Al Adawi, Idris (2023) *Developing intercultural competence in EFL: a qualitative enquiry into the beliefs and classroom practices of a group of Omani EFL teachers in a higher education institution in Oman.* PhD thesis.

https://theses.gla.ac.uk/83755/

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten: Theses
https://theses.gla.ac.uk/
research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk

University of Glasgow

Developing intercultural competence in EFL: a qualitative enquiry into the beliefs and classroom practices of a group of Omani EFL teachers in a higher education institution in Oman

Idris Al Adawi

B.Ed. (English Language), MA (TESOL and Applied Linguistics)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

School of Education
College of Social Sciences
University of Glasgow

September 2022

Abstract

Intercultural education, which promotes principles of respect, mutual understanding, and harmonious functioning between individuals and social groups, is increasingly acknowledged as a desirable educational goal across almost all national contexts. The Omani educational context, with its current strategic educational imperatives, is no exception. However, research on intercultural education within the Omani EFL teaching context is largely negligible. Even though the country's Philosophy of Education, an educational policy that articulates the country's overarching educational objectives for all institutions, recognises positive intercultural dialogue as a key educational principle, our understanding of Omani EFL teachers' beliefs of intercultural competence (IC) and other culturally-related issues in relation to their teaching context is surprisingly non-existent. By responding to this gap, the current thesis aims to explore and understand how a group of Omani EFL teachers, considering their learning and teaching experiences, perceive and implement IC within the unique, yet underexplored, intersection of Omani social, institutional, and EFL classroom contexts.

Situated within the intersection of two main research areas, language teacher cognition and intercultural education in EFL, the current study draws on two theoretical models, namely Borg's model of language teacher cognition and Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence; both anchored in the constructivist philosophical paradigm. Borg's model serves as the theoretical backbone of this study as it is utilised to explore how Omani teachers' former schooling, professional coursework, and contextual factors mediate the IC-related beliefs into classroom practice. Byram's characterisation of IC is drawn upon in operating the term IC in this study particularly in interpreting the participants' IC-related beliefs and practice. Considering these theoretical underpinnings, alongside the study's overarching purpose, three main questions were developed to guide this enquiry which are (1) How do Omani EFL teachers perceive and implement Intercultural Competence (IC) in relation to their EFL teaching practice? (2) How do Omani EFL teachers' educational and teaching experiences inform their beliefs and practices which are related to IC? and (3) How do identified contextual factors influence Omani EFL teachers' beliefs and practices of IC?

To answer these questions, a multi-method qualitative design was utilised by deploying four data collection methods which are semi-structured interviews, vignettes, classroom observations, and stimulated recall. In terms of recruitment, ten Omani EFL teachers were purposefully selected from a General Foundation Program (GFP) in one government-owned university in Oman. The collected data were analysed thematically using NVivo software generating the themes and sub-themes which constitute the key findings of this research study. The study found that the development of IC exhibits a peripheral position within the manifested pedagogies of the selected participants in spite of its perceived theoretical significance. It is also found that the Omani teachers' former schooling, pre-service teacher education programmes, and accumulative teaching experience together inform, although in various ways, the way IC is perceived and practised by teachers. Additionally, three contextual dimensions are found to intervene substantially in the enactment of teachers' IC beliefs - categorised into socio-cultural, institutional, and classroom-based.

By positioning Borg's framework within the curricular area of intercultural teaching and by situating it within the yet unexamined Omani EFL teaching context, an expanded version of the model is proposed acting as the main theoretical contribution of this study. The expanded model offers nuanced insights into (a) the significant role of the cultural composition within the schooling and teacher education environments in formulating teachers' beliefs of IC, (b) the key role of teachers' general pedagogical beliefs in informing IC-specific beliefs, and (c) the unique contextual factors which mediate Omani teachers' IC beliefs into classroom practice. The theoretical implications are discussed setting the agenda for future versions of the expanded model by highlighting the need to examine the way IC is perceived and implemented in different institutional environments in Oman and to investigate the IC-related beliefs among non-Omani teachers who teach EFL in Omani educational institutions. The practical implications are also discussed offering some recommendations for key stakeholders, namely educational policy makers, teachers, teacher trainers, professional development planners, and curriculum developers.

Table of contents

Abstract 2
Table of contents 4
List of tables 8
List of figures 9
List of abbreviations 10
Dedication 11
Acknowledgement 12
Author's Declaration 13
Chapter 1 | INTRODUCTION 14
1.1 My personal rationale 14
1.2 Research problem 16
1.3 Research purpose and questions 17
1.4 Conceptual framework of the study 17
1.5 Significance of the study 18
1.6 Structure of the thesis 20
Chapter 2 | AN OVERVIEW OF THE OMANI EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT 22
2.1 Introduction 22
2.2 Geographical situation and political system of Oman 22
2.3 Demographics and culture 24
2.3.1 Cultural and linguistic pluralism in Oman 24
2.3.2 The culturally collectivist Omani society 26
2.3.3 Religion 28
2.4 Intercultural education in Oman 29
2.4.1 A brief overview of the educational system in Oman 29
2.4.2 Education policy in Oman and intercultural education 30
2.5 Intercultural education in English language teaching in Oman 32
2.5.1 The status of English Language Teaching in Oman 33
2.5.2 ELT and intercultural education in Oman 35
2.6 Summary 38
Chapter 3 | THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE 40
3.1 Introduction 40
3.2 Theoretical underpinnings: a conceptual understanding of teacher beliefs of IC 41

3.2.1 Intercultural language teaching 41
3.2.2 Language teacher beliefs of IC 54

3.3 Review of related studies: EFL teacher beliefs of intercultural teaching 60

3.3.1 The role of schooling on teacher beliefs and practices of IC 60
3.3.2 The role of professional coursework on EFL teachers' beliefs of IC 62
3.3.3 The role of contextual factors on EFL teachers' beliefs of IC 66
3.3.4 The influence of teaching practice on cognition 72
3.3.5 Divergences between beliefs and practice 73
3.3.6 Research gaps 76

3.4 Summary 77

Chapter 4 | METHODOLOGY 79

4.1 Introduction and statement of research questions 79

4.2 Philosophical worldviews: my ontological and epistemological stances 79

4.2.1 Ontology: a constructivist ontological stance 80
4.2.2 Epistemology: Interpretivism 81

4.3 Methodology: the qualitative research design 82

4.4 An overview of the research procedure 84

4.4.1 Sampling: a purposive approach 85
4.4.2 Recruitment procedure and overview of participant profiles 86
4.4.3 The research site: An Omani government-based higher education institution 87
4.4.4 The General Foundation Programme (GFP) 88

4.5 Data collection methods 89

4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews 89
4.5.2 Vignettes 92
4.5.3 Classroom observation 95
4.5.4 Stimulated recall 99

4.6 Interpreting the data: Thematic analysis (TA) 102

4.6.1 Inductive versus deductive 103
4.6.2 Analysis procedure: Six steps 104
4.6.3 Utilising the Nvivo software 106

4.7 Reflexivity 106

4.7.1 Social location and emotional responses to respondents 107
4.7.2 Academic and personal biographies 108
4.7.3 Institutional and interpersonal contexts 108

4.8 Trustworthiness 110

4.9 Ethical considerations 112

4.10 Summary 113

Chapter 5 | FINDINGS (A): SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND VIGNETTES 115

5.1 Introduction and general overview of findings 115

5.2 A brief overview of the identified codes and themes 116
5.2.1 Theme 1: Educational and teaching experiences with IC 116
5.2.2 Theme 2: The contextual factors which influence intercultural teaching 117
5.2.3 Theme 3: Perceiving and implementing IC in relation to EFL teaching 118
5.3 Educational and teaching experiences with IC 118
5.3.1 Schooling experiences with IC 119
5.3.2 Teacher education and IC 123
5.3.3 Teaching experience and IC 128
5.3.4 Concluding remarks (Themes 5.3.1 to 5.3.3) 132
5.4 The contextual factors which influence intercultural teaching 133
5.4.1 The Omani society 134
5.4.2 The university 140
5.4.3 The classroom profile 145
5.4.4 Concluding remarks (Themes 5.4.1 to 5.4.3) 148
5.5 Perceiving and implementing IC in relation to EFL teaching 149
5.5.1 "Intercultural teaching is important but …" 149
5.5.2 The meaning of IC in relation to EFL teaching practice 150
5.5.3 Operating IC in the EFL classroom 153
5.5.4 Concluding remarks (Themes 5.5.1 to 5.5.3) 159
5.6 Summary 159
6 | FINDINGS (B): CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS AND STIMULATED RECALL 161
6.1 Introduction 161
6.2 Part A: Data from classroom observations 161
6.2.1 Relating foreign cultural content to the local Omani context 162
6.2.2 The textbook as a basis for classroom instruction 165
6.2.3 Teacher as a source of cultural knowledge 167
6.2.4 Lack of student-student interaction in interculturally related discussion 169
6.2.5 The pivotal role of students' level of English 171
6.2.6 Concluding remarks on findings from Part A 174
6.3 Part B: Data from Stimulated Recall (SR) 175
6.3.1 Rationales related to teachers' pedagogical content beliefs 176
6.3.2 Rationales related to the teacher's educational and professional experiences 182
6.3.3 Rationales related to the teaching context 186
6.3.4 Concluding remarks on Part B 190
6.4 Summary 191
7 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS 192
7.1 Introduction 192
7.2 Research Question 1: How do Omani EFL teachers perceive and implement Intercultural Competence (IC) in relation to their EFL teaching practice? 193
7.2.1 A peripheral position: reprioritising IC in the EFL classroom 193

7.2.2 Classroom power imbalance: from teacher's leading construction towards classroom co-construction 195
7.2.3 The skills of discovery and interaction: a missing savoir 198
7.2.4 Conclusion on answering RQ1 200

7.3 Research Question 2: How do Omani EFL teachers' educational and teaching experiences inform their beliefs and practices which are related to IC? 200

7.3.1 Schooling: a re-constructed apprenticeship of observation 201
7.3.2 Professional coursework: the impact of implicit intercultural teacher training 203
7.3.3 Teaching experience: towards more guided reflection-on-action 205
7.3.4 Conclusion on answering RQ2 207

7.4 Research Question 3: How do identified contextual factors influence Omani teachers' beliefs and practice of IC? 207

7.4.1 The sociocultural factor: the intervening role of the Omani national identity 208
7.4.2 The institutional factor: towards a more institutionalised recognition of intercultural objectives in EFL teaching 210
7.4.3 The classroom profile: students' English proficiency and intercultural teaching 212
7.4.4 Conclusion on answering RQ3 214

7.5 The language teacher beliefs of IC in the Omani EFL context: a situated model 214

7.6 Contribution to knowledge 218

7.7 Recommendations for stakeholders 221

7.8 Limitations of the study and directions for future research 224

7.9 A Closing reflection 227

References 229

Appendices 250

7.1 Appendix A: Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman 250

7.2 Appendix B: Interview schedule 251

7.3 Appendix C: Vignettes 252

7.4 Appendix D: Classroom observation schedule with sample notes 253

7.5 Appendix E: Participant information sheet for teachers 254

7.6 Appendix F: Consent form for teachers 256

7.7 Appendix G: Participant information sheet for students 257

7.8 Appendix H: Consent form for students 259

7.9 Appendix I: Themes and sample coding from semi-structured interviews 260

7.10 Appendix J: Themes and sample coding from classroom observations 262

7.11 Appendix K: Themes and sample coding from stimulated recall 263

7.12 Appendix L: List of codes, themes, subthemes, and sub-sub-themes 264

List of tables

Table 4.1 *An Overview of the Participants' Profiles* 87
Table 5.1 *The Link Between Research Instruments and Research Questions* 115
Table 5.2 *Overview of Theme 1: Educational and Teaching Experiences with IC* 117
Table 5.3 *Overview of Theme 2: The Contextual Factors Which Influence Intercultural Teaching* 117
Table 5.4 *Overview of Theme 3: Perceiving and Implementing IC in Relation to EFL Teaching* 118
Table 5.5 *An Overview of Participants' Qualifications and Training Experiences in Relation to Intercultural Teaching* 125
Table 5.6 *Cultural Topics Which Participants Tend to Exclude from Their Teaching* 137
Table 6.1 *Examples of Teachers' Relating Statements Based on Textbook's Content* 163
Table 6.2 *An Overview of the Main Themes in the Textbook and the Teachers' Incorporated Cultural Discussions* 166
Table 6.3 *Examples of Cultural Statements Stated by Teachers during Instruction* 168
Table 6.4 *The Recruited Participants as per the Levels they Teach* 171
Table 6.5 *Examples of Teacher-student Culturally-related Dialogues from Level 1* 172
Table 6.6 *Examples of Teacher-student Culturally-related Dialogues from Level 4* 173
Table 6.7 *Examples of Knowledge-related Incidents and Participants' Recall Responses* 180
Table 6.8 *Examples of the Relationships Between Teacher's Teaching Principles and IC Practice* 182
Table 6.9 *Examples of Participants Recalls which are Related to their Schooling Experiences* 183
Table 6.10 *Examples of Participants Recalls which are Related to Instruction Time* 189

List of figures

Figure 2.1 *Map of Sultanate of Oman (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2013)* 23
Figure 3.1 *Elements and Processes in Language Teacher Cognition, adapted from Borg (2006, p. 283)*......... 58
Figure 3.2 *Interactions Between Teachers' Beliefs, Constraints and Action (Sullivan & Mousley, 2001, p. 148)* 74
Figure 4.1 *Chronological Timeline of the Research Process* 84
Figure 4.2 *Observer's Seating Position in The Classroom* 98
Figure 6.1 *Lesson A - Pathways Listening, Speaking, and Critical Thinking 3 (Chase & Johannsen, 2012, p. 45).* 164
Figure 7.1 *The Language Teacher Beliefs of IC among a Group of Omani EFL Teachers in a Higher Education Institution in Oman (expanded from Borg, 2006, p. 283)* 217

List of abbreviations

CEFR	The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CELTA	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CO1, CO2	Classroom Observation no. 1, Classroom Observation no. 2
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMI	English Medium Instruction
GFP	General Foundation Programme
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IC	Intercultural Competence
ICC	Intercultural Communicative Competence
Int1, Int2	Interview no. 1, Interview no. 2
K-12	Kindergarten to Grade 12
RQ	Research Question
SR	Stimulated Recall
SR1, SR2	Stimulated Recall session no. 1, Stimulated Recall session no. 2
TA	Thematic Analysis
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
US	United States

Dedication

To the memory of my late brother, Oman.

May you rest in peace.

Acknowledgement

I should like to say that I would not have completed this thesis without the support and considerate guidance of several people to whom I am profoundly indebted. To them - to my two supportive and compassionate supervisors, Dr Dely Elliot and Dr Sally Zacharias, to my affectionate parents, Hamed and Moza, to my soulful wife, Zainab, to my two adorable kids, Turki and Danah, to my very cooperating and welcoming study participants, to the brief yet insightful discussions with the great Mike Byram and the distinguished Simon Borg, to my truly best friends, to the vibrant University of Glasgow community, to the generosity of the National Postgraduate Scholarship Programme for funding my PhD, and to others who were connected with my project, many of whom were in some way and often quite unwittingly of assistance to me in writing this thesis, **I record my very grateful thanks**.

Author’s Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, 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.

Printed Name: Idris Al Adawi

Signature

Chapter 1 | INTRODUCTION

1.1 My personal rationale

This thesis sets out to explore the beliefs and practices which are related to intercultural competence (IC) among a group of Omani EFL teachers in the Omani higher education context. Before embarking on such an enterprise, I would like to articulate my personal motives behind the development of this project. First, I reflect on the time when I first visited the UK in 2009 for my MA degree when I visited a country outside the Arabian Gulf for the first time. Because it was a unique and unprecedented sojourn experience, I had to learn how to communicate and interact with students and tutors from different parts of the world. While doing so, I started to develop a conscious awareness of the impacting position of one's own culture when communicating with people coming from different cultural backgrounds. Therewith, as part of my master's programme, I decided to explore this phenomenon further through my dissertation by investigating how Omani learners' cultural background influences the way they interact with foreign teachers in the EFL classroom. Ever since, the topic of intercultural communication in relation to English language teaching has been my chief topic of interest within the realm of academia. In my professional teaching space as an English language tutor, I have always had the interest to observe and understand how Omani EFL learners could improve their ability to interact with others from different cultures in an appropriate and efficient manner.

Secondly, I write this thesis under a personal concern that the globe is undergoing heightened cultural turbulence. In spite of the increasing global mobility and the prevailing cultural diversity around the world over the last few decades, strong versions of nationalism and ethnically driven ideologies across many states seem to be on the rise (Bieber, 2018; Pinto, 2018) - from the Trump's controversial populist administration which attempted to block borders against undesired visitors and migrants, to isolationist referendum movements (such as Brexit, Scotland, Catalonia, etc.), and to the increasing numbers of hate crimes and terrorist attacks across many countries (ibid). Although each may have its own rationales and agenda, these ideological views and political movements may in general diminish the value of being a trans-national global citizen who is conscientiously responsible for all humanity and instead

spur bigoted narratives based on utter race, gender, religion, political ideology, or common descent.

The above-mentioned global turbulences are not independent from the Arab world and more particularly from the Gulf states - the place where I come from. Despite the accelerating globalisation processes within the Gulf region since the 1990s and the consequent growing economic and socio-cultural connections with the global arena, reports show that the Gulf states seem to embrace the economic dimension of globalisation only and resist the cultural layers associated with it (Held & Ulrichsen, 2012). Even though foreign migrants constitute nearly one-third of the total Gulf population, this non-national working force is still struggling to be culturally embraced by the states' nationalistic outlook or even by the local Gulf Arab nationals (Partick, 2012). This phenomenon is sometimes believed to have resulted in exclusionary and stereotypical discourses by the indigenous Gulf populations against *other* cultural groups living in the Gulf states which ultimately create unnecessary barriers against cross-cultural tolerance and mutual understanding.

Nonetheless, this thesis is not politically driven. It neither aims to advocate for certain political or ideological agenda, nor to problematise current political trends. It is, instead, an educationally motivated project which aims to contribute to the intercultural landscape of the world through the means of educational force. It is anchored by the assumption that educationalists, and particularly teachers, are key players who have the capacity to enhance people's lives and to promote a better intercultural discourse; a discourse that discourages ethno-centrism, a point of view that judges one's group's standards as the best, and instead encourages ethno-relativism, a position that all cultural groups are naturally equal and valid (Bennett, 1993).

Owing to these personal motives and convictions, alongside the fact that I belong, as an English language teacher, to the educational arena, I strive in this project to contribute to the educational scholarship which continuously endeavour to advance and foster the value of respecting cultural diversity across different educational contexts. Under the personal premise that the teacher is the key actor in the process of educational transformation, this study takes a teacher's perspective in investigating the development of IC in EFL and explores the IC-related beliefs of a group of EFL teachers in the underexplored Omani EFL context.

1.2 Research problem

Intercultural education, which promotes principles of mutual respect, understanding, and harmonious functioning among individuals, and social groups (Bleszynska, 2008; UNESCO, 2006), is increasingly acknowledged as a desirable educational goal across almost all national contexts (Akkari & Radhouane, 2022). The Omani educational context, with its current educational imperatives, is no exception. However, research within the Omani educational context suggests that there is a gap between the intended goals of intercultural education as advocated in the global literature and the actual practices in Omani educational system (Al-Maamari, 2016). What is more, research on intercultural education within the specific context of EFL teaching in Oman is largely negligible. Even though the country's Philosophy of Education (2017), an educational policy document which articulates the country's overarching educational objectives for all institutions, recognises positive intercultural dialogue as key educational principle, our understanding of Omani EFL teachers' beliefs of intercultural competence (IC) and other culturally-related issues in relation to their teaching context is surprisingly non-existent.

