they don't find a guide to guide them in the group because they are in the same level, discussing between each other I see they are mysteriousness in their eyes , it's ok , jut to learn them work and commit mistakes no problem and they fix it together , difficulties for working group as I told you for teachers , they will not be inclined or working in system, where it is little bit noisy and this affect badly and negatively on the student themselves with sounds and voices , moving the chairs and chatting with each other

jj. What kind of feedback do you students' value?

Sometimes I give them hand in presentation , every girl just finishes her presentation all the class with me give hand, where this is encouraging , if she said something interesting in her presentation I like comment on that and let other students comment on her presentation and say their points of view, I ask do you think of your friend presentation and I am not here for judging and I don't let other students to judge their colleagues , only they should say their points of view.

If students commit mistakes in listening , speaking and errors in sentences , Do you like to correct students directly or indirectly?

No not directly because I give her tense setting , maybe she mistakes in something , let's say the meaning of definition for one word what is the meaning of alternate , they say of course the word means change, I move z I give her a chance , read the example, you have an example , then the other students say teacher teacher, I say no give your friend a chance , she can answer, then after twenty second she gets answer correctly

F. Do you want to add any other points about how you teach grammar?

Really I think that I am afraid and embarrassed as a teacher about the amount of girls is much where the number is large above fifty student and this of course affects the efforts of teachers negatively and timing, now we are in semester of four months but like one month

**Thank you so much for taking part in my study.**

### **The third interview**

#### **Semi structured interview**

Thank you for interesting lessons

##### **A. Personal background**

- a. How long have you been teaching English as a second language?

Now for ten years.

- b. How long have you been teaching English grammar in the university?

Now I started with English language skills from 2008 to 2014, then when I got appointed here in the college I taught some English skills, listening and writing then I took some English course.

- c. Which levels have you taught?

For the listening I started teaching beginners, generally the previous experience was with intermediate and pre-intermediate level.

##### **B. Experience and satisfaction :**

Thank you for your interesting lessons that I have observed I really enjoyed them. From these lessons, I would like to ask you the following questions:

- a. Which part of the lessons did you like best? Were any problems that you have faced during the lessons?

I like writing question itself writing sentences, how sentences build, the organization of paragraphs, what causes of a lot of problems when students committed grammatical mistakes, they always ask how they say this and how they say that, where they have no tools to build sentence itself before paragraph.

- b. Is there anything in the lessons that you would have done differently?

First of all I need more time with students as a first problem also large number of the class, where I need to focus on each group I have chance I would work with one group starting with their difficulties then second group with difficulties, sometimes students who have fluency, they usually write good paragraphs that seems like talking because they have fluency they don't have strategies for example to academic writing but for those who don't have fluency they are good in structure, they pay a lot of attention to grammar, spelling etc. but for the meaning they are not usually good, where they don't experience writing in foreign language.

- c. How do you like to teach English?

Communicative mostly I like to see students energetic but where I come to explain something to them, they use it for other purposes, they take their time in talking they talk and stop, so I don't like the cause when it comes to me talking over time about the listening, there is no part of them is communicative.

- d. Tell me about the textbook. What do you think are its strengths? Does it have any weaknesses in your view?

Weakness is repetition of paragraph, then I don't have to cover most of paragraphs "the sample paragraphs", so redundancy, the grammar section is brilliant, the vocabulary section is divided to word association and calculation is good for writing, so only redundancy I guess. Sometimes I don't focus on book, I use sentences and I use my feedback to direct the lesson differently, so I don't have to follow everything in the book.

- e. What do you think about the topics in the textbooks for example do you think they are meaningful or interesting for the students? Why?

f. What do you do to attract the students to the topics?

Actually they write the topic good I would say but when we come to their opinion paragraph they choose the one is relevant to their experience So the topics are interesting , where most students for covering say yes , they have to relate to whatever they write or discuss, when we come to opinion they choose some topics I am sure about using yes or no, texting or calling everyone can relate to this including some relevant to their experience and the society for example , there is kind of flexibility , so for definition of some terms in the paragraph they need to dictionary to know their meaning, sometimes they provide their own definition, they like idea of defining terms like friendship , freedom, honest on their own way, so each one has his own definition.

g. What do you think about the topics are they connected to the students culture?

If no how will you link it to the Saudi Culture?

When it isn't linked to the culture I try to ask them before if that relates they talk about if not they do describe what is about , how usually people feel, how is it , is it cheap, dirty and so on.

h. What kind of teaching style does the textbook support?

I don't think it is supporting and integrative method like when we teach kids usually integrate many skills together for example listening , writing , reading the most kind of book I like to teach is headway where I integrate all together in one unit , many because of academics don't like the one used for English language academic center , so I think I am not sure but is not definitely like direct message not even English for specific purposes.

Do you like your students to work in groups, pairs or on their own?

Sometimes not all unit directed to work in pairs or group work , it isn't integrative.

i. Do you think that this textbook supports the other skills rather than grammar?

And how?

Yes large section is dedicated for grammar and writing section and every unit including grammar is related to type of paragraph.

Do you explain grammar for them?

Yes sometimes already that isn't taken in grammar class, if so they give example to me for making sure that they know their rule and then they immediately go the exercise if not I explain that by myself.

j. Do you use any materials as well as the textbook? If yes what are they?

I am not relying on different books or websites I use my own. I use some materials for explaining additional things not really mentioned in the book.

k. I noticed that you started your lessons by (warm up or immediately starting with the lesson) why? ( this question will depend on my observation of the lessons).

No I have to mention what we have covered previously to refresh their memories and to link that to new lesson.

l. What are the ways you use to engage the students?

We have strategies like writing together me and them on the board and if it is small class I would ask students to go the board and write different paragraph and if large class I will write and ask them give me their suggestion.

m. When do you like your students to work in groups , pairs or their own?

n. How do you help the students to process new ideas and information?

I believe in discussion , because open discussion can help everyone observe new idea and it gives a chance to ask question in the same time , yes mostly discussion.

o. How do you encourage the students to share their own experiences and ideas about the topic of the lesson?

Yes they speak about their experiences for example when they talk about a subject each one can speak about his own experience, where some of them say no that isn't necessary, some of countries like British are clear, so that depends on country.

- p. How do you like to encourage the students to practice the language?

I like to remind them where that depends on their skills we are working on, So I like to remind them reading , writing and I ask them to go back to the sample paragraphs, if I am not sure about structure of paragraph itself , especially when they come to different types, where each paragraph has its own organization some for example require sequence , how kind of paragraph , processing paragraphs, imperative form is different from narrative form, some of them when they write they forget information that isn't stuck in their mind , so I link read and writing with reducing ideas.

- q. What is your view about collaborative learning in the classroom?

It is best I believe in collaborative learning, So I said already I like students to be energetic and they shouldn't be dead.

- r. What difficulties, if any, do you think students might encounter when asked to work in groups?

They are introverted mostly they find difficulties to engage , take part in discussion, they would be there in group discussion but I hope students avoid that , where I ask them to feel free and make them feel comfortable, sometimes I go around them when they are working on group to see their working together , if they are two or three or not , thus some of them are introverted and to see shyness and confidence , so that would be difficulty.

- s. What kind of feedback do you students' value?

Mostly they are complaining about the course and they ask where do we cover this not that , they don't understand beginning of the course and they ask to cover the first part of book but I say no, we cover the second part, thus through dialogue, students give me their feedback , so that why we spend previous time focusing on section not included in , some students unfortunately only concentrate on what is coming in the final course, other kind of feedback is related to the course, therefore for having feedbacks I ask them for example before the term I give them a quiz as kind of warm up for me and for them saying let's test ourselves to know about anything you didn't like , of course I like to do that.