The impact of teacher beliefs over classroom decision-making is now well-established (Borg, 2006; Burns, 1996; Pajares, 1992; Woods, 1996). There is documented evidence that beliefs, which originate from different learning and professional experiences such as early schooling experiences, pre-service teacher training, and accumulating teaching experience, cannot but give shape to the teaching behaviour in the EFL classroom. Based on such theoretical premise, combined with the paucity of related literature in the Omani context, the current study argues that there is still much to know about how Omani EFL teachers, with their distinct educational biographies and professional experiences, perceive IC in relation to their EFL teaching and how their beliefs cohere with pertinent literature as well as the country's intended intercultural objectives formulated in the state-level educational policies. Failure to unpack such a knowledge of teacher beliefs "is likely to result in misguided efforts to improve the quality of instruction" (Thompson, 1984, p. 106) since understanding teacher beliefs is essential towards improving teacher education programmes (Johnson, 1994). Therefore, by increasing our knowledge of Omani teachers' beliefs of IC I propose we can lay the groundwork for tailoring a more

conducive and contextually-informed professional development agenda that can enhance Omani EFL teachers' intercultural teaching practice.

1.3 Research purpose and questions

The above research problem is what this research aims to address by studying the interplay between Omani teachers' beliefs of IC and how these beliefs are enacted in the EFL classroom by virtue of the contextual factors surrounding their teaching profession. Put clearly, the overarching aim of this research is the following:

> **To explore and understand how a group of Omani EFL teachers, considering their educational and teaching experiences, perceive and implement Intercultural Competence (IC) in their EFL classroom under the contextual conditions which situate their teaching practice.**

To address the above prime aim and with reference to the reviewed literature in the field, the following research questions have been developed to guide the enquiry of this study:

1. **How do a group of Omani EFL teachers perceive and implement Intercultural Competence (IC) in relation to their EFL teaching practice?**
2. **How do Omani EFL teachers' educational and teaching experiences inform their beliefs and practices which are related to IC?**
3. **How do identified contextual factors influence Omani EFL teachers' beliefs and practice of IC?**

1.4 Conceptual framework of the study

As introduced earlier, this study probes into the beliefs and classroom practices of a group of Omani EFL teachers in the curricular domain of IC in EFL. Situated in the intersection of two main research areas, language teacher cognition and intercultural education in EFL, the current study draws heavily on two main theoretical models, namely Borg's model of language teacher cognition (2006), and Byram's Intercultural (Communicative) Competence (1997, 2009); both anchored in the constructivist philosophical paradigm. Borg's model aligns with the overarching

purpose of this study in exploring the way teachers' educational and teaching trajectories possibly give shape to their IC beliefs, the influence of the contextual factors at play in their teaching profession, and how these collectively relate to classroom practice. This model has been empirically investigated in several educational contexts and have been utilised as a theoretical lens within different ELT curricular domains such as writing, vocabulary, speaking, reading, and grammar. Drawing on the findings from these studies, the current study ventures that this model can potentially provide a theoretical basis to understand how Omani EFL teachers, with their educational histories and teaching experiences, enact their interculturally-related beliefs into the underexplored Omani EFL classroom.

The study also draws on Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in further defining and operationalising the concept of IC. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of IC, it can be understood and operated differently across different fields of enquiry (i.e., business studies, international relations, politics, cultural studies, etc.). Drawing on Byram's model of IC which is rooted in the field of foreign language education aligns with the context and purposes of this study which is also located in the field of teaching EFL. The model foregrounds five primary components which together characterise the development of IC in the foreign language classroom; these are *knowledge*, *attitudes*, *skills of interpreting and relating*, *skills of discovery and interaction,* and *critical cultural awareness*. Because this model has been utilised extensively in different Western contexts, utilising this model in the Omani government-based higher education context where language classrooms are culturally less diverse than those in the West can further elucidate its relevance and applicability. To the best of my knowledge, the current study is the first data-driven study which draws on Byram's five savoirs in the Omani EFL context.

1.5 Significance of the study

The significance of this study stems from three main considerations. First, this research falls within the area of developing IC in EFL teaching which rests on principles of cultural understanding, positive dialogue, effective co-operation, and appropriate communication among foreign language learners (Byram, 1997; Corbett, 2003). These aims intersect heavily with the UNESCO's persistent effort over the last few decades in promoting intercultural

education across the globe; an effort which resulted in a published intercultural educational framework entitled Guidelines on Intercultural Education (2006) setting out three basic principles of intercultural education:

> ***Principle I*** *Intercultural Education respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all.*
>
> ***Principle II*** *Intercultural Education provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society.*
>
> ***Principle III*** *Intercultural Education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural, and religious groups, and nations. (UNESCO, 2006, p. 33-37)*

The UNESCO's continuous advocacy of the above principles comes in response to the increasing prevalence of globalisation, hypermobility, and internet where individuals from disparate cultural backgrounds become enmeshed within an interconnected global arena. Oman, which is a member of UNESCO since 1972, incorporates the above-mentioned principles into the country's educational policies, at least at the strategic level. However, there is still much to learn about how these principles are translated in practice towards the realisation of intercultural awareness and effective dialogue among EFL learners. Therefore, by zooming in on the Omani EFL teachers' intercultural teaching practice, this study can contribute to our understanding of how the current position of IC is analogous to the policy intentions of the educational imperatives in Oman and to the UNESCO's principles at large.

At a theoretical level, there is shortage of scholarship on a global scale which illuminates the combined roles of teachers' educational and teaching experiences (e.g., the teacher's learning history, professional teaching practice, and in-service training) on the formation and enactment of IC-related beliefs. Different studies draw (either incidentally or as part of a focused investigation) on these experiences but in a disintegrated fashion. Maijala (2020), for example, draws on the role of schooling; Cushner and Mahon (2009) and Wilhelm et al. (1996) highlight the impact of pre-service teacher training; whereas Matsumoto (2018) and Othman and Ruslan (2020) tap into the role of accumulative teaching experience. However, there is a very limited

number of studies which combine in its enquiry the influence of the aforementioned experiences in tandem with the surrounding contextual conditions when investigating EFL teachers' beliefs of IC. By utilising Borg's framework, which gives joint attention to the above components, the study seeks to increase our knowledge on the role of the different key educational and teaching experiences and how these potentially give shape to the decision-making related to intercultural teaching practice.

At the practical level, the significance of this study lies in its potential contribution in informing the intercultural teaching practice in the Omani educational context (and other similar contexts). The possible implications from this research can have particular attractions for different stakeholders in Oman; mainly, educational policy makers, teachers, teacher trainers, professional development planners, and curriculum developers. Teachers and teacher trainers are specifically key targets since the current study focusses on the teacher as a primal unit of analysis. By recruiting ten Omani EFL teachers who had their undergraduate teacher training degrees in Omani educational institutions, the study seeks to unveil insights on how Omani teachers make meaning of these educational experiences and eventually draw an image of the role which teacher education programmes in Oman can play for the betterment of intercultural teaching practice. Ultimately, the findings of this study aim to stand as premises for decision-makers on teacher education programmes on how to envisage better curricular agenda which facilitates meaningful, effective, and contextually situated transformation of teachers' understandings and practices of intercultural teaching in light of the unique, yet underexplored, sociocultural and political circumstances surrounding their profession.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised in seven chapters. **Chapter One,** the current chapter, offered an introduction to this thesis. **Chapter Two** describes the selected context of the study by giving an account on the key social, cultural, and political issues surrounding the Omani educational system. It also gives a specific attention to the Omani EFL context in higher education, particularly in relation to intercultural teaching. In **Chapter Three**, I present the theoretical foundations which underlie and inform my study and I shall review the literature on English language teacher beliefs and practices of IC in relation to the identified theoretical

underpinnings. Subsequently, **Chapter Four** details the proposed methodology of the study which includes a presentation of the research design, data collection methods, and an account on the selected site and participants. This chapter also gives an account on the study's trustworthiness, researcher's reflexivity, and the ethical considerations linked with the study. Later, **Chapter Five** draws on the findings from the semi-structured interviews and vignettes whereas **Chapter Six** presents the findings from the classroom observations and stimulated recall. Building on these two findings chapters, **Chapter Seven** synthesises and discusses the key findings in relation to the study's proposed conceptual framework and reviewed literature in order to answer the proposed research questions. Therewith, the chapter makes concluding remarks on the key contributions of this study, highlights the study's key implications and recommendations and provides suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2 | AN OVERVIEW OF THE OMANI EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

Having introduced the research project in the previous chapter, this chapter seeks to offer an account of the Omani educational context which situates the enquiry of this thesis. The current study, which ventures into the IC-related beliefs of a group of Omani EFL teachers, presumes that beliefs do not manifest in a vacuum but are instead grounded within the characteristics of the context in which they occur (Skott, 2009). By unpacking these contextual characteristics, the chapter therefore aims to provide a tentative positioning of intercultural education within the current intersection of the Omani political, sociocultural, and educational settings which surround the EFL teaching profession in Omani HEIs.

In terms of organisation, the chapter starts in **Section 2.2** by providing a brief overview of Oman's geographical situation and political system. Next, **Section 2.3** casts some light on Oman's demography and culture. Then, **Section 2.4** gives an account of some key aspects of the Omani educational system - its historical development, strategic policies, and anticipated challenges in relation to intercultural education. Because the research focus is the Omani EFL teachers, **Section 2.54.1** sheds light on the current status of ELT in Oman. The last section, **2.5.2** places a particular discussion on the current position of intercultural education in EFL in Omani HEIs.

2.2 Geographical situation and political system of Oman

Oman is an Arab state located in the far east of the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia. It shares borders with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (see Figure 2.1 below). Officially known as the Sultanate of Oman, the state is an official member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab League, and the United Nations. It is internationally renowned for its independent and moderate approach in dealing with foreign policies which have helped the state throughout its historical trajectory to remain away from regional political conflicts (Kechichian, 1995; Lefebvre, 2010). Even in the middle of the heated political tensions in the Gulf between Saudi Arabia and its close allies, on the one part, and Iran, on the other part, Oman keeps firmly its political and friendly ties with those opposing states and other

neighbouring countries. For this, the Sultanate of Oman has acquired a global reputation for promoting cross-national understanding and for encouraging opposing regional powers to focus on commonalities and reach acceptable trade-offs (Kechichian, 1995).

Figure 2.1 *Map of Sultanate of Oman (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2013)*

In terms of the political status, Oman is an independent country with full sovereignty. Usually depicted as an *absolute monarchy* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018), the state is ruled by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq who holds ultimate executive and judiciary powers, acting as the supreme head and prime minister of state. However, a level of democracy is promoted through *Majlis Al Dawlah* (State's Council) and *Majlis Al Shura* (Consultation Council), both of which form the main parliament in Oman, the Council of Oman (Kumar, 2016). While the members of the State's Council are selected and assigned by a royal decree, the members of the Consultation Council are democratically elected by the Omani people. Both councils serve as key platforms through which members can voice their concerns and help the government in shaping the general policies of the country (Shura, 2019). However, they are arguably constrained within their merely consultative role as they have been granted only limited legislative power in making executive decisions.

In terms of regional administration, the country is divided into eleven governorates. Each of these governorates is further divided into smaller provinces, called *Wilayats*, headed by a local governor appointed by the government called *Wali* (Ministry of Information, 2018). While this subordinate organisational system is intended to encourage regional administration, the governing process of each Wilayat remains highly dominated by the centralised government in Muscat as both executive and legislative powers are concentrated in the hands of the Sultan and the cabinet (Ivanyna & Shah, 2012). Such a centralised system may have been advantageous in the 1970s and 1980s (with then newly reformed state) in setting a cohesive and focused approach in executing rapid nation-wide reforms (Worrall, 2020) but they might now bring limitations to the quality and flexibility of local administration within the regional districts. Such a limitation might impact the autonomy of local educational institutions where the majority of decision-making is limited to following mandates processed at a ministerial (or cabinet) level. For this, there have been criticisms (Westrick & Miske, 2009) that due to the centralised and hierarchical system, regional educational institutions lack adequate and prompt recognition of their unique needs in terms of, for example, the teaching resources, staff development programmes, and curriculum.

2.3 Demographics and culture

2.3.1 Cultural and linguistic pluralism in Oman

Central to understanding the wider social context of Oman is to cast light on its population and demographic structure. In terms of population, the latest official records show that the population in 2020 was around 4.4 million (NCSI, 2021, p. 58). The official records also show that the Omani nationals constitute 61% of the whole population (2.7 million) which indicates a large number of expatriate workforce living in state (1.7 million). This high level of dependence on expatriates initiated in the 1970s when the Omani government had a national labour that was still incapable, both technically and professionally, to implement the aspired reforms instigated by Sultan Qaboos in 1970 during what is usually referred to as Oman's Renaissance. According to Winckler (2000), the Omani government with the advent of the new Sultan was keen, during the 1970s, to accelerate socio-economic growth, yet "the relatively small and unskilled national workforce required a massive import of foreign workers, which from the early 1980s onwards constituted the majority of Oman's total labour force" (p. 23).

From a multicultural point of view, the constituting position of expatriates within the Omani demographic composition and the sociocultural consequences ensued from this cannot be understated. The vast majority of expatriates in Oman are of diverse ethnicities, religions, and regional origins (Peterson, 2004) who come to the state for different motives, such as political turmoil in their home countries or come in pursuit of better job prospects. Nonetheless, despite their disparate cultural backgrounds, foreigners have generally been able to blend peacefully in the Omani community while contributing to its economic expansion and prosperity (Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2014). This blend is prevalent not only in modern and metropolitan cities in Oman but even in indigenous places in the interior as well as in coastal areas in Oman (Jones & Ridout, 2015). However, Mehta and Heble (2015) warn that some communication gaps between expatriates and Omani citizens do exist and urge for further effort which would enable a more effective intercultural interaction between the host nation and expatriates. This seems to suggest that while Oman is highly reputable in maintaining a domestic multicultural blend across the different ethnicities living in state, the need to establish an even more intercultural understanding should never be undervalued.

With regard to language, Arabic remains the national and official language in Oman (Oman: The Basic Statute of the State, 2002). However, other languages are also spoken in state mainly due to the historic presence of many ethnic groups in the country for more than five centuries (Al-Ismaili, 2018). For example, many Omanis who have ancestors in Zanzibar (Tanzania) speak Swahili, others who have roots in Baluchistan (part of Pakistan) speak Baluchi or Urdu, others coming from Iranian origins speak Farsi or Lawati and some who live in the northern mountains of Dhofar speak Jibbali (Al-Ismaili, 2018; Peterson, 2004). The linguistic diversity is deemed to have positively influenced Omanis to tolerate linguistic pluralism which in turn made Omanis develop positive attitudes towards learning languages other than Arabic (Al-Ismaili, 2018). Such an attitudinal factor, from an intercultural understanding perspective, might have also contributed to an increased tolerance towards people with differing linguistic backgrounds living in Oman.

Besides the above-mentioned languages, English has grown over the years to become a widely used language in Oman after Arabic. This has partially been due to Oman's historically global connections with countries such as Great Britain, India, and Persia (Iran); in addition to the

relatively large number of foreigners within Oman's workforce (Al-Ismaili, 2018). Consequently, English has become a prevalent medium of communication between Oman and the outside world, and between Omanis and foreigners within state. Moreover, the globalized status of English as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2007) seems to have greatly influenced its presence in the Omani context in many aspects. For example, English is the dominant language in HEIs for being the main medium of instruction. Further, English is becoming increasingly institutionalised within the business sector by becoming the common linguistic preference of communication within different business institutions (Al-Issa, 2019). More detail on the status of English language in relation to education will follow in a subsequent section (see 2.4.3).

2.3.2 The culturally collectivist Omani society

Similar to the majority of Arab and particularly Gulf nations, the Omani society seems to emphasise the significance of the unity of social group (Common, 2008; Shah, 2017; Valeri, 2019; Zaharna, 2009). For this, Common (2008) posits that in Oman there is a high degree of *collectivism* where individuals inject larger consideration to the needs of their social group more than the personal goals of the individual (Hofstede, 2001). Unlike *individualistic* societies (typically prevalent in Western and highly cosmopolitan countries), ingroups in Oman hold general perceptions about the importance of allegiance to social community and commitment to collective cultural norms (Al Asmi & Caldwell, 2018; Triandis, 1995).

The collectivist/individualist categorisation of nations is not uncontroversial since accurate representation in this regard are very difficult to identify, but several studies from the Omani cultural context have found patterns which seem to indicate a collectivist mindset that pervades across the Omani cultural landscape in general (Common, 2008; Little & Al Wahaibi, 2017; Shebani, 2018; Valeri, 2019) and among Omani English language learners in particular (Salih & Omar, 2021). Examples of these patterns, according to Common (2008, p. 183), include "pride in tradition; dependence on relatives and friends; and emphasis on consultation with in-groups". Valeri (2019) observes that although many Omani parents teach their children how to be individually responsible and self-reliant, they tend to foster strong empathy and loyalty towards the norms of the wider community (e.g., neighbours, tribe members, and co-nationals). Similarly, Salih and Omar (2021) report in their study that Omani ELT students hold self-perceptions of their culture as being collectivist as opposed to Western culture being

“individualistic with fragile relationships” (p. 189). Such perceptions, from a sociocultural point of view, are thought to have contributed to strengthening social stability, peace, and group cohesion among Omani social communities and, thus, have reduced social conflicts over the years. At the same time, they might have encouraged an inhospitable environment for individually dissimilar manners which are usually considered, in light of collectivism, disruptive to the harmony of the group.

Arguably, the assumed collectivist mindset in Oman is sometimes ratified at the governmental level. The Omani state, with its nationally-oriented policies, strives to preserve the collective Omani identity and its traditional cultural assets. In support of this claim, the government, for example, forbids any sort of tampering with the Omani national costume (*Dishdash* for men, and *Abaya* for women) wherein tailors and traders are asked by law to refrain from introducing novel and unfamiliar designs into the national Omani costume to maintain its collective identity (Aisa, 2017; Roche et al., 2014). In addition, foreigners living in Oman are enjoined to respect the Omani conservative cultural landscape by wearing modest clothes which cover their shoulders and legs (GOV.UK, n.d). These governmental jurisdictions, in essence, endorse the common cultural values held by the majority of Omani communities.

In relation to the main topic of the current study (i.e., intercultural competence), the implications of the individualist/collectivist binary on intercultural development in Oman cannot be understated. While extreme individuation within our ultimately interconnected reality is undesirable and may leave one “vulnerable to isolation and low self-esteem” (Brewer, 1991, p. 478), it can be argued that excessive loyalty to group memberships, on the other hand, within Omani societies might lead to an underestimation of the unique nature of individuals and, moreover, an increase of stereotypical view of other social groups. This is not to suggest that a level of membership to a community is unfavourable but to emphasise the significance of striking a delicate balance between attending to the reasonable demands of a social group and the differentiation demands of the individual self. Unless values of independent thinking and intercultural skills are equally addressed within Omani educational institutions, such balance can be far from reach.

2.3.3 Religion

Islamic religion is also viewed as a fundamental aspect within the *collective* Omani culture. The arrival of Islam in the 7th century marked a turning point in the religious composition of the Omani population. Ever since, Islam has become the dominant faith in Oman and, to date, it remains the official religion of the state according to the state's constitution (Oman: The Basic Statute of the State, 2002). Given this recognised legal status, the Omani legislation is heavily built on the essence of *Islamic Sharia*, or Islamic law. Further, Islamic rites and values are explicitly and widely disseminated by the Omani government. For example, a school subject entitled *Islamic Education* is formally introduced as a core and compulsory curricular subject in both public and private educational institutions in all grades starting from as early as kindergarten towards the end of secondary school with five weekly lesson units in average (Bouzenita & Al-Salimi, 2020). In addition to the presence of Islamic values in the formal regulations of the state's establishment, these values greatly permeate Omani's public and private lives. Similar to many other Islamic nations, Omanis have strong observance over the five pillars of Islam which are *faith in God*, *prayer*, *charity*, *fasting*, and *pilgrimage to Mecca*. These basic acts predominantly form the foundations of Muslims' life in Oman.

However, despite the dominance of Islam in public and private lives in Oman, acts of religious discrimination remain strictly prohibited by the Omani government (Al Sadi & Basit, 2013). In addition, there is a considerable freedom for non-Muslims to perform their religious rites on condition that they do not offend public order. This is reflected in the fact that in Muscat, the capital of Oman, for example, there are churches, Hindu temples, and a Sikh community; all of which reflect a level of multi-cultural acceptance towards religious pluralism in Oman. According to Leonard (2015):

> *In Oman Christian choirs are allowed to perform choral hymns in public spaces during the Christmas season. Hindus openly celebrate the festival to Lord Shiva and Shias perform rituals of mourning on the Day of Ashura in the month of Muharram through the streets of Muttrah. The same public displays of religious devotion are often restricted in many western nations that seek to keep public space free from religious expression. Among modern nations, Oman has fared well in this regard, having achieved notable legal, constitutional, and practical protections for and broad cultural acceptance of the presence and participation of non-Muslim religions in public life*. (p. 268)

Relevant to the purposes of this thesis, therefore, is to explore how the above realities where strong adherence to Islam, on the one hand, and the tolerance to other religions, on the other, may interact with concepts of culture and interculturality in the realm of intercultural teaching. As suggested by Zaharna (2009), the fundamental appeal and importance of Islam in the Arab world can give shape to the way intercultural communication is performed and the role of religion, I believe, cannot be uncoupled from our overall understanding of IC in the Omani context. Such an awareness imposes the necessary discourse of examining how educational institutions approach principles of intercultural understanding in order to maintain the balance between adhering to the nation's dominant Islamic identity and the acceptance of other religions or cultural ideologies in-state.

2.4 Intercultural education in Oman

Having presented an overview of Omani political and sociocultural contexts, this section visits Oman's educational context to understand the position of intercultural development (or lack thereof) within the state's national educational agenda. Towards that end, the following sub-sections seek to give a description of the country's educational system and the postulated strategic policies which are related to the topic under question (i.e., the development of IC in EFL teaching).

2.4.1 A brief overview of the educational system in Oman

Formal education system in Oman is comparatively new. It is only in 1970 that the first nationwide public education system came to existence. Before 1970, there were only three schools which focused only on teaching the Arabic language and Islamic religion (Ministry of Education, 2011). However, after the advent of Sultan Qaboos to the throne in 1970 in what was known as the Omani Renaissance, much emphasis was devoted to education which in response gave rise to a nationwide eagerness and admiration for knowledge. Subsequently, the number of schools started to increase rapidly. Within only five years, the number of schools rocketed from only three in 1970 to over two hundred schools in 1975 (Ministry of Education, 2011). In addition, preparatory and secondary schools opened their doors for the first time in 1972/1973 and in 1973/1974 respectively. Today, there are more than 1808 schools that provide pre-tertiary

education around the country (NCSI, 2018). These figures, I believe, represent a massive transformation in the quantitative infrastructure of the educational system in Oman in terms of the number of schools, enrolled students, and recruited teachers and personnel.

Notably, the rapid growth in quantitative infrastructure, illustrated above, has been corroborated with the government's continued plans to improve the *qualitative* infrastructure to meet higher quality standards in education. Represented by multiple educational reforms, these quality standards were instated to uplift Omani learners' capability for the challenges associated with globalization and the imperatives of the twenty first century. In the particular dimension of intercultural awareness, the Omani government's obligation to provide a quality education capable of producing skilled and trained global citizens who are capable of working in diverse cultural settings is explicitly instated within the state's education policy, the focus of the following section.

2.4.2 Education policy in Oman and intercultural education

Because the related literature stresses the role of educational policies within national curricular guidelines in developing learners' intercultural skills (Gonçalves & Carpenter, 2012; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) as well as in developing teachers' conceptions about intercultural teaching (Gu, 2016), this section traverses the current position of intercultural education within the overall strategic objectives of Omani national curricula as voiced in the relevant published guiding documents. Oman's current educational policies are spearheaded by the Education Council, the state's supreme educational institution. Its overarching objective is to raise "the standards of all forms, levels, and outcomes of education in the Sultanate of Oman to improve its quality in a way that corresponds with the general policy of the State, development plans and the needs of the labour market" (The Education Council, 2016a). Acting as an overall guide for educational planning in Oman, the Council is responsible for setting up the overarching educational policies for all educational stages in Oman (i.e., kindergarten, school, and university). In addition, it monitors the performance of all educational institutions and makes informed decisions in this regard (The Education Council, 2016a). Therefore, it becomes necessary to highlight the educational policies stipulated and regulated by the Education Council which are specifically related to intercultural education and discuss how these might inform the current study.

The Council's educational policies are represented in a document called, the Philosophy of Education, which comprises a set of nation-wide goals and principles which act as guidelines for the development of all educational sectors in Oman. The principles covered in the Philosophy of Education are set around sixteen themes which are: Integrated Growth of Learners, Identity and Citizenship, National Prestige and Respect, Good Values and Behaviour, Human Rights, Responsibility and Accountability, Education for Consultation, Sustainable Development, National Responsibility and Partnership, Quality Education, Education and Work, Knowledge and Technology, Research and Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Peace and Mutual Understanding, and finally Lifelong Learning (The Education Council, 2017, p. 20-28).

The topic of interculturality, which refers broadly to the rightful form of interaction between diverse cultures, is by and large featured in the fifteenth principle, *Education for Peace and Mutual Understanding*. The pronounced objectives within this principle (see Appendix A), converge greatly with the objectives of mainstream intercultural education, particularly, in raising awareness of cultural diversity, promoting tolerance among different social groups, and developing international understanding (Byram et al., 2002; Deardorff, 2009; Parmenter, 2010). This shows that in line with the widely recognised position of intercultural objectives across many national education contexts, *Principle Fifteen* represents a testimony to the significance given by the educational policy to respect cultural diversity within the Omani society as well as across the world. These objectives mandate all educational institutions in Oman to facilitate the means through which they can be met, hence encouraging the achievement of IC.

However, I argue that the way we operate intercultural objectives in Principle Fifteen cannot be uncoupled from the other competing principles within Oman's Philosophy of Education. That is, one should understand whether the principle of *Peace and Mutual Understanding* discussed above is addressed by teachers in a coordinated manner with the second principle *Identity and Citizenship* which involves objectives that aim to reinforce the national cultural identity (see Appendix A). While this principle should not theoretically presume any conflict with other existing themes related to international and intercultural understanding, it can arguably be open to ambivalent interpretations by teachers in their everyday teaching practice; particularly with regard to meaning of the Omani national identity against the meaning of interculturality and global citizenship.

Elaborating on the above dilemma, it is worth to mention that it is not unusual that educational policies are articulated with the intention of maintaining a national identity. However, this intention should be equally aligned with the demands of the interconnected nature of the contemporary world where sub-national ethnicities and identities interact and co-exist (Byram, 2009). Educators, if foregrounding national identity objectives independently from intercultural objectives, might be at risk of exclusively imposing a mono-cultural view of the world to Omani learners. With reference to the guiding principles under Identity and Citizenship, misconceiving objectives such as *providing sound background in Islamic ideology*, *encouraging students to feel proud of their Omani identity*, and *reinforcing a sense of belongingness to Islamic and Arab nations* can promote negatively driven ethnocentric perceptions at the expense of intercultural and global citizenship values. This argument is supported by Al-Maamari's study (2016) which found that teachers in pre-tertiary education in Oman are largely unprepared to engage with issues related to global citizenship, interculturality and religious diversity. Such a lack of preparedness is reportedly represented by a traditionally authoritarian and content-led style of teaching which together instil a passive role in students within the intercultural development process. Al-Maamari's study, which focused on teaching the Social Studies subject in Omani schools, concluded that there is a mismatch between the aspirations of intercultural education as promoted in the relevant literature and the actual practices in Omani schools.

In all, it can be argued that setting out guiding intercultural aspirations within national policy documents, whilst necessary and helpful, is not a sufficient condition for the immediate realisation of such objectives in the classroom. This in turn does not only suggest that more elaborate guidelines are needed at the institutional level on how policies can better be interpreted and operationalised by teachers, but also the need to explore teachers' perceived understandings of interculturality in light of the given policy context and how these cohere with intended objectives. Therefore, more studies are needed on studying how language teachers in Oman can enact these guiding principles when approaching intercultural teaching in their EFL classroom.

2.5 Intercultural education in English language teaching in Oman

Because the current study seeks to explore teacher's beliefs of IC within the specific context of EFL teaching in Oman, this section seeks to shed light on this area by giving an overview of the

status of intercultural education in the context of ELT in Omani educational institutions. The first subsection starts by presenting the status of ELT in Oman with a particular focus on the General Foundation Programme (i.e., the ELT programme where this study is situated). The subsequent section discusses the potential role which ELT plays in promoting or hindering the development of Omani students' IC and how this role can inform the current study.

2.5.1 The status of English Language Teaching in Oman

As discussed earlier in section 2.3, with the advent of Sultan Qaboos to the throne in 1970 Oman has started to witness considerable changes not only in the realms of economy and politics but also in the socio-cultural aspects of life. One of these socio-cultural changes has been the mounting recognition of the English language as an important tool for modernisation and national development (Al-Issa & Al-Mahrooqi, 2017). While the Arabic language remains dominantly the national and official language of state, English has been exponentially used in several public domains, such as education, business, and media (Al-Issa, 2019). Within the everyday aspects of life, English is used in "banks, chemist shops, medical clinics, showrooms, general trade stores, restaurants, factories, hotels, insurance agencies and companies" (Al-Issa, 2006, p. 199). Therefore, being a common medium of communication in these private sectors, alongside its hegemonic position as a lingua franca, the mastery of English language has become increasingly one of the prerequisites for securing a job in Oman.

The above imperative, in turn, attracted the government's attention and legislative support over the use and spread of English in Oman. For example, English has been formally institutionalised in both government and private organisations and considered as the only official foreign language in Oman according to official policies (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). Moreover, it is widely used as a medium of instruction across the majority of the HEIs in Oman (Denman & Al-Mahrooqi, 2019). In around forty universities and colleges in state, it is the main medium of instruction for the science, business, communication, and technology academic specialisations. These realities arguably demonstrate not only the wide prevalence of the English language across the educational institutions in Oman but the significant position it holds in the everyday learning experiences of Omani HEI learners.

However, such a significant position necessitated a level of proficiency in English for Omani learners prior to their enrolment to HEIs. For that, the educational policies in Oman have stressed the role of English language learning as an integral part of national educational objectives. Initially, between 1970 till 1998, English was taught in primary education starting from grade four (around the age of 10). However, under a reformed educational system called Basic Education System, the number of English classes have been lengthened and pupils started learning English in grade one (Sergon, 2011). English is now taught five to seven periods per week, each period is forty-minute long - comprising around three to four hours a week (Al-Jardani, 2012). This way, students become exposed to the English language throughout the different stages of their pre-tertiary education aiming for an increased language proficiency.

However, in spite of the reformulated position of English language within the education system, the current practice of ELT has been associated with several drawbacks. In a notable review done by Al-Issa and Al-Mahrooqi, (2017) over different studies in the area, the conundrums which seem to permeate ELT in Oman has been summarised as follow:

- student's lack of intrinsic motivation
- student's lack of competence in communication skills
- teacher inadequacy
- textbook-based teaching and inadequate curricula
- memory-based exams which have failed to reveal students' language performance
- limited exposure time to English
- and the system and the school environment (p. 43)

The above setbacks in the ELT status in Omani schools have arguably resulted in an unbridged gap between pre-tertiary level where mastery of English remains underachieved and tertiary level where English is predominantly used as the main means of instruction. Due to weakness in English proficiency, students finishing secondary education and entering post-secondary education are believed to face hardships in adapting to university life and a great deal of difficulty in understanding the subject content "at a deep level" (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018, p. 3). In this sense, obtaining an adequate level of English language proficiency becomes a pre-requisite in order to enter the different academic specialisations in Omani HEIs where English is the common medium of instruction.

In response to this problem, the Omani government introduced what is known as the General Foundation Programme (GFP) to bridge the divide between the level of English among school graduates and the level needed for higher education studies (Al-Issa & Al-Mahrooqi, 2017). The GFP in Omani HEIs acts as a stepping-stone as it is designed to help Omani students who just finished secondary education better prepare for their further studies in higher education. In this programme, students undertake intensive English language courses usually within a period of one academic year to meet the language entry requirements of different Omani HEIs. In addition to the mastery of English, the foundation programmes in Omani HEIs, according to Tuzlukova et al. (2019), take into account multiple objectives which are derived from "the culture of the society, local and global needs of the future citizens, social communities, communication networks, and collaboration among various institutions/universities" (p. 481). By so doing, the GFP arguably recognises that not only the linguistic skills but also other life-long learning skills are needed for effective university-level education. This recognition further indicates how sociocultural and intercultural aspects prevail as a constitutive part of the ELT environment in Omani HEIs; an area which will be further discussed in the following section.

2.5.2 ELT and intercultural education in Oman

Central to the current enquiry is to understand the current role ELT plays in augmenting the development of students' IC particularly from the Omani teacher's perspective. As discussed earlier, the wide prevalence of English across Omani educational institutions comes as a recognition of its hegemonic position as a global lingua franca - being "the preeminent language of science, scholarship and engagement with the world's academic and business communities" (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018, p. 4). In turn, the English language in Oman becomes a key tool not only for domestic socio-economic plans but also for the effective integration of Omani citizens into the wider international community with its diverse cultural heterogeneity.

According to the Ministry of Education, the recently introduced English language curriculum plans in Oman aim to "equip learners with higher cognitive abilities, skills, and attitudes that Omani learners will need to succeed in this rapidly changing society" (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 7). This objective seemingly suggests that ELT can, in part, be a helpful tool for preparing Omani citizens to be interculturally competent in order to be active participants in the

global arena and not merely as a tool for raising the learners' linguistic proficiency. In Al-Mahrooqi and Denman's (2018) words, English education in Oman seeks "to better integrate the country into the international community by taking advantage of the access to global markets and academic and professional mobility that globalization allows" (p. 4). These objectives recognise the constitutive role English language education plays in promoting intercultural understandings among Omani learners and hence prepare them to be effectively and appropriately active within the international community.

Against such understanding, it can be argued that any setback in the delivery of ELT practice might impact the learners' linguistic achievement required for intercultural development. As such, the drawbacks associated with ELT practices in Oman, discussed in 2.4.3.1, might negatively affect the Omani learners' communicative, social, and intercultural skills. In support of this argument, Al-Mashikhi et al. (2014), who investigated Omani students' attitudes of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in one Omani HEI, indicated that Omani students undergo communicative and social struggles during their studies due to the demands of EMI. The study demonstrated that over 60% of Omani students tend to refrain from expressing and defending their opinions in the classroom because of their lack of confidence in their English proficiency. This finding seems to affirm the mutual and dynamic relationship between acquiring the necessary English language skills, on the one hand, and the development (or hindrance) of the social skills required to interact with the outer environment, on the other hand. In other words, without mastery of English language proficiency, the development of Omani students' social, communicative, and intercultural skills could be impeded.

In similar veins, Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2018) further indicate the intricate relationship between ELT and the development of Omani learners' sociocultural skills. They report that sociocultural issues in ELT in Oman are sometimes associated with the belief among teachers that "learning in, and about, English inevitably involves the acquisition of Western values and beliefs that may not be compatible with traditional Arab and/or Muslim identity" (p. 4). Such a perspective could arguably be founded on the fear of linguistic imperialism which describes the transfer of language (and culture) of a dominant group onto another group (Phillipson, 1992). Those assumed fears are deeply embedded in the teachers' cultural beliefs and ideologies which in turn can resonate in the way they make culturally-related decisions in teaching. Therefore,

the language teacher beliefs among Omani teachers will become central to the process of intercultural development in Omani HEIs.

Along the impact of Omani teachers' own beliefs on the development of Omani learners' IC, the contextual conditions which surround the teachers' professional practice should not be ignored. Al-Issa (2019), for example, warns that ELT in Oman has been depicted with a political "culturalist ideology" (p. 263) where teachers are forced by the educational authority to "teach the mandated textbook in the same way and following the same routines, regardless of the way they were educated and trained as humanistic professionals" (p. 266). Subsequently, teachers' autonomy and agentic voice become minimalised by the highly structured prescriptions of the Ministry of Education. Al-Issa proceeds to argue that Omani teachers are

> …. confronted with the politically dominant and competing culturalist ideology as promoted by the Ministry of Education since the inception of ELT in the Sultanate of Oman in 1970, which has controlled, marginalised, oppressed and subordinated the epistemic power of teachers as public intellectuals and professionals, and confined them to being servants to the prescribed textbook and deliverers of certain modes of knowledge. (p. 266)

The culturalist ideology presented above arguably poses the risk of promoting an imbalanced distribution of social or cultural knowledge in the ELT classroom and hence encourages a stagnant form of learning among Omani learners. In other words, it turns the ELT process into a rigid and meaningless textbook-centred practice with only a minimal space for Omani learners to develop their social and cultural skills which are required to integrate competently with the diverse communities living in Oman and the globalised world.

The above challenges are not exclusive to pre-tertiary education. In higher education also intercultural teaching is sometimes reduced to teaching an *international* textbook, assuming an overreliance on providing cultural content as a way to develop the learners' intercultural readiness (Tuzlukova et al., 2019). There is little attention given to the way teachers should address this cultural content in the classroom and on how to effectively raise students' intercultural awareness. As highlighted in Tuzlukova et al.'s study (2019), many stakeholders in Omani HEIs warn that more explicit emphasis is still needed with regard to the development of learners' intercultural skills and abilities. Given the fact that teachers constitute an immediate

and predominant source of interaction and knowledge in the classroom, their role in shaping their learner's IC cannot be understated.

Acting on these perspectives, therefore, it can be argued that while acknowledging that many contextual factors may influence the sociocultural status of ELT in Omani educational institutions, the role which Omani EFL teachers directly play in addressing the socio-cultural and intercultural competencies of their learners is significant. Given their central role as agents of social change (Bourn, 2016), their contribution in fulfilling the social demands of the globalised world cannot be undervalued. As warned by Al-Issa and Al-Mahrooqi (2017), Omani teachers, among other stakeholders in the educational system, remain "key actors in meeting the challenges and demands of globalization and internationalization" and therefore "bear a huge responsibility for the implementation of the government's English language policy" (p. 264). While acknowledging the eventual impact of other stakeholders, Omani teachers remain centrally and directly responsible for promoting student's socio-linguistic and intercultural competencies at least within the immediate context of their EFL classroom.