If students commit mistakes in listening , speaking and errors in sentences , Do you like to correct students directly or indirectly?

I would like to say that orally but if it needs explanation I write it on the board, sometimes I like to use her own , but I change to the way that works , I can sometimes not of course

- A. Do you want to add any other points about how you teach grammar?

I would add more times and I would have editors for the class , I wish certain students help other students, and when we do with collaborative class specially in large classes I would be good to have a group and a head or an editor but I have to try that and I would assign some rules for students.

**Thank you so much for taking part in my study.**

#### **The fourth interview**

##### **Semi structured interview**

Thank you for interesting lessons

##### **A. Personal background**

- a. How long have you been teaching English as a second language?

For six years



- d. How long have you been teaching English grammar in the university?  
For four years
- e. Which levels have you taught?  
So far level 1 and level 2 – skills including grammar , reading and writing.

**Experience and satisfaction :**

Thank you for your interesting lessons that I have observed I really enjoyed them.  
From these lessons, I would like to ask you the following questions:

- a. Which part of the lessons did you like best? Were any problems that you have faced during the lessons?

Actually the most I like in any lecture when I have a discussion " when we discuss with them state, weak sentences, any type of discussion is actually interesting for me and my students and I like the point when I figure out their mistakes and they are able to correct them by themselves or by help of each other, for your question were there any problems, actually yes I have problems such as noisy students or when students are not interested in the class " lecture" so they are not interacting with me.

Do you face any problem during the lesson.

I feel bored because number of students , thus when they have exams , projects to submit in the same day they are tired, so it depends.

- b. Is there anything in the lessons that you would have done differently?  
So far no and to some extent I am happy with what I am doing.

- c. How do you like to teach English?

My best moments are when I am lecturing..

Do you like to teach English for example by using grammar translation methods or it depends.

It depends on the students and textbooks , but generally in speaking I prefer indirect methods.

- d. Tell me about the textbook. What do you think are its strengths? Does it have any weaknesses in your view?

Generally speaking it is good and I like the point about meaning and use , so we have a section titled meaning and use and this is very effective for students and I like to go through it.

- e. What do you think about the topics in the textbooks for example do you think they are meaningful or interesting for the students? Why?

Actually they are meaningful but they are not interesting for the students , because they are not from other cultures and if they don't make much students interested.

- f. What do you do to attract the students to the topics?

I try my best to apply it something to our daily life.

- g. What do you think about the topics are they connected to the students culture? If no how will you link it to the Saudi Culture?

No it is not related to our culture and I try to make it is related by applying it to something related to our daily life , for example when I am talking about the past I ask students what did you do in the weekend, come and describe briefly our class and speaking like this, so I try my best to connect that to the culture.

- h. What kind of teaching style does the textbook support?

I think it supports the interactive approach.

Do you like your students to work in groups, pairs or on their own?

It depends on the route and question, mainly that depends on students if they are welcoming to work in group or pairs but generally they prefer pair work.

- i. Do you think that this textbook supports the other skills rather than grammar? And how?

Yes actually such as speaking , writing and reading

Do you explain grammar for them?

Yes I do cover some speaking points and we have reading texts before each class and I try to link it to writing as much as but I can focus on speaking and reading.

j. Do you use any materials as well as the textbook? If yes what are they?

Yes actually the audio tracks and I give them extra exercises from other books to practice more, where extra exercises including worksheets as homework and presentations to help them, whereas I ask them to present any exercises they want to break the routine of class.

k. I noticed that you started your lessons by (warm up or immediately starting with the lesson) why? ( this question will depend on my observation of the lessons).

We refresh the memory about rules and to review the previous one to make them involved in the lesson, where usually we start lesson with warm-up.

l. What are the ways you use to engage the students?

I like to give them some tricky questions like when one answered she will get a bonus and if she failed and committed certain mistakes , common mistakes I ask one of them to explain it to clarify that to her friend , so if she understands from her then she will get bonus , as way of delivering information to the classmate.

m. How do you encourage the students to share their own experiences and ideas about the topic of the lesson?