In all, a key concluding remark from sections 2.4 to 2.5 is that the Omani EFL teachers' role in developing learners' IC is largely assumed but not investigated. The Omani educational policies through its theoretical documents count on educationalists, and mainly teachers, on incorporating principles of intercultural understanding into their EFL teaching. However, studies which explore Omani EFL teachers' beliefs of IC as well as their educational and professional readiness towards the implementation of the country's intended objectives is almost non-existent. For this, it is now possible to argue that the unique, yet underexplored, conjuncture of Omani contextual characteristics presented in this chapter is a legitimate area for further investigating Omani EFL teachers' beliefs of IC.

2.6 Summary

This chapter sought to provide a synopsis of the context which nests the enquiry of this study. The aim of the chapter was, in part, to locate intercultural teaching within the intersection of Oman's political, social, and educational characteristics in order for the study findings to be well contextualised and better interpreted. The chapter began by shedding light on the

geographical location and political system of the Sultanate of Oman. It then moved to give an account on the demographic structure of the Omani population and the common cultural patterns which characterise the overall Omani society. Next, the chapter gave a description of the educational system in Oman, focusing on the nation-wide policies related to intercultural education. Later, the chapter sought to identify the distinct attributes which feature ELT profession in Omani educational institutions with specific focus on the current, yet unconsidered, position of IC within ELT practice. Drawing on the discussions from these sections, the chapter provided significant impetus towards investigating how Omani EFL teachers perceive and implement IC in a way that aligns with the intercultural education objectives as expressed in the wide literature as well as domestically with the country's strategic objectives. An awareness of this concluding remark, as well as the contextual specificities presented in this chapter, will be carried throughout the next chapters in this thesis.

Chapter 3 | THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter has introduced the Omani educational context which situates the enquiry of the current thesis, this chapter aims to discuss the theoretical underpinnings and the existing research of the phenomenon under question, namely EFL teacher beliefs and practices of IC. With this, it seeks to position the research on the two different but complementary fields of research that inform this study: teacher cognition and intercultural education in EFL. The impetus of this chapter is twofold in that it is interested in exploring both the conceptual (i.e., theoretically focussed) and practical (i.e., empirically focused) realms of related research. Drawing on insights from both, the chapter seeks to argue for a more context-focused and integrated investigation which recognises the combined roles of the Omani EFL teachers' learning and professional experiences related to IC and the contextual factors which together mediate the enactment of IC beliefs into the EFL classroom.

The chapter begins in **Section 3.2.1** by presenting the key theoretical conversations around the area of IC in EFL by offering conceptual understandings of the term IC along key related terms. It also gives focus to Byram's model of ICC which guides, in part, the current thesis in operating the concept of IC in the foreign language lesson. Following this, **Section 3.2.2** seeks to identify the key theoretical underpinnings of the term *language teacher beliefs* with specific focus on Borg's framework of language teacher cognition. Discussions from both sections attempt to offer a tentative theoretical basis which guides the development of subsequent sections and chapters. The second major part in this chapter, **Section 3.3**, reviews the related literature. Based on the identified concepts and elements within Borg's framework, the literature review aims to present empirical scholarship which addresses the role of early schooling (in **Section 3.3.1**), professional coursework (**Section 3.3.2**) and the role of context (**Section 3.3.3)** in shaping EFL teachers' beliefs of intercultural teaching. Then, **Section 3.3.4** discusses the reciprocal relationship between the professed beliefs and actual practice while **Section 3.3.5** discusses the nature of tension that might arise between the two. Finally, **Section 3.3.6** concludes with some identified gaps and offers rationales for filling each of these gaps.

3.2 Theoretical underpinnings: a conceptual understanding of teacher beliefs of IC

As its name indicates, this section situates the study within the theoretical discourse of teacher beliefs of Intercultural Competence (henceforth IC) in EFL. The theoretical underpinnings will serve as the "researcher's map of the territory being investigated" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 33). This map aims to offer a guiding frame for the conceptual development of this thesis by identifying, understanding, and integrating the concepts which underlie the territory being investigated, namely EFL teacher beliefs and practices of IC. To achieve this, the section starts by conceptualising intercultural language teaching and then proceeds to discuss the underpinning theoretical definitions of language teacher beliefs, building towards a combined conceptual understanding of EFL teacher beliefs of IC.

3.2.1 Intercultural language teaching

This section builds towards a theoretical understanding of intercultural language teaching in the specific context of EFL. Because interculturality is principally underpinned by the concept of *culture* (Byram, 2008), the section will start by presenting the key theoretical debates on the meaning of culture - highlighting the shift from essentialist to non-essentialist definitions of the concept. Then, it proceeds to explore the meaning of IC in foreign language education and finally gives specific focus to Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) which guides, in part, the current study in operationalising the concept of IC in the EFL classroom.

3.2.1.1 Culture

Edward Tylor used the term *culture* for the first time in 1871 to refer to that "complex whole" which encompasses knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other habits acquired by individuals as members of a society (as cited in Bennett, 2015, p. 191). However, in spite of Tylor's choice of the word *complex*, the concept of culture has for so long been reduced to the nation's physical artefacts and common practices which the people of that nation share. For example, when people refer to the British culture, they might be referring to things like British music (e.g., The Beetles or The Rolling Stones), food (e.g., tea or fish and chips), or customs (e.g., love for queuing and constantly saying sorry). With this, the culture of a nation was

thought to be conveyed and explored principally through its collective customary and artistic heritage. Such a heritage was understood to document people's social behaviour, etiquette, collective goals, and common values. In addition, the nation's tangible manifestations in its various forms (e.g., literature, folklore, music, paintings, sculptures, theatre, etc.) were sometimes used by its producers to creatively highlight observed social issues and to problematise power struggles in their societies. For this, the nation's artistic and literary products have become for many decades potential windows through which one can capture the *culture* of that national group.

However, with the term's growing expansion into popular usage, *culture* has evolved from its simplistic nationally-bound definitions to become a very complex and nebulous term. The Oxford's dictionary defines culture as "the way of life of a people" (Oxford Reference, n.d.) but even a cursory examination of the existing academic literature reveals that it is far more complex than this. Among the very cited definitions of the term, Kramsch (1998) defines it as "a membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history and common imaginings" (p. 10). In this, the shared commonalities among a group community (e.g., in the way the perceive or do things) become the *culture* of that group. While retaining this definition in this study, I expand it by visiting one of the most troublesome dichotomies associated with the term, at least as drawn from the related intercultural literature, namely essentialism versus non-essentialism.

One of the major advances in conceptualising the term culture in language education has been the shift from essentialism to non-essentialism (Borghetti, 2019; Cole & Meadows, 2013; Holliday, 2011; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Essentialist definitions of culture, on the one hand, tend to visualise the term as a stable set of constituting elements (or behavioural patterns) among a group of people. This view represents a uniformist outlook which considers culture to be a homogenous and universal entity across nations and social groups. Based on this understanding, essentialist views permit the identification of a recurring cultural behaviour among members of societies and generalise it to the whole social group. However, this traditional view of culture as a fixed national heritage of a country's population has become challenged in the wake of today's immensely globalised world where diverse social groups (i.e., ethnicities, races, religions, institutions, communities, etc.) can now submerge within one national context (Dervin, 2010; Holliday, 2011). Further, part of the conceptual understanding of culture is to

note that there is no straightforward mapping between the individual's membership to a certain culture and the individual's behaviour. As such, affiliating to one culture does not necessarily predict what individual members of that culture would do. This position arguably goes in parallel with the purposes of contemporary intercultural education which rejects the stereotypical attributions which are associated with individuals, countries, races, ethnicities, etc.

Therefore, a non-essentialist view of culture, in response to the above essentialist outlook, comes as a counterprinciple to contend that culture is not an inherently fixed entity but a constantly changing construct. In this respect, Holliday (2011) argues for understanding that culture is not a static reservoir that resides in history but one which continuously re-emerges during interactions – emphasizing the central role of individual agency. In these ways, every individual has the potential capacity to reformulate the collective description of any culture that one subscribes to. Such an agency-centred perspective aims to promote against the perpetuation of the structural status quo by rejecting the preconceived social statuses and roles inherited by society.

Also, viewing culture as a non-essentialist process underlies a pluralist outlook which considers the "cultural relativity among cultures" (Murphy, 1988, p. 154) and, therefore, recognises the subcultural variations within communities. In these ways, assuming the existence of one overarching monolithic national culture is an over-simplification that fails to represent the pluralistic reality where multiple cultural perspectives have the capacity to co-exist. Such a relativist view does not necessarily reject group classifications when referring to shared (or collective) patterns of behaviour. As argued by Gillespie et al. (2012), making social categorisations is a natural part of our thinking process; yet such thinking should be underpinned by recognising that social categories are highly fluid human constructs which constantly change and have history. Further, non-essentialism, in its relative sense, encourages an extended form of social categorisation. An example of this, according to Murphy (1988), is to consider referring to *single men aged fifty* instead of generally talking about *men*, and another example is to refer to *EFL male learners* instead of simply *learners*, etc.

It is worth underlining that the shift from essentialist to non-essentialist views of culture has brought several pedagogical implications on language teaching. One of the key implications has

been the transition from concentrating on the merely *cultural* aspect of language education to embracing the wider *intercultural* aspect (Borghetti & Qin, 2022). In other words, the focus is no longer exclusive to addressing the culture specifically associated with the target language but to a wider diversity of multiple target cultures. For example, Arabic learners who learn English as a foreign language are now expected to engage with learning not only the Anglophone culture (or cultures traditionally associated with the English language) but in understanding the existing multiplicity of world cultures including their own. In these ways, the British, American, or Australian cultures, as to speak, do not become *the* target cultures; instead, developing the learner's awareness of the plurality of cultures as well as their ability to communicate across different cultural boundaries have become the desirable target.

Another key implication is the mounting interest in fostering the learners' criticality in the context of IC development (Guilherme & Sawyer, 2021). Moving from essentialism to non-essentialism has necessitated a perspective that does not treat perceived cultural assumptions and behaviours as static entities but as fluid social constructs. For this, language learners have become constantly invited to interrogate their pe-conceived standpoints by critically reflecting on and analysing practices and discourses from both their own and other cultures. It is becoming apparent that models dedicated to IC now include criticality (or other related terms such as critical evaluation, analytical thinking, or self-reflection) as a common element within its overall framework. Some notable examples of these models are Deardorff's Process Model of Intercultural Competence (2006), Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1993), and Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997). These models underscore, although in various ways and degrees, the significance of critical reflection in order to maximise the learners' capability of effectively navigating and functioning within diverse cultural contexts.

Moreover, defining culture in light of non-essentialism as a life-long process aligns with the tenets of constructivism, the study's ontological stance, insisting that one's culture is not *naturally* but instead *socio-culturally* determined (Byram, 1997) (for more discussion on constructivism see 4.2.1). Such a process-based view treats culture as a verb (Street, 1991) suggesting that individuals continuously construct their cultural beliefs and traditions. An implication of this verb-view on language learning, according to Byram (1997), is that learners

become capable of not only interrogating their own cultural assets but potentially transforming them. In other words, by defining culture as a constructive process, the pre-determined cultural ascriptions imposed by social powers surrounding the learner will become, in principle, subject to continuous reformulation (hence re-construction).

Finally, any attempt to define the properties of culture, at least in the context of EFL, usually wrestles with the dichotomous debate of *objective* versus *subjective* culture (Bennett, 1998). Objective culture, which sometimes is referred to as big C culture (Lee, 2009; Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993), refers to the tangible (or visible) forms of culture such as the people's achievements and cultural artefacts. In this, it considers the cultural *products* of social groups such as literature, architecture, folklore, art, music, and history. On the other hand, subjective culture refers to the non-material aspect of culture such the collective customs, behaviour, beliefs, assumptions, values, and worldviews. These, according to Lee (2009), represent the little "c" culture which refers to "the invisible and deeper sense of a target culture" (p. 78). In other words, it emphasises the implicit patterns of perceiving the world, such the way a particular group perceive the idea of feminism or the way they collectively view the role of religion in their everyday life. Highlighting such a binary is crucial, as part of defining what culture is, since it evokes questions of what cultural elements are to be introduced in the language classroom. My stance on this follows Steele's (1996) position that "small c" and "big C" cultures are not apart from each other but instead formulate an integrated entity which depicts the beliefs and values of a social group. In the language teaching context therefore, both little c and Big C, as argued by Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), should be part of the cultural provision in the lesson since an awareness of both (the tangible achievements and implicit beliefs of target cultures) can help learners develop a more holistic picture of other social groups to avoid pragmatic failure when communicating with them.

3.2.1.2 Intercultural and Competence

Having established a working definition of culture, this section seeks to define Intercultural Competence (IC). Towards a holistic understanding of the term IC, it is significant first to dissect its two underlying constituents, *intercultural* and *competence*. The word *intercultural*, as a free-standing term, refers to the interaction between cultures. By emphasising interaction, it

transcends the act of knowing about cultures to encompass a two-way exchange between people from different cultural backgrounds (Byram et al., 2002). Although the term is sometimes used interchangeably with other synonymous terms such as, multicultural, cross-cultural, transcultural, etc, the current study views *intercultural* as a distinguished concept. Mirroring Clark and Dervin's (2014) argument, the prefix *inter-* which highlights interaction is what makes *intercultural* unique, not so much the *-cultural*. The term *multi-cultural* on the other hand highlights the multiplicity of cultures and the term *cross-cultural* depicts the comparability of cultures. It is for these reasons the current thesis upholds the advocation (Allemann-Ghionda, 2009; Gundara, 2003; Lee, 2005; Norberg, 2000) that it is more relevant to use the term *intercultural* in the context of promoting the role of interactiveness, negotiations, processes between interlocutors instead of merely presenting knowledge about the diversity and comparability of cultures.

The term *competence*, in the context of IC, is also disputed. Although the Oxford's dictionary generally defines the word as "the ability to do something successfully or efficiently" (Stevenson & Waite, 2011), it usually invites debates about its form and nature. For example, Killick (as cited in Deardorff & Jones, 2012) suggests that *competence* is a flawed concept as it misleadingly indicates a complete state of skill acquisition which assumes an ultimate quality and a total accomplishment of a desirable intercultural outcome (see 3.2.1.3 for related discussion). For this, alternative terms are sometimes brought to the fore such as intercultural *awareness* (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2005), intercultural *understanding* (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2021) or intercultural *sensitivity* (Bennett, 1993) to emphasise a process (Deardorff & Jones, 2012). It can be argued, however, that the degree of terminological uncertainty in defining the term is not bound merely to the lexical sense of the word. Instead, the way competence is conceptualised lies, in part, on the researcher's paradigmatic foundations. A positivist, for example, may define competence as an objectively realised ability with predictably definite set of indicators whereas a constructivist, on the hand, may perceive it as a constantly constructed ability that responds to the ever-changing social reality. Therefore, this epistemological rationale applies also to the above-mentioned alternative terms (i.e., understanding, awareness, sensitivity) which can equally fall into the product-process debate. Having said this, the current study, which is underpinned by the constructivist paradigm, adheres to the term competence

while underscoring its liquid nature and, therefore, views it as an ever-evolving ability (Liu & Zhang, 2014).

Following the above perspectives on *intercultural* and *competence*, IC then becomes broadly the ability to interact with people from different cultures. However, the related literature includes a definitional endeavour which attempts to demystify what such an *ability* entails. Some definitions are componential in nature as they offer a list of components which constitute IC (Van de Vijver & Leung, 2009). Such componential definitions have resulted in IC measurement tools, such as Cultural Intelligence Scale (Earley & Ang, 2003), which seek to measure the extent to which someone is interculturally competent. These definitional attempts may contribute to our conceptual understanding of IC by offering an accessible inventory of IC constituents and therefore simplify the conceptually complex ramifications into concrete analytical data. However, IC scales and measurement tools are increasingly criticised for offering a reduced view of IC that assumes a predictable *a priori* configuration of IC traits and ignores its complex nature. They also seem to assume a decontextualised normative matrix, (or universal cultural code) for assessing IC and therefore undermine the unique context in which the intercultural communication unfolds.

Bearing the above in mind, accentuating the encompassing context as part of defining IC becomes significant. Arasaratnam (2016) and Dervin (2010) both observe that mainstream definitions of IC seem to foreground the internal ability of the individual and downplay the role of the contextual parameters which embody the intercultural encounter. For this, they warn that IC does not solely reside within the individual but it involves a co-creation of shared cultural appropriateness with whom one is interacting and more importantly within the accommodating contextual environment (i.e., classroom, conference, party, supermarket, airplane, etc.). The way two individuals coming from dissimilar cultural backgrounds interact in a party might not be the same when they interact in a conference. This example reaffirms the assumption that the individual's ability to perform an efficient communication in a certain cultural setting is impacted by other contextual conditions involved in the encounter and not solely dependent on the individual. This context-focused view suites the current study which views culture as a co-creation of shared meaning within situated contexts. What is more, this view renders any

definitive understanding of the meaning of IC to be context-specific, where defining the term in the context of foreign language education becomes crucial.

3.2.1.3 Intercultural competence in the context of foreign language education

In the context of foreign language learning, the origins of IC can be traced back to Noam Chomsky's (1965) *linguistic competence* which refers to the native speakers' innate linguistic capacity that allows them to perform language functions. Chomsky's linguistic competence had influenced the language learning practice by equating the mastery of syntactic forms of language with language learning achievement. Later critiqued by Dell Hymes (1972), the term linguistic competence became *communicative competence* to argue that basic knowledge of linguistic rules is not enough to produce language; instead, one has to have both linguistic and sociolinguistic competences (hence communicative competence) to be able to use language within a specific social context in order to communicate appropriately. Situated within the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, Hymes's communicative competence gained a lot of recognition and it has influenced the way language is taught for several years. However, Byram (1989), among other scholars (e.g., Cook, 1999), argued that the communicative competence downplays the position of the learner's own culture by implicitly suggesting that foreign language learners should model themselves on native language speakers. Therefore, Byram introduced the term Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (Byram, 1997, p. 70) to expand on Hymes's communicative competence and suggests that language learning should involve the intercultural, linguistic, and communicative competences which together help learners perform efficient communication.

Along its wide acceptance and application, impulses came to further define what IC means in the context of foreign language education. In this context, Meyer (1991) defines IC as "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures" (p. 137). Deardorff (2006), quite similarly, suggests that IC is "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). Fantini (2009) also incorporates effectiveness and appropriateness in his definition and suggests that IC is the "complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and

appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself' (p. 1). The academic consensus of both *effectiveness* and *appropriateness* as common components of intercultural communication invites various interpretations of what they represent within the parameters of the EFL classroom. As such, Fantini elaborates that effectiveness refers to the learners' perceptions of their own intercultural performance in the target foreign culture whereas appropriateness refers to the way representatives of the target culture view such performance. In this sense, the successful intercultural communication (i.e., effective and appropriate) hinges on the mutual perceptions and performances of both interlocutors in the encounter.

On the whole, IC can be defined in the context of foreign language education, as the EFL learner's ability to enact a language communication within diverse cultural settings in a way that is capable of resulting in effective and appropriate interchange of communication.

3.2.1.4 Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence

Whilst useful, the above definition needs further elucidation in terms of how it can be operated in the classroom. The IC literature includes a wide array of models which attempt to offer such lucidity by formulating a working model of the concept. In a renowned conceptual study by Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), over twenty models of IC are identified from across the fields of education, communication, business, human resource management and many others. Among the very common models which have strong relevance to foreign language education is Byram's Model of Intercultural Competence (1997, 2009). In this model, Byram articulates his notion of IC further by offering a comprehensive characterisation that outlines how IC can be taught, analysed, and achieved in the FL classroom. He specifies five components, or savoirs, through which IC can be operationalised in foreign language education; these savoirs are learners' (1) attitudes, (2) knowledge, (3) skills of interpreting and relating, (4) skills of discovery and interaction, and (5) critical cultural awareness. A brief configuration of each is presented below.

- **Attitudes**, according to Byram (1997), represent "the openness and readiness to suspend disbelief and judgement with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours" (p. 34). By developing intercultural attitudes, learners should have the willingness to interrogate beliefs in their own culture and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom they are

interacting (p. 34). Attributing attitudes to the concepts of *willingness*, *readiness,* and *openness* entail, to a large extent, a flexible mode of interaction where learners have the capacity to behave adequately when confronted with differing representatives of foreign cultures. Attitudes are the most difficult to operate in the classroom since there is no specific pedagogical methodology that can directly change individual's attitudes (Porto, 2013). However, Byram argues that by addressing other intercultural objectives, it is expected that students will enhance their attitudes at the same time.

- **Knowledge** entails a conscious awareness of "social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction" (Byram, 1997, p. 51). The duality of one's own and other entails that any cultural content about *other* social groups should be taught in relation to the student's own culture and not presented in a vacuum. For example, knowledge of some family patterns of a target nation or social group are better learned through the observed family patterns of one's own country. This way, the objective of teaching intercultural knowledge will not become a merely fact-teaching endeavour; instead, it will yield an intercultural process where learners are building a mutual understanding and appreciation of the existence of a cultural diversity across different states and ethnic groups.

- **Skills of interpreting and relating** refer to the "ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own" (Byram, 1997, p. 52). These skills describe the ability to establish a relationship between a pre-existing knowledge of one's own culture with that of another within a given learning material (e.g., textbook, picture, video, reading passage, etc.). They also entail the ability to identify ethnocentric perspectives in a cultural content or event and more importantly explain their origins. One good illustration of the above, with particular reference to context of Omani culture, is how Omani learners can for example interpret dress patterns in Western cultures within their own Omani cultural frames. Omani women, for example, tend to view the wearing of *hijab*, or head scarf, as a symbol of modesty, self-respect, and dignity (Esposito, 2002, p. 96). With skills of interpreting and relating, therefore, Omani (female) learners when encountering a learning content which includes contradicting Western dress patterns attempt to mediate between the

conflicting interpretations of the two phenomena by not relying on their own values as the frame of reference.

- **Skills of discovery and interaction** are defined as "the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and the ability to operate that knowledge along with the intercultural attitudes and skills under the constrains of real-time communication and interaction" (Byram, 1997, p. 61). These skills, in part, necessitate that language learners should be placed in situations where they have no or little prior knowledge about the target or foreign culture in order to make discoveries. They also assume a direct interaction with interlocutors from other cultures in real-time, or authentic, situations. By doing so, language learners are aimed to engage with intercultural contact (or interactions) where they can adequately implement the knowledge, attitudes, and skills with interlocutors of foreign culture.

- **Critical cultural awareness**, according to Byram, is the "ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products on one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 1997, p. 63). This entails a conscious awareness and a rational understanding of the potential conflicts that may exist between two disparate sets of cultures. By constantly developing and building on the previous savoirs (knowledge, attitudes, and skills), critical cultural awareness seeks to promote a constant questioning of the learning offered to students and the sociocultural reality in which they live (Byram, 2008). This, in practice, can be achieved through asking *what*, *how*, and most importantly *why* do certain patterns of behaviour exist in one's own and in foreign cultures. However, such questioning, warn Byram and Guilherme (2000), does not intend to impose a personal standpoint on learners but to facilitate a learning avenue where learners can discover the bases of commonly perceived stereotypes independently and where they can present well-balanced arguments.

Although Byram's model, explained above, has been greatly welcomed by intercultural theorists and educationalists over the last two decades (Hoff, 2014), it should be acknowledged that it has been criticized on multiple levels. First, given that Byram's framework of IC is originally formulated in the Western context where concepts of global citizenship, social equality, and freedom of speech have been greatly established, this model might pose some limitations in terms of its practical applicability in teaching contexts outside the Western educational

landscape. In particular, promoting greater cultural openness in the classroom as well as voicing out critical and political views against one's own identity might not be welcomed by educational policies which consolidate established religious values and reinforce commitment to nation-wide customs and traditions (like those found in the Omani educational policies). In turn, the application of this model within the so-named conservative Omani setting can possibly create an unwelcoming learning environment that hinders the learners' motivation to engage in culturally-related dialogues. Nonetheless, I argue that instead of rejecting its relevance, more situated research which adopts the model in countries outside the Western world to further navigate its pedagogical feasibility is warranted. Given the fact this model, at the best of my knowledge, has not been used in the unique Omani context, I believe that using it in this study will potentially contribute to the existing research as to what extent this model is applicable in countries where the level of democracy is comparably limited and where stakeholders within the educational institution share (relatively) homogeneous cultural backgrounds.

In addition, Byram's model is sometimes criticised for adopting a *nationalist* conception of language and culture and often faulted for implicitly ignoring the inherent diversity of subgroups within one nation (Risager, 2007; Wahyudi, 2016). It is sometimes depicted as a reductionist model (Holliday, 2011) for assuming a high level of homogeneity and rigidity within the population of one nation which in reality does not exist. In this respect, Kramsch (1998) warns that notions of interculturality should consider communication between different social groups and subgroups "within the boundaries of the same national language" (p. 81). Nonetheless, in responding to this criticism, Byram contends that equating culture with national culture, with regard to his model, is a "misinterpretation" (Byram, 2021, p. 38). In that, he explains that a *national* culture is only one of many possible sets of cultural beliefs and being aware of this set (irrespective of whether one subscribes to or rejects) can offer learners a valuable basis for interaction (Byram, 2021, p. 28). In other words, the possibility of subscribing to a *national* culture becomes only one layer of affiliation within the interconnected web of affiliations (or cultures) that one might maintain. In this manner, affiliating to a national culture does not assume an inherent and immutable core of being (or essence) but a fluid expression of cultural identification.

Further to the discussion above, there are some reasons why I believe Byram's model in particular is applicable and relevant to the current study. First, Byram's model has been

developed mainly for pedagogical purposes (Byram, 1997). Unlike some other models which only attempt to delineate the theoretical nature of IC development (e.g., Deardorff, 2006) or to measure IC (e.g., Hammer et al., 2003), this model is teaching-focused that aims to guide educationalists and particularly teachers to address the development of IC in practical and instrumental terms. It elaborates on the definition of IC by providing a clear set of learning objectives which help teachers maintain an accessible reference for IC teaching and assessment. Therefore, this model is deemed to be pertinent as the present study does not focus on the theorising of IC in the Omani EFL lesson but on exploring its pedagogical position from the teachers' perspective.

In addition, the model is one of the few models which attempt to conceptualize the concept of IC in the particular field of foreign language teaching (Byram, 2009; Bredella, 2000). As mentioned earlier, IC is addressed differently in different educational disciplines. Although the majority of disciplines share the general premise that IC is aimed to equip individuals with the tools required to effectively and appropriately function in a culturally diverse setting, the specific context in which IC functions remains an influential factor for its development. For example, the way IC is operated and developed in the science classroom is arguably not the same as in the language classroom – considering that the content in each of these classroom settings varies greatly. In particular, given the intricate relationship between language and culture (Kramsch, 1998), the way IC functions in the language classroom is consequently perceived to be unique in terms of instruction, curriculum, content, and delivery. Therefore, pertinent to the context of the present study (i.e., Omani EFL classroom), Byram's model which gives due attention to the development of the learners' linguistic competence as part of developing IC becomes directly applicable.

Finally, Byram's model has strong links with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Hoff, 2014) – a framework which is also used in the Omani HEI where this study is conducted. This framework acts as a guideline which describes language proficiency and achievement of foreign language learners across Europe and increasingly in other countries around the world (Phipps, 2012). It gives a useful discussion and an explicit reference to intercultural language pedagogy and intercultural awareness (Byram, 2003; Byram & Parmenter, 2012). The institution selected for this study has benchmarked its learning outcomes against those found in CEFR documents which, in turn, assumes an inherent link

between the communicative achievement standards set by the selected institution in this study and Byram's IC objectives – rendering the selection of Byram's model in this study to be highly compatible.

Considering all the rationales above, combined with the preceding theoretical discussions of culture and IC, Byram's IC framework will guide the current thesis in constructing the content of the research instruments (to be further explained in the methodology chapter) and in interpreting the collected data from these instruments in the analysis and discussion chapters. Having discussed the study's theoretical underpinnings of IC in EFL, the following section offers a theoretical perspective on the language teacher beliefs of IC.

3.2.2 Language teacher beliefs of IC

The research on teacher beliefs stretches back to over 60 years (Fives & Buehl, 2012). Ever since, a variegated scholarship within the wider discipline of teacher cognition has attempted to offer a theoretical understanding as well as guiding methodological approaches on how this construct can be conceptualised and operationalised within related research enquiries. Particularly over the last three decades, however, there has been a notable upsurge in researching teacher beliefs which has brought, and continues to bring, a more established conceptualisation of the concept (Borg, 2006; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). Because the current study is concerned with understanding the *beliefs* of a group of Omani EFL teachers which are related to IC, it becomes necessary to draw on the key theoretical underpinnings of the term *belief* in order to arrive at a working definition that ensures a level of consistency and lucidity when identifying, collecting and analysing the participants' beliefs in this study.

3.2.2.1 Defining teacher beliefs

Within the teacher cognition scholarship, the term belief has been defined in variable ways. It has been labelled by Pajares (1992) as a *messy* construct, suggesting that many belief-related terms within the teacher cognition lexicon exist but not used in a uniform way. Examples of these terms include *conceptions of teaching* (Thompson, 1992), *implicit theories* (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992), *personal knowledge* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Kagan, 1992), *practical knowledge* (Elbaz, 1981; Meijer et al., 1999), among other related terms. While it is not within

the capacity of this thesis to dedicate a discussion on the theoretical foundations associated with each of the above terms, an understanding of the term *belief*, the study focus, is particularly necessary in order to mitigate potential definitional confusion as much as possible.

Among the commonly held definitions, Borg (2001) views teacher belief as a subset of teacher cognition and defines it as an evaluative proposition accepted as true by the teacher, either consciously or unconsciously held, and capable of guiding thought and teaching behaviour (Borg, 2001). This definition, in general, is apposite for this study in that it concerns teachers' *own* evaluative (hence subjective) meaning of IC. Also, this definition accepts the position of teaching behaviour as an inherent constituent within the belief-practice continuum and, therefore, serves the current study in recognising the *enactment* of teacher beliefs. However, while tentatively aligning myself to this definition, I acknowledge that getting to conceptual grips with term *belief* requires further lucidity. Against such understanding, the literature shows that common debates in language teacher cognition usually swing back and forth on whether beliefs are general or context-specific, implicit or explicit, or whether they differ from knowledge or not. My position on each of these binaries and how they might inform my study now follows.

3.2.2.2 General/Context-specific

For so long, the primal focus of teacher cognition has been on studying the individual mind of teachers away from the social activity in which it resides. This appears to be partially rooted in the purely cognitive orientation in studying teacher belief where the interference of factors that surround teacher's interactive thinking processes has been somewhat neglected (Kelly, 2006; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002). However, there has been mounting interest, along the constructivist trends, in studying the cognition of teachers as situated within the social dynamic surrounding teachers' mental lives. This interest follows, in part, from socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) which posits that cognitive processes should not be defined in neural and biological terms as these processes remain inseparable from the social, cultural, and historical context in which they occur. Based on this, teacher beliefs, as explained by Lerman (2001) and Johnson (2009), can differ greatly depending on the teaching context in which they are situated. The current study subscribes to this position given that a central purpose for this research is not to describe

how cognitive beliefs are physically and innately processed inside the teacher brain but to interpret the enactment of Omani teachers' beliefs in relation to the properties of the specific teaching environment which situates their cognitive activity.

The implications of the socio-cultural perspective on the current study is, first, to study teacher's beliefs-in-action (i.e., in relation to classroom practice) since teachers' beliefs are located and developed in authentic teaching situations and are not purely innate modalities. Another implication is to make sense of teacher beliefs in relation to both micro (or immediate) context and macro (or broad) contexts in which teachers' professional lives are embedded (Li, 2019; Walsh & Wyatt, 2014). This also implies that although teachers have a level of capacity to enact autonomously their subjective beliefs inside the classroom (Priestley et al., 2012; Toom et al., 2015), the agentic enactment of these beliefs does not function independently from the structural reality of their teaching profession (Peiser & Jones, 2014). As such, teachers sometimes have limited control of the surrounding national and sociocultural conditions as well as the institutionally imposed regulations and policy demands which ultimately resonate in their instructional choices.

3.2.2.3 Explicit/implicit

Debates exist on whether beliefs are explicit or implicit. According to Fives and Buehl (2012), viewing beliefs as only *explicit* suggests that teachers are actively aware of their own opinions and, thus, capable of justifying their teaching practices based on their espoused beliefs and preconceptions. Teacher cognition research which adopts this view often relies heavily on elicitation methods (e.g., interviews) were participating teachers are asked to verbally express their beliefs. Based on such *explicitly* espoused beliefs, researchers can make conclusions about corresponding classroom behaviour. Others, however, warn that teachers sometimes hold *implicit* beliefs which may guide their classroom practice without necessarily being consciously explicit about them (Berliner, 1987; Hativa, 2000). This position implies that researchers should not, therefore, rely on teachers' articulated but *enacted* beliefs (i.e., classroom behaviour) since these are induced by teachers' implicit thinking. In other words, the researcher can infer teachers' thinking from observed actual behaviour. Taken both insights together, the current study acknowledges that teachers generally "hold both implicit and explicit beliefs that

influence their teaching practice" (Fives & Buehl, 2012, p. 474). My stance follows from the empirical studies which advocate that since teachers are not always able to verbalise the entirety of their beliefs (Donaghue, 2003), the researcher should assume that there might also be hidden beliefs (Hsiao & Yang, 2010) which require researchers to utilise stimulating methods to further unpack teachers thinking processes. Based on this understanding, the researcher should assume that some of the teachers' acts in the classroom might be spontaneous and enacted without a considerable level of rationale judgment. As an example, a teacher might nominate a certain student to read a reading passage for the whole class without necessarily processing a conscious thinking behind the selection of that very student from other students.

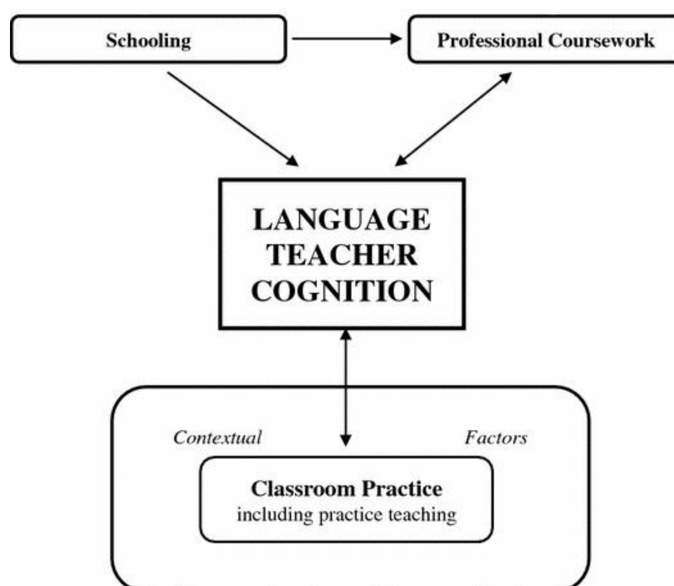
3.2.2.4 Knowledge/ different from knowledge

The precise relation between belief and knowledge is immensely disputed given that both concepts reside inside the unobservable mental world of the teacher (Verloop et al., 2001). Some studies highlight the inseparable and synonymous nature of both (Murphy & Mason, 2006; Philipp, 2007; Poulson et al., 2001; Woods, 1996), whereas others such as Fenstermacher (1994) promotes that "to know something is epistemologically different from simply having a belief in something" (p. 29). The current study subscribes, as a point of departure, to Kagan (1992)'s position that, in general, it is hard to explicate clear-cut boundaries between belief and knowledge. Kagan, however, purports that knowledge is basically a belief that has been affirmed by the teacher as true on the basis of consensual proof or opinion. This position suits the current study which is concerned with researching the teacher's own interpretation and this involves the teacher's judgement, evaluation, or opinion on the acquired epistemic propositions (e.g., formal theories of language acquisition, common methods of language teaching, effective instructional strategies, quality assurance standards, etc.). Also, in purporting to the constructivist standpoint, these epistemic prepositions, although sometimes are depicted as facts, remain grounded in the teachers' mental representation of them and, therefore, do not entail a case of purely *objective truth*. That said, the current study holds that adhering to the term belief (as opposed to knowledge) goes in parallel with the constructively aligned purposes of this thesis. Separating knowledge from belief, on the bases of objective truth, may fit under the light of externalism in which *knowledge* can be independently measured, verified, or confirmed based on an external objective truth, or prior criteria; all of which are not part of the purposes of the current thesis.

3.2.2.5 Borg's model of language teacher cognition

The discussion hitherto defines belief as an evaluative judgement accepted as true by the teacher which is context-dependent, held either explicitly or implicitly, is inseparable from knowledge, and is capable of informing teaching behaviour. Having built this theoretical understanding, this section proceeds to draw on Simon Borg's model of language teacher cognition (2006) as a lens towards understanding the inherent processes and contextual factors which characterise the formulation as well as the enactment of teacher beliefs. Borg developed his conceptual framework based on a thorough and comprehensive synthesis of related studies in the field to depict the architecture of language teacher cognition. The aim of this framework is to demonstrate the key sources which contribute to the formation of language teacher cognition and to signify how these sources elastically interact with each other in relation to the context as well as the manifested teaching practice (see Figure 3.1 below). This framework, to a great extent, mirrors the aim of the current study which is concerned with exploring the educational and teaching experiences among a group of Omani EFL teachers (in relation to IC) and explain how these experiences inform IC teaching practice as mediated through the situating teaching context.

Figure 3.1 *Elements and Processes in Language Teacher Cognition, adapted from Borg (2006, p. 283)*



At the core of this framework lies *language teacher cognition* which is an umbrella term that refers to teachers' beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, assumptions, theories, among other subordinate cognitive constructs. *Schooling* refers to the teacher's early language learning experiences (i.e., Kindergarten to Grade 12) which define initial conceptions of teaching. Next, *professional coursework* refers to both pre-service and in-service formal training which language teachers undertake as part of their professional development. *Contextual factors* include all the macro and micro factors which surround and potentially influence cognition and teaching behaviour such as the socio-cultural, political, institutional, among other interfering factors. Finally, *classroom practice* refers to the instructional (or teaching) behaviour which language teachers perform inside the language classroom (including practice-teaching as part of the teacher education programmes). Besides the above listed elements, the framework highlights the intricate relationship between these - signifying the reciprocal relationship between its key components (i.e., professional coursework, contextual factors, and classroom practice) and teacher's cognition. In this, as symbolised in the diagram by the bi-directional arrows, Borg's model indicates that while cognition greatly informs teaching behaviour, classroom practice can concurrently influence teacher's cognitive conceptions.