Actually by welcoming any answer excepting any point and anything they feel always welcome and we welcome any idea students brings it from her experience as long as that is related to our culture.

n. How do you like to encourage the students to practice the language?

I have a point about previous question so I praise different ideas and I accept any answer if they like presenting any answer and they want to participate and I encourage answering by students to practice language themselves and I give them also presentations for encouraging them to use the language.

o. What is your view about collaborative learning in the classroom?

Actually collaborative learning is good in specific situations where I think if we cannot start it from beginning of the semester we need to have a time to be able to group them effectively , so I think collaborative learning should last more than one semester. So I need to cover certain amounts of textbooks , where sometimes I feel that is priority and more important.

p. What difficulties, if any, do you think students might encounter when asked to work in groups?

Difficulty of collaborative learning is related to students themselves because some of them don't accept sharing in groups which have different levels and this will affect their rates , where rate is most important for students. Some students are not welcoming to work with others.

q. What kind of feedback do you students' value?

Actually I have no two ways to give my feedbacks , one of them is different actually I use it when I have correct answers , always I ask the class like do you agree ladies, this is true, then they say yes or no, sometimes I use indirect feedback , where if I have a problem in the writing I write that on the board and discuss that with same who provide me with answers for correcting herself and students like indeed feedback because it helps them to correct themselves and know , where is problem is fixed it can be corrected.

B. Do you want to add any other points about how you teach grammar?

No

**Thank you so much for taking part in my study.**

## **The fifth Interview**

### **Semi structured interview**

Thank you for interesting lessons

#### **C. Personal background**

- a. How long have you been teaching English as a second language?  
Now it is about more than ten years or more, may be fifteen years.
- b. How long have you been teaching English grammar in the university?  
Also the same period , I only teach English as a second language.
- c. Which levels have you taught?

I have taught preparatory year , level one , level two, level 3.

#### **D. Experience and satisfaction :**

Thank you for your interesting lessons that I have observed I really enjoyed them.  
From these lessons, I would like to ask you the following questions:

- a. Which part of the lessons did you like best? Were any problems that you have faced during the lessons?

The most interesting part is discussion , when we discuss about something with students about an issue, problem they have about a grammatical rule and when other students can figure new rules or comparing like Arabic language rules, they guess other rules which they are going to have, so the most interesting part students can see, it is discussion part.

For problems during the lesson the Most problem is when I ask a student to work in group , they will not participate and they will be shy and they will not work.

- b. Is there anything in the lessons that you would have done differently?

No

- c. How do you like to teach English?

As I am specialized in teaching grammar I like to use deductive way almost all the lesson.

- d. Tell me about the textbook. What do you think are its strengths? Does it have any weaknesses in your view?

I start with weakness , but for the book it is very good , and most they like parts called meaning and use section which is very healthful for students to know the meaning and how to use this word. So it isn't focusing only on the grammatical rule, we say even say other skills.

- e. What do you think about the topics in the textbooks for example do you think they are meaningful or interesting for the students? Why?

They are meaningful but some of topics aren't interesting for these students they don't match their interesting.

- f. What do you do to attract the students to the topics?

sometimes I need to link this topic to attract their attention by using some examples, comparing what is related to something , I relate something to their daily life for example, girls like fashion, cooking, something related to lady.

- g. What do you think about the topics are they connected to the students culture? If no how will you link it to the Saudi Culture?

As I said before giving example, comparing and sometimes I can't change the topic but I can refer to similar topics I have in our culture.

- h. What kind of teaching style does the textbook support?

Yes we have some parts that I need to use audios and listening and discussion and speaking when they write some sentences, so writing is supportive , they should read texts they cover the rule.

- i. Do you think that this textbook supports the other skills rather than grammar?

- j. Do you use any materials as well as the textbook? If yes what are they?