With its focus on language teacher cognition, Borg's model has been frequently utilised in studying the cognition and practices of English language teachers. However, a broad overview of the related literature shows that Borg's framework has been linked primarily with the classical curricular dimensions of ELT such as vocabulary (Chung, 2018; Rahimi, 2014), grammar (Phipps & Borg, 2009), speaking (Yunus et al., 2016), writing (Uddin, 2014), CLT (Nishino, 2012), ICT (Al-Waaili, 2018; Kartchava & Chung, 2015) or assessment (Chappell et al., 2015). However, this framework has hardly been applied in studying EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in the particular dimension of IC. Therefore, I aim in the following sections to situate this framework in the particular area of intercultural teaching in EFL and review related studies as per each component in the framework. As Ravitch and Riggan (2016) puts it, the conceptual framework within any study should include "not only the relevant theoretical literature, but also the empirical findings of prior research" (p. xi). By doing so, I aim to discuss how the existing literature of intercultural teaching in EFL can inform us in light of Borg's model about the educational and teaching experiences and the contextual factors which potentially shape

teachers' beliefs of IC. Subsequently, I will identify the knowledge gaps which need to be addressed in order to expand our current understanding in this area.

3.3 Review of related studies: EFL teacher beliefs of intercultural teaching

The developed conceptual understanding of teacher beliefs of IC aimed to set a tentative map, as to speak, that guides further the development of this thesis. Based on this proposed map, this section reviews the related studies in accordance with the concepts identified in Borg's model, which are schooling, professional coursework, contextual factors, and classroom practice.

3.3.1 The role of schooling on teacher beliefs and practices of IC

A common theoretical feature in teacher cognition research is that initial schooling experiences greatly contribute to the formation of language teacher cognition (Borg, 2006; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Johnson, 1994; Levin & He, 2008; Lortie, 1975). While the domain of schooling remains broad as it encompasses a stretched period of time over the individual's lifespan, it typically refers to the teacher's former K-12 school experiences which define early conceptions of education (Borg, 2006). It involves the teachers' historical biography as a school learner and the initial observation of how schoolteachers and learners used to behave in the classroom. This form of observation is usually referred to as the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) which describes the period in which learners internalise teaching models while observing their schoolteachers and take these models to their future instructional practice. By doing so, the role of the former schooling experiences become a key contributing source of teacher's beliefs of teaching.

Within the particular context of intercultural teaching in ELT, only few studies draw on the role of schooling on teacher's beliefs of incorporating culture in their teaching (Castro et al., 2004; Maijala, 2020; Sougari, & Sifakis, 2007). Castro et al. (2004), for example, examined the perceptions of Spanish EFL teachers on integrating IC and found that teachers prioritise language teaching objectives (over IC-related objectives) due to the schooling influence of former school teachers. Similarly, in a recent study by Maijala (2020) on Finnish pre-service FL teachers, findings show that teacher-candidates tend to bring content and methodologies which were familiar to them from school. Based on these initial schooling experiences, participants

become influenced to follow certain conceptual aspects of incorporating culture in ELT, such as holding a static view of culture, utilising media in teaching, sharing personal cultural experiences with students, *inter alia*. Additionally, Sougari and Sifakis (2007) found, in the Greek educational context, that teachers follow methodological approaches which are deeply-seated in their own language learning experiences. These findings, therefore, suggest that teachers in many occasions teach the way they were taught at school.

Nonetheless, some evidence shows that despite the influence of prior schooling experiences on teachers' professional life, this influence does not necessarily proceed to pervade till the end of the language teachers' career (Causey et al., 2000). In a notable longitudinal study on understanding the relationship between conceptions gained in early schooling and conceptions gained through professional experience, Causey et al. (2000) explored the cognitive change of a group of prospective teachers on issues related to cultural diversity. Through auto-biographical essays and reflection journals, the authors searched for patterns which are related to the role of teacher's schooling in the formation of beliefs about cultural diversity in teaching and the reaction to these experiences. According to the findings, the participants of the study, who were self-described as growing up in monocultural settings, have initially developed stereotypes of certain cultural groups in their past schooling experiences and carried these conceptions to their beginning teaching practice. However, three years after participants' graduation from the teacher education programme, the authors further investigated the teachers' beliefs and reported that although some predominant schemata from early schooling prevail at least in the first years of teaching, they were able to reconstruct their prior beliefs about diversity. This indicates that the role of schooling can phase out over the course of teaching career in response to the nature of coursework, the working environment, and other interfering contextual factors which teachers persistently engage with.

The above discussion can inform the current study in terms of studying the influence of schooling experiences (particularly which are related to IC) closely with the teacher's subsequent educational and professional experiences. In this, teachers before commencing their teaching career might have already established an image of what teaching looks like, yet this image can potentially be altered due to the multiple experiences that follow. Also, it is worth highlighting that the above reviewed studies which relate to culture and intercultural teaching

are greatly outnumbered by studies which explored the influence of schooling in other curricular subjects. Our understanding of how EFL teachers retrieve their early schooling experiences to their intercultural teaching today and how they negotiate these past schooling experiences with the surrounding contextual factors as well as teaching experiences they accumulate through time remain understudied.

3.3.2 The role of professional coursework on EFL teachers' beliefs of IC

It is almost certain that every professional teacher has undertaken at least a certain form of professional training before and/or during their teaching profession. Building on research which alludes to the impact of professional coursework on the development of English language teachers in general (e.g., Borg, 2015; Johnson, 2009), it becomes even more relevant to the purposes of this research to discuss the role of professional coursework on EFL teachers' beliefs and practices within the specific curricular dimension of intercultural teaching. The scope of professional coursework, based on the reviewed literature, typically revolves around the engagement with both pre-service teacher training programmes and in-service professional development - both discussed below.

3.3.2.1 The influence of pre-service teacher education

It has been suggested earlier in 3.3.1 that although schooling plays a key role in defining the teachers' initial conceptions of teaching, these conceptions can potentially change based on the educational and professional experiences that follow. In line with this, several testimonies in the intercultural education literature assert the impact of pre-service educational programmes on the construction and transformation of teachers' beliefs of IC (Civitillo et al., 2018; Genç, 2018; Maijala, 2020; Wilhelm et al., 1996). Wilhelm et al. (1996), for example, examined the beliefs of American pre-service teachers before and after undertaking a four-week intensive intercultural training course. The course aimed to provide teacher candidates with intercultural knowledge and skills which are related to teaching culturally diverse student populations in the US. Through a pre-test/post-test research design, findings show that participants, after completing the course, have significantly increased their confidence in understanding, planning, and reflecting on multicultural instruction.

Similarly, Maijala (2020) found that through teacher preparation programmes, EFL student-teachers were able to alter their pre-conceived instructional beliefs which were acquired from their K-12 educational experiences. Findings show that they were able to shift from adopting a static view of culture (i.e., treating culture as transferable factual information) to a more dynamic conceptualisation (i.e., treating culture as constantly evolving social construct) in relation to their cultural pedagogy. Civitillo et al. (2018) also have concluded in their systematic review of the related literature the positive influence of pre-service training on cultural diversity especially when it is based on experiential format (e.g., facilitating field experiences to engage in authentic intercultural encounters). In all, the above findings seem to suggest that through teacher training, pre-service teachers can transform their pre-held pedagogical beliefs of IC.

Conversely, some studies have reported limited influence of the teacher education programmes over teacher's cognition and practice (Castro, 2014; Deveney, 2007; Guo et al., 2009; Levin & He, 2008). For example, Guo et al. (2009) in a study within the Canadian context revealed that although pre-service teachers were given dedicated orientation on intercultural teaching, this orientation made limited influence on them, suggesting that participants started to learn how to address IC only through practical teaching experience. Levin and Ye He (2008) also found that what teachers learned from the teacher education programmes has been the least influential source compared to other sources such as influence of family background and in-service teaching practice. In similar veins, Castro (2014) explored how a teacher education programme influences teachers' views of multicultural education and citizenship in the US. The results show that although the programme has been somewhat influential on teachers' thinking and understanding of how IC should be implemented in the classroom, participants' prior experiences and cultural biographies seem to play a more formal role in their views of multicultural education suggesting that more research on the best effective training programmes is needed.

Based on the above discussion, it can be argued that IC-related teacher training obtained before commencing teaching profession is not a straightforward determinant of how teachers will eventually approach interculturally-related pedagogy. While some studies report some evidence of the notable impact of teacher's pre-service training on at least novice teachers, other studies have shown only little influence in this regard. This mixture of findings illustrated above can

arguably be attributed to two main reasons. First, the various characterisations of the different teacher education programmes which are involved within the reviewed studies seem to play a role in yielding variable outcomes on teachers' cognition. That is, pre-service teacher training programmes across different contexts differ greatly in terms of, for example, the training programme's duration (e.g., one year professional course or 4 year degree programme); the instructional content provided (i.e., the quantity and quality of intercultural input involved); the contextual location of the course (e.g. local or abroad); or the amount of classroom practice involved (e.g. theoretically driven or practically oriented course).

Second, the influence of pre-service education programmes on the development of teacher's cognition cannot be understood independently from the interference of teachers' prior schooling beliefs which have been discussed earlier. As cautioned by Levin (2014), the prior beliefs which prospective teachers bring into their teacher training programmes can act as "filters for interpreting new knowledge and new experiences" (p. 50). Put simply, the unique profiles which student-teachers bring to their training courses can either mediate or inhibit the implementation of newly acquired knowledge. It follows therefore that the influence of teacher education programmes can partially be dependent on the extent to which it takes into account teachers' pre-conceived beliefs and schooling biographies.

3.3.2.2 In-service professional development

While the preceding discussion focused on the role of *pre-service* education, this section reports findings from studies which have indicated the influence of *in-service* professional development on teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices. In agreement with teacher cognition research which affirms the role of in-service professional development on teachers in general (Adey, 2004; Fullan, 2014; Hill et al., 2013), some studies have given particular attention to the impact of professional development on developing teachers' intercultural pedagogies (Alvarez, 2020; Biasutti et al., 2019; DeJaeghere & Cao, 2009; Hajisoteriou et al., 2019; Sales et al., 2011). To cite an example, Hajisoteriou et al. (2019) within Greek context attempted to explore and simultaneously improve teachers' personal attitudes towards intercultural teaching by responding to an interculturally-oriented professional development course. The findings evidenced the influence of the course concluding that with participatory, collaborative, and

action-research modes of development teachers can alter their attitudes and practices towards IC in the classroom. In that, instead of top-down approach where teachers are provided with ready-made materials of how intercultural teaching should be addressed in the institution, a bottom-up approach is recommended where teachers are given the opportunity to incorporate their histories, beliefs, and experiences into the manifestations of institutional educational policies.

Further detail on the influence of in-service training has been reported in a study by Sales et al. (2011) which investigated the impact of an intensive professional development course on school teachers in Spain. Through a bottom-up school-based training programme that takes into account teachers' voice, the course has been found a valuable driver for teachers to question the way they used to culturally categorise pupils and they subsequently become more aware of their role in building cultural identities of their learners. This echoes findings from a recent study by Alvarez (2020) in the Columbian context where EFL teachers have collaboratively constructed, through a reflective involvement in a study group, a more situated understanding of IC in relation to their teaching. This understanding has been found to transform teachers into redrawing their own pre-assumptions and to cultivate them to grow professionally. Both findings by Sales et al. and Alvarez above indicate that the influence of in-service training on IC can inflate when teachers are offered with the opportunity to actively reflect upon their beliefs and practice. In other words, professional development programmes become more influential when they are positioned in the context of teachers' distinct professional biographies and experiences.

Quite on the contrary, however, Lee et al. (2007) found that a training intervention which aimed at enhancing in-service teachers' understanding and incorporation of cultural issues have resulted in almost no change. After conducting a two-year professional course which focused on instructional issues related to cultural diversity, findings suggest that participants' beliefs and practices remained relatively stable demonstrating only minimal transformation. In particular, participating teachers fail to incorporate diverse cultural experiences or materials into their teaching and did not show change in their beliefs of students' cultures. However, the authors attribute the lack of change to several impeding contextual factors such as the lack of congruent policies at the state-wide level, in addition to some institutional challenges such as high-stake

assessment demands imposed by the curriculum which collectively make the incorporation of culturally-related pedagogy somewhat challenged.

In sum, the above presented findings do not seem to offer conclusive evidence of the direct and determining influence of in-service teacher training on teachers' beliefs and enactments, yet it can be argued that the influence of in-service training can prevail greatly when teachers' collaboration and self-reflection in these trainings are acknowledged. In addition, the realisation of such influence can be conditioned, as suggested by Lee et al. (2007), by other mediating factors which can be institutional, policy-related or linked with classroom teaching practice. In relation to this, more discussion on the role of contextual factors now follows in the next section.

3.3.3 The role of contextual factors on EFL teachers' beliefs of IC

As discussed in 3.2.2.1.1, this study views teachers' cognition as an inseparable construct from the context in which it is situated. For this, studying teacher beliefs "in isolation of the contexts in which they occur will inevitably provide partial, if not flawed, characterisations of teachers and teaching" (Borg, 2006, p. 275). Contextual factors refer, in general, to the interrelated conditions which mediate teachers' beliefs into classroom practice. These conditions can relate, according to Borg (2006), to the social, institutional, and physical settings which surround the realities of the educational institution. As such, they can range from as broad as the macro social dimension; to specific institutional constructs such as curriculum mandates and staff support; and to even more micro conditions which involve the immediate teaching situation within the classroom. Parallel to this position and as commonly configured in the intercultural education literature, I discuss now the role of each of these contextual dimensions in (re)shaping the beliefs as well as the instructional practices which are related to the development of students' IC in EFL.

3.3.3.1 The social factor

There is a wealth of evidence that testifies to the influence of the wider socio-cultural context on the formation of teacher's beliefs and practice of IC (Chao, 2016; Ran, 2001; Valdiviezo, 2009; Winch, 2015). Chao (2016), for example, reported in a quantitative study that the enactment of some of teachers' preferred teaching styles is challenged by some social patterns

identified in the Taiwanese context. One example of these patterns has been the pressure from students' parents on focusing on certain educational objectives (e.g., achieving high proficiency scores instead of developing intercultural skills) which have in turn influenced teachers to act correspondingly. This mirrors the findings of Ran's (2001) study in a multicultural school which have shown that parents from Eastern background usually expect teachers to focus on language accuracy and achieving high results, whereas British teachers, according to the study findings, attach a greater attention to facilitating processes such as problem-solving and critical thinking skills. The social influences which are grounded in differing cultural perceptions seem to ultimately create conflicts between the expectations of the students' family and the teachers' way of teaching.

Along the same lines, Winch (2015) has investigated how surrounding cultural patterns may influence language teachers' preferences and found that their decision-making processes tend to conform to the predominant cultural traits in which the teaching environment is situated. The study found, for example, that language teachers who originally came from individualistically-oriented societies (i.e., where ties between individuals are relatively loose) tend to gradually develop collective-based attitudes after moving to work in collectivist society (i.e., where people are integrated into strong cohesive social in-groups) (as in Hofstede, 1991). The study found, for example, that native Western English teachers have somewhat altered their professional attitudes towards time commitment after moving to work in a foreign Eastern country where time commitment is not highly valued. This finding gives further support to the influence of the predominant cultural landscape on the formulation and enactment of teachers' beliefs.

Also, evidence from a number of studies has established that religion, as a socio-cultural construct, can influence the way EFL teachers approach IC in the classroom (Naidu, 2020; Shah et al., 2013). Although studies which explore the influence of religion in the particular Omani EFL context seem to be scant, some studies from similar religiously oriented contexts can inform our understanding on this topic. For example, in a study by Shah et al. (2013) which is conducted within the Saudi context where Islamic religion plays a huge cultural role in the Saudi society, findings show that the religious and conservative Saudi social environment seems to influence EFL teachers in choosing their cultural materials (e.g., incorporating materials which is culturally relevant to students). Naidu (2020) reports similar observations in the Indonesian

context and indicates that Indonesian Muslim teachers tend to refrain from discussing inter-religious matters in the classroom. These findings can inform the current study in paying attention to the potential role Islam can play in the way teachers operationalise culturally related content and discussions in the classroom since Islam, as has been established in 2.3.2, plays a pivotal role in the Omani cultural and political landscape.

3.3.3.2 Institutional factors

Besides the wider national context, some studies have reported the influence of the institutional context on teachers' culturally-related pedagogies (Ghavamnia, 2020; Othman, & Ruslan, 2020; Valdiviezo, 2009; Young & Sachdev, 2011). Valdiviezo (2009), for example, found that the vague treatment of intercultural content within the institutional policies and procedures have resulted in a mismatch between what teachers do and what the policies aim to achieve. The author found that the policy's top-down design where teachers' voice has been neglected contributed to the teacher's lack of implementation of intercultural practices. This accords with findings from multiple studies (Gu, 2016; Luk, 2012; Zamanian & Saeidi, 2017) which have concluded that although institutional objectives include an explicitly prescribed intercultural element within its agenda, teachers sometimes hold perplexed views on how this element can effectively be translated in practice. Failing to translate the institutional objectives in practice arguably suggests that instating explicit objectives in terms of IC is not necessarily a guarantee on the effective incorporation of IC by teachers especially if detailed guidance on how these guidelines can be translated in practical terms is missing.

Other institutional factors, as reported recently by Othman and Ruslan (2020), include the nature of intercultural dynamics inside the institution. An example of this, according to the authors, is the level of interaction among staff members from diverse cultural backgrounds, which has been found to influence the teachers' understanding as well as attitude towards executing more effective intercultural teaching strategies in their EFL teaching. In addition, the prescribed teaching resources within the institution were found to greatly impact teachers' intercultural choices (Cheng, 2012; Luk, 2012; Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2018). Cheng (2012), for example, found that despite teachers' reported beliefs of the significance of intercultural learning, more emphasis during classroom instruction has been given on covering textbook content to mainly

fulfil the prescribed curriculum which, in turn, challenges their intercultural teaching choices. Luk (2012) and Sadeghi and Sepahi (2018) extend further on the role of the textbook and found that the cultural content within some of the prescribed (international) textbooks sometimes conflict with teachers' own cultural preferences which in turn result in a distorted and sometimes inconsistent implementation of the given cultural content. These findings can inform the current study where the selected study participants are required to follow an international textbook mandated by the HEI.

Besides the above-mentioned institutional dimensions, the influence of instruction time on teachers' intercultural teaching choices should also not be underestimated (Ghavamnia, 2020; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008; Nguyen et al., 2016; Sercu et al., 2004). The issue of instruction time is especially prevalent in the particular context of incorporating culture in teaching since the mainstream objectives of ELT seem to foreground students' linguistic proficiency as the overwhelming learning objective. This, in turn, makes other tacit curricular objectives (i.e., IC) of a lesser priority especially in situations where given instructional time is relatively limited (Ghavamnia, 2020). In support of this argument, Sercu et al., (2004) found in their study that due to time constrains, participating teachers devote 80% of their lesson on teaching language structure and only 20% is devoted on addressing cultural content. Likewise, Larzen-Ostermark, (2008) found that lack of time has been "a great obstacle" (p. 541) to Finland-Swedish EFL teachers in incorporating culturally-related pedagogies. The study reports that participants find themselves obligated to dedicate the limited time to mainly teach the grammar aspects of language and therefore they hold beliefs that in such circumstances the cultural aspects will have to go.

Taken together, the above reviewed studies seem to be suggestive of a mutual interactive relationship between teachers' own beliefs and the instilled institutional regulations and professional dynamics in which these beliefs are enacted. Teachers' theoretical beliefs of intercultural pedagogy could become effectively implemented if mediated by institutional affordance (or support) where intercultural education is highly valued. However, given the widely variable characteristics identified across different institutions (e.g., diverse vs monocultural teaching environments, public vs private institutions, basic vs higher education, textbook-driven or non-textbook driven syllabi, structure vs process-based teaching approaches,

etc.), it is arguably questionable to identify a universally uniformed way of how different institutions can facilitate intercultural teaching effectively. For this, conducting further studies in variable institutional parameters would continuously yield more tailored recommendations which take into account the multiple unique institutional realities where English language teachers are embedded.

3.3.3.3 The student factor

At the classroom level, some studies have shown that the classroom profile impacts teachers' beliefs and practices of IC (Angelovska & Schaipp, 2020; Svensson, 2017). Besides the reported influence of some logistic and physical classroom-related factors such as the classroom size (Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi, 2015) and the availability of instructional resources (Schulz, 2001), central to the topic of this thesis is to understand the role of the classroom's *cultural* profile on EFL teachers' intercultural beliefs and practices of IC. In relation to this and based on the existing literature, one influencing characteristic is the level of cultural diversity among the language learners in the classroom. Findings, for example, suggest that culturally heterogenous classrooms (i.e., where students come from relatively distinct cultural backgrounds) may well have a bearing on language teachers particularly in the way intercultural teaching is operationalised (Angelovska & Schaipp, 2020; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008; Svensson, 2017). According to a study by Larzen-Ostermark, (2008) in the Finnish context, classrooms with heterogenous student groups with widely diverse cultural interests act as a restriction on teachers in terms of providing a suitable cross-cultural content for all. This is reinforced by Svensson (2017) who found that Swedish ELT teachers' most challenging part of their work is to deal with the heterogeneity of their classroom particularly with addressing the individualised cultural needs of their students.

However, Angelovska and Schaipp (2020) assert that the cultural diversity of the classroom should not be an obstacle but instead an opportunity for teachers to integrate multicultural instruction; hence increases learners' intercultural awareness. This, according to Angelovska and Schaipp, is conditioned by teachers' own beliefs in the significance of accepting this opportunity which further highlights the significant role of teacher beliefs in the implementation of intercultural teaching. For this, Flores and Smith (2009) stress the value of facilitating

diversity preparation programmes which can enhance teachers' beliefs towards cultural diversity in the classroom. It can therefore be suggested that understanding the degree of influence of the *cultural* composition of the classroom cannot be uncoupled from understanding the teachers' own beliefs and the level of professional preparation they obtained to engage with cultural composition in the classroom.

In addition to students' cultural backgrounds, studies have shown that the level of students' English proficiency impacts teachers' enactments of intercultural teaching choices (Hismanoglu, 2011; Young et al., 2013). Hismanoglu (2011), for example, found that learners with higher linguistic proficiency tend to be more interactively responsive to the communicative intercultural situations initiated by the teacher than those with lower linguistic proficiency. This seems to imply that teachers' enactment of intercultural choices which demand students' collaborative and interactive engagement may be impeded by the students' linguistic incapability of engaging with such activities. This, in turn, influences the teacher to dedicate more instructional time in raising students' linguistic capacity instead of expanding on their IC and other non-linguistic skills. The role of students' proficiency is of particular relevance to the current study which selects its participants from the GFP programme; a programme which is designed mainly to uplift students' low linguistic level.

In view of all that has been discussed so far in relation to the role of context (3.3.3.1 to 3.3.3.3), findings seem to point toward the unavoidable influence of the context on the way IC is instructionally implemented in the EFL classroom. The consensus is that teachers' beliefs and preferred professional choices, although capable of guiding teaching behaviour, seem to largely be negotiated within contextual parameters (Peiser & Jones, 2014). While the literature identifies few studies which give little weight to the role of contextual factors and instead emphasise the role of teachers' intrinsic factors and personal histories (Jamalzadeh & Shahsavar, 2015; Peiser & Jones, 2014; Varghese et al., 2005), these studies are considerably outnumbered by studies which give ample evidence of the role of context in the formation of teachers' beliefs and practices. This gives further indication that findings related to teachers' beliefs and practice in one particular context do not necessarily inform the reality of other different contexts. For this, the current study acknowledges that studying EFL teacher's beliefs of IC in the yet

unconsidered Omani context can increase our understanding of how distinct language teaching environments with different contextual conditions can reshape teacher beliefs and enactments.

3.3.4 The influence of teaching practice on cognition

Teaching practice, according to Buehl and Beck (2015), refers to "any action that is part of the teaching process (e.g., planning, decision making, instructional strategies or approaches, assessment, reflection, work with families and relationship building)" (p. 67). It is understood that these *actions* are, in principle, manifestations of beliefs since beliefs are capable of guiding teaching practice (see 3.2.2.1). Such an established understanding, however, does not intend to depict an ultimately mono-directional relationship between belief and teaching behaviour. Instead, there is a widespread conviction that the relationship is bi-directional (Thompson, 1992) meaning that not only cognition guides practice but practice simultaneously reformulates cognition. While the notion of belief-guides-action has become a commonplace in language teacher cognition research (Burns, 1996; Woods, 1996), there has been more interest in studying how the cumulated classroom teaching experience impacts teacher's beliefs and conceptions. Cushner (2007), for example, indicates that with prolonged expertise, teachers' pedagogical beliefs tend to evolve dynamically with the needs of students' learning. Similarly, Tsui (2003) suggests that experienced teachers tend to develop, over the course of teaching profession, a sense of student-related decision-making processes (i.e., foregrounding the needs of their students) when planning and implementing their teaching practices whereas novice teachers rely heavily on their recently acquired theoretical knowledge of teaching.

In the context of intercultural teaching, only few studies have given close attention to the role of experience on the way language teachers view and implement IC. Deveney (2007) in his study found that teachers through classroom experience can become effective in handling multicultural issues in the lesson even without prior specific training; although such effectiveness, warns the author, is dependent on teacher's attitudinal openness towards other cultures. On the contrary, Young and Sachdev's (2011) study, suggest that although teachers' theoretical views of IC can somewhat be enhanced with experience, teachers remain unable and sometimes unwilling to incorporate these views in practice. According to the authors, teaching experience was not enough to enable teachers to resolve unwelcoming contextual conditions

such as the lack of curricular support and unsuitable textbook material. The conflicting findings above seem to underline, once again, the significance of examining the joint influence of multiple educational sources and contextual factors which together can mutually and interactively inform teachers' beliefs and practices of IC.

3.3.5 Divergences between beliefs and practice

It is now considered that beliefs and practice are mutually informing i.e., depicting a reciprocal relationship between what teachers hold as a belief and what they ultimately do in class. Such a bi-directional relationship is sometimes explained in terms of the *tensions* which might arise between the two (Basturkmen, 2012; Buehl & Beck, 2015; Fang, 1996; Lee, 2009; Phipps & Borg, 2009). The meaning of tensions in this context generally refers to any divergence between what teachers theoretically hold as a belief and what they actually do in their classroom practice. The teacher cognition literature identifies variable angels through which tensions can be captured. Guerra and Wubbena, (2017), for example, view it through the lens of cognitive dissonance signalling a psychologically "disjoint between conflicting beliefs" (p. 47) which in turn yield inconsistency in practice. The implication of this view is that teachers when experiencing dissonance are thought to facilitate an arena for internalising new set of beliefs (which override initial beliefs) and use them as a guide for future instructional practice (Eisenhardt et al., 2012).

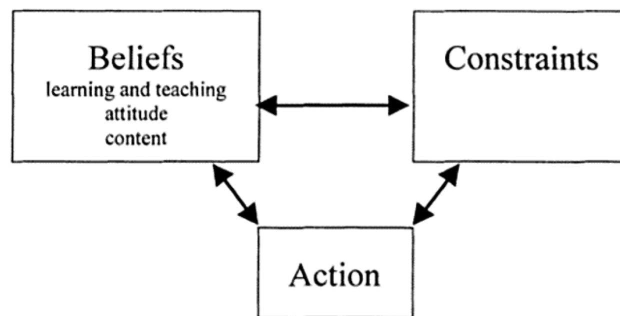
Elsewhere, Phipps and Borg (2009) suggest that potential tensions should be regarded as "multi-dimensional" (p. 387) as they are characterised by the multiple interfering factors which challenge teachers' internal decision-making processes, as neatly demonstrated by the authors in their example below:

> *[A] teacher may not believe in the value of gap-filling grammar, but they may know that their students enjoy and expect that kind of work; they may also be aware that gap-filling is a feature of the tests students have to take; and finally the teacher may value gap-filling activities as a classroom management tool. In such cases, tensions are multi-dimensional – they are characterized by several competing forces. (p. 387)*

Relatedly, Sullivan and Mousley (2001) as well as Buehl and Beck (2015) arrive at similar conclusions that tensions between belief and practice should be explained in light of the

constraints which fuel these tensions. These constraints according to Buehl and Beck (2015) can either be intrinsic such as teacher's lack of knowledge on the teaching subject or lack of self-awareness; or extrinsic such the school system or educational policies. This, arguably, implies that harmony between teachers' cognition and practice is expected to be the norm; whereas incongruence is an indication of an existing interfering constraint which challenges the enactment of the typical norm (as illustrated in Figure 3.2 below). In other words, teachers might believe that integrating culture is critical in cultivating the learners' intercultural skills, yet some of the unwelcoming contextual factors (discussed in 3.3.3) can create inconsistencies between what they believe and what they do in class.

Figure 3.2 *Interactions Between Teachers' Beliefs, Constraints and Action (Sullivan & Mousley, 2001, p. 148)*



Within the particular field of intercultural teaching, the disparity between teachers' professed beliefs and action has been attributed to various factors. Studies by Jedynak (2011) and Safa and Tofighi (2022), for example, found that current teacher education programmes do not provide prospective teachers with sufficient pedagogical skills to translate theoretical beliefs into the classroom - resulting in a notable disparity between a perceived significance of IC and an incongruent intercultural teaching practice. Safa and Tofighi's findings go further to suggest that teacher's prior language learning history, a lack of principled IC methodology, and inappropriate teaching materials are additionally significant influencing factors for perpetuating belief-practice tensions. The latter, in particular, seems to be a commonly reported attribute across many studies highlighting the key role which curriculum can play in mediating (or constraining) teachers' held beliefs into classroom practice.

Expanding on the impacting role of curricular influences on the belief-practice relationship, in a study conducted by Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019), participating teachers suggest that the prescribed teaching materials (i.e., textbooks, supplementary readers, worksheets, etc.) do not seem to locate adequate attention to intercultural pragmatics and competence. Resultantly, teachers, by conforming to mandated curriculum, end up with limited instruction time to proactively incorporate interculturality-oriented pedagogy in their classroom. Baleghizadeh and Moghadam (2013) report somewhat similar findings suggesting that teachers on the majority of occasions feel obligated to adhere to the predetermined cultural content of the prescribed textbook regardless of their own beliefs of what cultural content is better suited for their students. What is more, prescribed textbooks in many educational contexts are found to represent a particular cultural bias, demonstrating a narrow spectrum of cultural perspectives; hence enabling the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes (Amerian & Tajabadi, 2020; Baleghizadeh & Amiri Shayesteh, 2020; Chao, 2011). These findings seem to suggest that although utilising a textbook can be greatly advantageous in terms of aiding the teacher with readily-made cultural content (Sugianto & Wirza, 2021), it can act sometimes as a source of instructional challenge. Based on this, it is worth considering in this study how curriculum, in general, and textbooks, in particular, can enable or constrain the enactment of teachers' IC beliefs.

Among the above perspectives, the debate on incongruences between beliefs and practices can also be explained in terms of the methodological limitation associated with the elicitation of these. Arguably, the assumption that what teachers *profess* in a survey or in an interview is an identical and complete representation of what they typically *do* in class is an overestimation. By the merely means of a questionnaire or a one-hour interview, researchers should not assume, I believe, that the participating teacher will be able to enunciate holistically their theoretical orientation of their corresponding teaching behaviour. This means that any identified inconsistency between belief and practice is not necessarily a disjoint between what the respondent said in the interview and what they did during classroom observation but could be confounded by an inadequacy in eliciting a comprehensive picture of teachers' beliefs in the first place. Needless to say, teachers (when being study participants) vary in the degree of articulation, cogency, choice of terminology or readiness during data collection procedures to elaborate on the complexities of their beliefs, etc. This, however, should not imply that eliciting

teacher beliefs is eventually a wasted endeavour. Instead, I believe that professed beliefs are better elicited in close tandem with observed classroom behaviour. This endeavour necessitates a shift in focus from solely relying on interviews where the teacher ideally thinks of what should be done into what the teacher actually does in action. In practical terms, this can be achieved through, for example, post-lesson interviews where the teachers' beliefs are elicited instantly after the observed classroom behaviour.

3.3.6 Research gaps

In framing the related literature of intercultural teaching in Borg's conceptual model, a foundational knowledge has been established about how the learning and professional experiences along with the contextual factors contribute to the formation and mediation of EFL teachers' beliefs of IC and how all of these potentially inform classroom practice. However, some gaps should be acknowledged. First, much of the reviewed scholarship seem to give primal attention to exploring teachers' *professed* beliefs with the presumptions that these beliefs indicate relevant enactments in the classroom. In spite of the established perspectives of the interdependence of belief and practice, belief remains the intuitive locus of analytic explanation in the majority of the reviewed studies. Even in studies which attempted to capture how teachers actualise IC in their classroom, the adopted methodological procedures relied on surveying and interviewing methods with minimal or no observational investigation of their corresponding practices in the classroom. In response to this methodological gap, the current study suggests that examining the implementation of teachers' cognitive mind in the social dynamic of the classroom is key in order to form a more robust understanding of EFL teachers' beliefs of IC.

Second, there is a contradictory evidence gap (Miles, 2017) where different studies in the literature seem to offer contradictory conclusions. As noted in 3.3.1, 3.3.2, and 3.3.4 there is a level of disparity in whether the teacher's learning and professional experiences have a direct influence on their beliefs of IC or not. While it is acknowledged that these studies present their research conclusions based on their distinct research purposes, methodologies, and contextual parameters which might account for disparity of results; the current study suggests that conducting more related studies in different research environments and with different teacher populations can allow us to understand the potential origins of these contradictions.

Third, the available literature shows that studies which explore teachers' beliefs and actual practices of IC together with teachers' initial schooling, previous professional coursework, and contextual factors, is still limited. In that, different studies place focus on the above-mentioned components in a fragmented way whereas studies which comprehensively and deeply investigate the multiplicity of these components within an integrative whole are lacking. In responding to this theoretical gap, the current study recognises that teacher's enacted IC behaviour should not solely be attributable to a single component in Borg's framework but to these components as a whole.

Finally, the reviewed literature seems to be dominated by studies which are conducted in Western contexts where FL classrooms are relatively more culturally diverse than those in Eastern Arab contexts. Although recently there has been an increasing wealth of research which studies EFL teachers intercultural teaching in some Eastern countries (most notably in China, Korea, or Iran); there is still an abundant room for further work to be conducted in the less researched Arabic context which makes for potentially quite different notions of intercultural teaching. The sparsity of contextually related literature left us at loss in terms of tailoring situated teacher preparation for different educational contexts. As has been established earlier, findings seem to vary from one context to another and, therefore, teacher cognition models should not migrate across international boundaries without proper consideration given to the domestic socio-educational contexts. For this, situating Borg's model within the unique intersection of Omani educational policy, societal, and institutional structures (discussed in Chapter 2) will help draw more tailored recommendations that will potentially help educationalists and policy-makers in Oman to articulate better informed agenda pertaining to the intercultural educational development in Omani HEIs.

3.4 Summary

This chapter presented the key theoretical propositions which underlie the phenomenon under investigation, i.e., EFL teacher beliefs of IC. It started by offering a conceptual understanding of the two key related terms, namely IC and teacher beliefs, both within the context of EFL teaching. Resultantly, a tentative conceptual understanding that draws on Byram's framework of ICC and Borg's model of teacher cognition has been established. Subsequently, the chapter

reviewed the related literature as per the key concepts identified in the adopted conceptual framework. The reviewed literature presented the current empirical knowledge of the different professional and educational attributes which inform teachers IC practice such as schooling, professional coursework, and classroom experience. It proceeded to discuss the role of the teaching context in mediating teachers' beliefs of IC. It then offered an account on the potential divergences that might emerge between what teachers hold as a belief and what they actually do in class. Finally, based on the reviewed literature, the common gaps which the study aims to fill have been articulated. Taking all the discussions and insights from this chapter, the next chapter will state the research questions and the methodology approaches adopted to answer these questions.

Chapter 4 | METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction and statement of research questions

The research gaps identified in the previous chapter, along with the proposed theoretical underpinnings, coupled with the research purposes outlined earlier in this study are now all united through the current research enquiry in a set of three guiding questions:

RQ1: How do Omani EFL teachers perceive and implement Intercultural Competence (IC) in relation to their EFL teaching practice?

RQ2: How do participants' educational and teaching experiences inform their beliefs and practices which are related to IC?

RQ3: How do identified contextual factors influence Omani teachers' beliefs and practices of IC?

Having articulated the RQs, this chapter intends to present the philosophical underpinnings, methodological design, and research procedures which were adopted in answering these questions. The chapter starts in **Section 4.2** by articulating the researcher's worldviews which demonstrate the ontological and epistemological foundations of the study. Next, **Section 4.3** discusses the qualitative research design which was proposed to answer the RQs. Later, **Section 4.4** gives an overview of the research procedure - illustrating the chronological timeline of the research process, the participant recruitment procedure, and the research site wherein this study was conducted. Following this, **Section 4.6** offers a detailed account on the data collection instruments employed in this study, namely semi-structured interviews, vignettes, classroom observation, and stimulated recall and the underlying rationale for utilising each of these. After that, **Section 4.7** provides a description on the procedures followed in the data analysis stage. Subsequently, **Section 4.8** clarifies my reflexive position (i.e., reflexivity) whereas **Section 4.9** discusses the strategies adopted to maintain rigour and scientific trustworthiness. Finally, the ethical considerations linked with this study are laid out in **Section 4.10**.

4.2 Philosophical worldviews: my ontological and epistemological stances

This section seeks to clarify my philosophical worldviews. Philosophical worldviews, or paradigms (Guba, 1990; Kuhn, 1970), can be defined as a basic set of beliefs held by the

researcher that guide research action (Guba, 1990). These philosophical beliefs, according to Cohen et al. (2018), are usually defined in terms of the researcher's *ontological* assumptions, which refer to the nature of reality; and *epistemological* assumptions which entail the nature of knowledge and ways of obtaining this knowledge. Both ontological and epistemological standpoints give fundamental shape to the type of enquiry we are drawn to and committing to these standpoints help produce a coherent research design. Therefore, a clarification of both my ontological and epistemological stances now follows.

4.2.1 Ontology: a constructivist ontological stance

In terms of ontology, or the nature of reality, the current study is underpinned by the constructivist paradigm. According to Bryman (2016), constructionism (or constructivism) embraces a subjectivist outlook which suggests that the world resides inside the subjective mind of the individual. For this, reality is not capable of being objectively discovered (or uncovered) since it is basically a human construction that is co-created by the individuals' interaction with their social environment. Based on these interactions, individuals *construct* their own subjective imaging of reality. Due to this subjective construction, the world (or reality) remains multiple, intangible and, therefore, incapable of representing any sense of absolute truth.

Constructivism can be explained in terms of its objectivist counterpart. Objectivism, in its hardcore sense, suggests that truth is *out there* independent from the knower; and the world can directly be obtained through observation (Bryman, 2016). In terms of research practice, objectivism implies that what cannot directly be observed or measured simply does not exist and, thus, does not contribute to the formation of truth. However, while acknowledging its popularity in the realms of natural science for offering predictability, causal descriptions, and generalisations of the natural world, objectivist approaches have been critiqued for not offering adequate understanding of the hermeneutic and intangible aspects of social sciences. The source of this lack of understanding is largely associated with the objectivist view of the social world as a closed laboratory setting where different factors and variables can be reduced and then measured within predetermined setting boundaries. In response to this, constructivism predicates that the nature of the world is not an externally observed modality that exists away

from the knower, but it is internally constructed through the individual's perceptions, experiences, and interactions with the world (Cohen et al., 2018).