Yes only using textbook, ok interesting, I noticed that you start your lesson by asking students what they have taken, for example you say.

- k. I noticed that you started your lessons by (warm up or immediately starting with the lesson) why? ( this question will depend on my observation of the lessons).

Because of the limit of time and there is no time and the number of students is huge, So also we have specific syllables we have just limited time to explain the topic, I should finish the topic, it isn't enough.

- l. What are the ways you use to engage the students?

By using discussion.

- m. When do you like your students to work in groups , pairs or their own?

It depends on the question and exercise we have, mostly students like to work by their own, maybe because of huge number and not friendly to some of students, "they have been selfish".

- n. How do you help the students to process new ideas and information?

By giving them the chance to participate to say their opinions and their ideas they have, So they a lot of chance.

- o. How do you encourage the students to share their own experiences and ideas about the topic of the lesson?

As I said before by giving them chance to participate to enjoy the class .

- p. How do you like to encourage the students to practice the language?

By reading a lot of tasks, listening audios, speaking English to their friends and I recommend them to use most of the time in their daily life.

- q. What is your view about collaborative learning in the classroom?

Yes because the student will collaborate and have a lot of time to discuss and participate. It will help them, but when have problem with number of students , so we like to use collaborative learning but we face time consuming and large number of students also we have final question and we should follow a specific time , therefore I am not free to teach what I want and my exams have been earlier and time is short.

- r. What difficulties, if any, do you think students might encounter when asked to work in groups?

As I said before some students are selfish , some of them are shy and some will not discuss the rules and exercises , they start chatting and enjoying their time , beside time shortage , so there is not time to use collaborative learning.

- s. What kind of feedback do you students' value?

It depends on time in which we use direct and indirect way , but almost they like indirect way, where students who are corrected directly will not participate in the future.

- E. Do you want to add any other points about how you teach grammar?

no

**Thank you so much for taking part in my study.**

## Appendix J

IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor - DataSet1

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
1	age	Numeric	8	2	age group	(1 00, under	None	8	Left	Scale	Input
2	experience	Numeric	8	2	experience years	(4 00, under	None	8	Left	Scale	Input
3	q1	Numeric	8	2	I prefer to work	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
4	q2	Numeric	8	2	I do like to work	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
5	q3	Numeric	8	2	it is easy to age	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
6	q4	Numeric	8	2	it is easy to ex	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
7	q5	Numeric	8	2	I can exchange	(2 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
8	q6	Numeric	8	2	I feel more resp	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
9	q7	Numeric	8	2	it is a waste of	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
10	q8	Numeric	8	2	I like my textb	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
11	q9	Numeric	8	2	the topics in th	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
12	q10	Numeric	8	2	the topics in th	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
13	q11	Numeric	8	2	topics in the te	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
14	q12	Numeric	8	2	the topics in th	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
15	q13	Numeric	8	2	I prefer to do th	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
16	q14	Numeric	8	2	I gain more ide	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
17	q15	Numeric	8	2	I like to get co	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
18	q16	Numeric	8	2	I get helpful co	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
19	q17	Numeric	8	2	The teacher ins	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
20	q18	Numeric	8	2	my teacher enc	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
21	q19	Numeric	8	2	during the clas	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
22	q20	Numeric	8	2	my teacher pro	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
23	q21	Numeric	8	2	my teacher mar	(7 00, agree	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input

IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor - DataSet1

Visible: 33 of 33 variables

	age	experanc e	q1	q2	q3	q4	q5	q6	q7	q8	q9	q10	q11	q12
1	2.00	5.00	8.00	8.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	7.00	8.00
2	1.00	5.00	7.00	7.00	8.00	7.00	9.00	9.00	7.00	7.00	9.00	7.00	9.00	7.00
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20	1.00	6.00	7.00	9.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	9.00	7.00	9.00	9.00	7.00	9.00
21	2.00	6.00	7.00	9.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	9.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	8.00

IBM SPSS Statistics Processor is ready Unicode ON