Based on the above assumptions, a distinct constructivist outlook which informs the current study is that strong determinacy of teachers' beliefs is rejected. This means that *absolute* descriptions or models which predict explicit causal relationships in researching the architecture of teacher's cognition are fallible. This emphasises that the social world of teachers, in light of constructionism, does not manifest in a universally autonomous order but emerges constantly as a socially joint enterprise (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, the borrowed models and developed theoretical underpinnings in this thesis remain time and context dependent, are deemed to be fluidly tentative, and do not depict law-like patterns of teaching behaviour.

4.2.2 Epistemology: Interpretivism

In terms of epistemology, which concerns how we obtain knowledge, the current study embraces an interpretivist stance. Inherent in the constructivist paradigm, interpretivism rests on the assumption that individuals come to know the world they live in through processes of thinking based upon what is observed, perceived, and experienced (Pritchard & Woollard, 2013). Counter to positivist epistemologies which make distinctions between what the world is and the way individuals make meanings of that world, interpretivism contends that such distinction is irrelevant as the world does not exist independently from our innate meaning-making processes (Ormston et al., 2014). As such, knowledge is obtained from the way an individual makes sense of the ecologies of social contexts. In these ways, knowledge becomes inseparable from the human consciousness and perceptions (Staver, 1995). The world, on interpretivist grounds, is not directly knowable but can be accessed through interpreting the meanings people associate with their experiences. Therefore, unlike positivist epistemologies which assert a universal objective form of knowledge, interpretivism asserts that world knowledge is subjective and liable to manifold interpretations.

Because epistemology concerns how we acquire knowledge, I signify, based on interpretivism, that the amassed findings in this study are mediated through the researcher (Ritchie et al., 2013). Such mediation implicates the researcher's position to be of an insider one; meaning that

knowledge is co-created jointly by different research subjects (including the researcher and participants) rather than in isolation. In other words, knowledge becomes established by the researcher and the participants as they participate in research activities that evolve in interaction. However, the researcher's subjective position does not seek to suggest an *anything goes* mentality where the researcher's opinions supersede rigorous investigation (Saldana, 2014), but to profess that knowledge, in light of interpretivism, cannot be separated from those who possess it and, more importantly, claiming objective neutrality would be paradigmatically erroneous. Meanwhile, I strive in this study, while acknowledging subjectivism, to retain what Ormston et al. (2014) called "empathic neutrality" (p. 8) which is:

> *a position that recognises that research cannot be value-free but which advocates that researchers should try to make their assumptions, biases and values transparent, while striving as far as possible to be neutral and non-judgemental in their approach.* (p. 8)

Acting on the above, an account on the researcher's awareness of his reflexive position and how it might potentially impact the overall interpretation of findings will be laid out in Section 4.8.

4.3 Methodology: the qualitative research design

Methodology, in general, refers to the research design that shapes the researcher's choice of particular methods in connection with desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998). With respect to the wide array of methodological designs identified in educational research, this study embraces a qualitative methodological design. Qualitative studies, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), attempt to "make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." (p. 43). In this fasion, they contrast sharply with quantitative designs which, in their classical forms, aim to measure and validate causal relationships among variables using statistical (hence quantitative) procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Muijs, 2010). While acknowledging that *quantity* is useful in seeking generalised statements about one size of the population regarding social phenomena, it falls short of answering the research questions of the current study whose focus is on the constructed meanings (hence *qualities*) associated with a group of Omani teachers' beliefs and practices of IC. For this, a qualitative approach would be a better fit since qualitative designs aim, as in Maxwell's (2013) words, to understand

> *the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, experiences, and actions they are involved with or engage in. I am using "meaning" here in a broad sense, including cognition, affect, intentions and anything else that can be encompassed in what qualitative researchers often refer to as the "participants' perspective.* (p. 30)

By adopting a qualitative design, I also follow Olafson et al.'s (2014) assertion that qualitative approaches (as opposed to quantitative approaches) are "ideally suited to the *messy* construct of teachers' beliefs" (p. 128). As such, in addition to their potential in exploring and understanding abstract concepts such as teacher cognition, qualitative approaches in social science research are associated with methodological traditions which aim to build deeply nuanced understandings of the richness and complexities of social phenomenon (Bryman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). In exploring teacher beliefs, in particular, qualitative methodologies have been appraised for offering the potential to understand "the complex and interrelated processes of personal experiences, beliefs and practices" (Fang, 1996, p. 60) which greatly intersect with the proposed purposes of this study.

Another reason a qualitative approach was chosen in this study is for its inherent potential in studying people's contextual lives and experiences in their natural settings (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) which refers to the ordinary everyday worlds of participants. As discussed previously, one aim of this study was to investigate Omani teachers' enacted intercultural pedagogies in the particular context of Omani EFL classroom and, therefore, the selected instruments aimed to situate the research subject (i.e., Omani EFL teacher) at the core of their actualised teaching setting. This, in turn, helps to collect data as nested in its real context (Miles et al., 2019) and also to understand "the particular contexts within which the participants act and the influence that this context has on their actions" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 30).

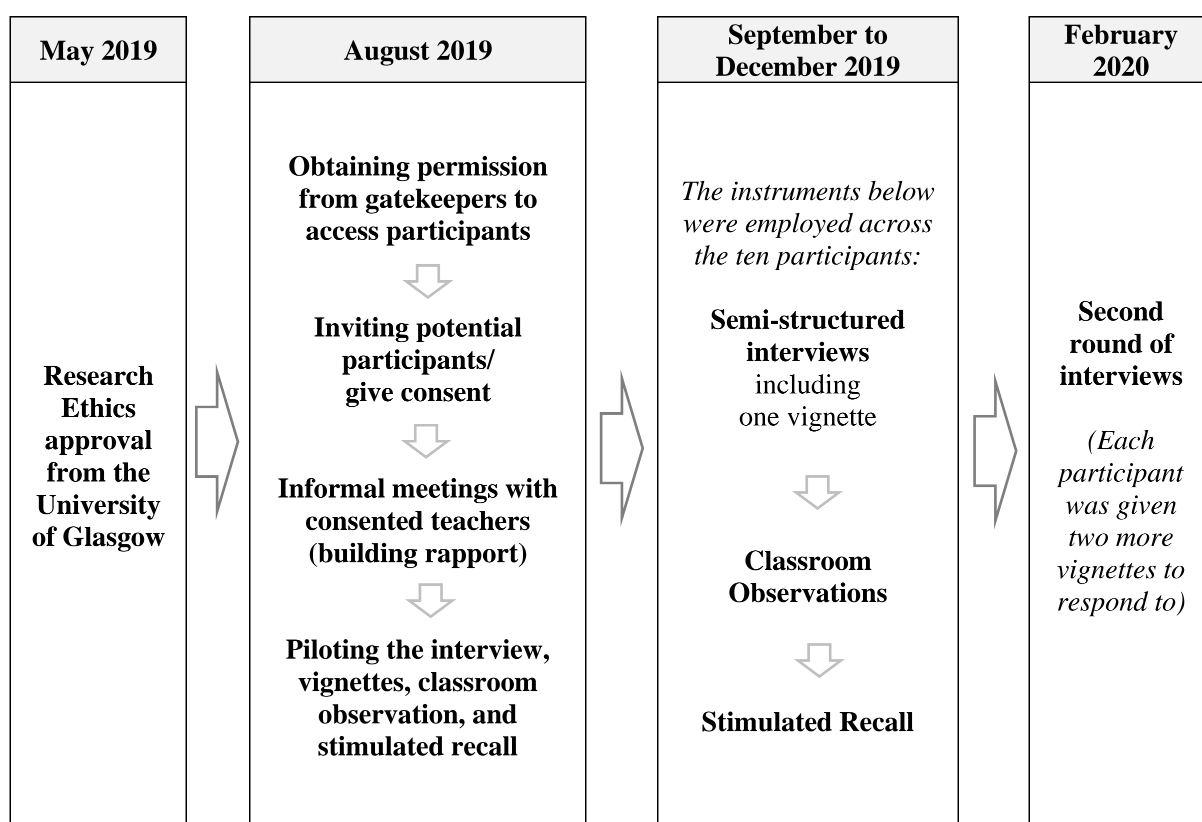
Further, the qualitative design is devised in this study for its capability of picturing a holistic overview of the issue under investigation (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2019). By allowing an integrated mixture of instruments, I aimed to encompass as many aspects as necessary to gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon under study. Aligning with Gay's (2014) assertion that "teachers' beliefs need to be examined more thoroughly and comprehensively in research" (p. 447), the present study employed four qualitative data collection methods; namely, (1) semi-structured interviews, (2) vignettes, (3) classroom observation, and (4) stimulated recall, in order to form a robust and well-rounded methodology which is capable of answering the multi-

dimensional research questions stated earlier and, thus, capturing the underpinnings of language teacher belief as a whole.

4.4 An overview of the research procedure

In terms of procedure, the above-mentioned collection methods were employed in around five months in one selected HEI in Oman (see Figure 4.1 for the chronological timeline of the research process). Following a permission to access the institution, ten Omani EFL teachers consented and recruited to participate in the study. Each of the ten participants engaged with all of the four instruments using the following order: (1) semi-structured interview including one vignette (2) classroom observation, (3) stimulated recall, and (4) second round of vignette-based interviews (more details about the selection procedures, participants, research sites, and data collection methods will be discussed in the following sections).

Figure 4.1 *Chronological Timeline of the Research Process*



Attention was given to the sequence of the deployment of the four instruments. For example, the rationale for starting with the semi-structured interviews before classroom observations was two-fold. First, I aimed to utilise the interview, in part, as a means to build further rapport with the participant teacher before visiting their lessons. Starting with lesson observations without first breaking the ice with the participant would have potentially caused undesirable stress during lesson observation (Wragg, 2012). Second, conducting the semi-structured interviews after lesson observations would have dangerously prompted teachers to provide *reflections* of their enacted intercultural practices and not necessarily their predominant theoretical assumptions and beliefs of IC.

Having completed the semi-structured interview, each participant teacher was later visited in their classrooms as part of the classroom observation stage. Following classroom observations, each participant was then invited for two to three stimulated recall sessions where they were prompted with audio-recorded episodes from the observed lessons to recall their thinking and decision-making processes during these selected episodes. Finally, each participant was invited for a follow-up interview where they were given two extra teaching scenarios, or vignettes, to base their IC-related beliefs upon.

4.4.1 Sampling: a purposive approach

In terms of sampling, this study adopted a purposive approach in selecting the items which would inform the data of my study. I say *items* because the units which are included in the data collection procedure are not necessarily restricted to people as they may also include locations, institutions, teaching programmes, events, etc. (Bryman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013); and I say *purposive* to indicate that the selection was not done on a random basis (Cohen et al., 2018). Rather, purposive sampling is done when the researcher positions the research questions at the centre of the sampling considerations (Bryman, 2016) in order to "learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (Patton, 2015, p. 264).

Consistent with these views and in light of the research purposes of the present study, I chose to focus on in-service Omani nationals who work as full-time EFL teachers and those who are assigned teaching schedules at the time of collecting the data. In addition, I chose teachers whose pre-service teacher education programmes were on English language education and undertaken

in Oman in order to explore how participants make meaning of their experience with these programmes on their today's IC-related practice. Also, because variation in sampling has potential in the richness of data (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015), I aimed to recruit participants with a relatively diverse range of characteristics such as gender, qualification, years of teaching experience, etc. More detail on the procedures and rationalities associated with the selection of the university, teaching programme, and participants will be provided below.

4.4.2 Recruitment procedure and overview of participant profiles

Soon after my Research Ethics application was approved by the School of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow, I started contacting the gatekeepers at the targeted institution to enquire about the proper procedures required for accessing the site and participants. I was advised by top management that I had to write a formal letter which contains details about the nature and purpose of the research as well as the data collection methods accompanied with a copy of the research ethics approval. After fulfilling this step, an access to the university was granted. Therewith, I sent invitation letters to prospective participants (under the proposed selection criteria) asking if they would be interested to take part in my study. Later, ten teachers agreed to participate and were recruited for the study. One of these teachers, however, later decided to withdraw and, therefore, to maintain the same target sample size, an alternative participant was duly recruited (see Table 4.1 for participants' profiles).

While there is no hard-and-fast rule on the size of the sample in qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013), I followed Onwuegbuzie and Leech's (2007) advice in that the sample size in qualitative designs should be large enough to generate thick and rich data and at the same time not very small that it prevents data redundancy. For that, I chose to recruit a number of ten teachers which proved to be not only a feasible sample size to be entertained within the set timeframe (Maxwell, 2013) but also capable of providing rich and nuanced accounts of the participants' beliefs and teaching experiences. While acknowledging that enlarging the sample size to even more than ten might be advantageous in building more confidence on the study findings, I was equally aware that fewer cases have the potential in increasing the qualitative researchers' opportunities of having close engagement with their participants and thus generate fine-grained data (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

Table 4.1 An Overview of the Participants' Profiles

	Participant (pseudonym)	Years of teaching experience	Qualification(s)	English Level taught during study
1	Al-Muhalab (M)	2	BEd in English Language and Literature (Oman) + MA in TESOL + CELTA + DELTA	Pre-elementary
2	Nasir (M)	10	BEd in English Language and Literature (Oman) + MA in TESOL	Intermediate
3	Amjad (M)	10	BEd in English Language and literature (Oman) + MA in TESOL	Advanced
4	Tahani (F)	12	BA in English teaching and Literature (Oman)	Pre-elementary
5	Shujoon (F)	5	BEd in English Language and literature (Oman) + CELTA	Pre-elementary
6	Maimoona (F)	6	BA in ELT (Oman) + MA in ELT	Elementary
7	Nihal (F)	2	BEd in English Language and Literature (Oman)	Advanced
8	Abrar (F)	5	BEd in English Language and literature (Oman) + MA in TESOL + CELTA	Elementary
9	Muhammed (M)	5	BA in ELT (Oman) + MA in TESOL	Intermediate
10	Jalal (M)	4	BA in ELT (Oman) + MA in Applied Linguistics + CELTA	Elementary

4.4.3 The research site: An Omani government-based higher education institution

The selected research site (whose name is omitted for anonymity purposes) is a non-profitable public university which is fully funded, governed, and controlled by the Omani government. I chose to purposively focus on government-based institutions where enrolled students are mainly Omanis. This was to focus on exploring intercultural teaching within the under-explored Omani EFL classroom where the teacher and students share relatively homogenous cultural backgrounds (i.e., Omani teacher teaching Omani students).

The primary aim of the selected university has always been to supply the Omani job market with qualified professionals who will work as engineers, technicians, accountants, and other technical occupations. Relevant to this study is to note that within the institution's overarching graduate attributes, as prescribed in its official documents, academic programmes should

- *ensure that graduates develop into responsible citizens by enriching their values and attributes to positively affect the socio-economic development.*
- *foster mutually beneficial constructive partnerships with various public and private sector organizations, professional bodies and local and international communities that benefit the community at large.* (The Education Council, 2016b)

The two goals above seem to recognise how graduate attributes within this institution are not defined solely in terms of academic and technical knowledge but extends to communication competences they need in order to effectively engage within the domestic and international spheres. Such competences overlap greatly with IC, the study focus, which also concerns the learner's ability to construct mutual communications with people from different local and international communities. In all, it can be suggested that teachers and lecturers at this university have the responsibility, as per the proposed graduate attributes, to help learners develop interculturally – therefore making the selection of this research site greatly relevant to the intended purposes of this thesis.

4.4.4 The General Foundation Programme (GFP)

Another rationale for purposively selecting the above institution is the fact that it uses EMI in all of its specialisation programmes which complies with the study's specific ELT context. In the selected institution, all enrolled students must meet specific English language pre-entry requirements (4.5 in IELTS for Diploma programmes and 5.0 for the degree programmes). Failing to do so will make the student eligible of taking the GFP; an intensive non-credited programme which aims to equip students with the basic English language skills required before admitting to their majors (See 2.5.1). Once registered in the GFP, students will take a placement test which will determine their proficiency level. Based on the score, students will be placed in either level one, two, three, or four (benchmarked to the scale of the

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as A1, A2, B1 and B2 respectively) -with level one being the lowest and four is the most advanced.

It is worthy of consideration that students' learning experiences in the GFP in Omani HEIs, including the selected university in this study, tend to be associated with linguistic and social struggles (Carroll et al., 2009). For example, students will have to adapt to EMI after spending twelve years from primary to secondary education with Arabic being the sole medium of instruction. In addition, students will experience for the first time the co-educational experience of male and female students studying together. Moreover, students will likely be taught by foreign teachers from different nationalities and cultures for the first time as the vast majority of teachers in pre-college schools in Oman are Omani teachers (Ministry of Education, 2016).

4.5 Data collection methods

Having illustrated the selection procedures of participants and research site, this section expounds in great details the four data collection methods employed in this study which are semi-structured interviews, vignettes, classroom observations, and stimulated recall.

4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

In order to elicit participants' beliefs on IC, this study utilised qualitative semi-structure interviewing. Qualitative interviews have been regarded as one of the commonest research methods in the field of social science in general (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Bryman, 2016) and in educational research in particular (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Cohen et al., 2018). Its common use stems from its potential in exploring in depth the meanings that underpin individuals' mental lives, histories, and routines (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Seidman, 2013). In this vein, interviewing was, in general, utilised in this study for accessing teachers' professed beliefs of IC, their educational and professional experiences with IC teaching and the contextual factors which surround their intercultural teaching practice.

With its extensive and wide use in social science research, the literature identifies different types associated with interviewing. However, the myriad types of interviewing, according to

Brinkmann and Kvale (2018), differ basically, in their degree of *structure* suggesting that interviews can either be structured, unstructured or semi-structured. In structured interviewing, all recruited respondents are asked exactly the same questions with the same order and without any extra probing questions- usually for the purpose of building an aggregation of responses across all interviewees. On the other hand, unstructured interviews, do not adhere to a clear frame of questioning and, thus, interview questions can vary greatly from one interviewee to another. Within the structured and unstructured continuum lies the semi-structured interview which acts as a middle ground between the two opposite poles. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer identifies beforehand a list of topics and questions to be asked in the interview; yet these questions are broadly framed and the wording and sequence of these questions can be tailored to each interviewee (Cohen et al., 2018).

In light of the above typology and with reference to the nature and purposes of the present study, I chose to utilise qualitative semi-structured interviewing for its potential in exploring widely the nuanced accounts of different aspects of the participant teachers' mental world (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018) while at the same time keeping the themes and questions of the interview relatively focused as per the identified research purposes. Unlike the strict protocol of structured interviews, the semi-structured interviews employed in this study offered me a latitude to prompt more questions in response to what are seen as noteworthy responses (Bryman, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018). Also, unlike unstructured interviews where the interview guide is based on wide-open themes and not necessarily specific questions, I aimed to follow a preliminary set of interview questions to keep the interview more focused, while at the same time allowing flexibility (Bryman, 2016) for other follow-up questions to emerge during the interview depending on the interviewee's responses.

4.5.1.1 Procedures and interview schedule

Following the consenting procedures and after a series of brief informal meetings conducted to build mutual rapport, each participant was invited for one semi-structured interview. All interviews were audio-recorded and took place in the university premises of the participant teacher. In terms of duration, the conducted interviews were one hour in length on average, ranging from 52 minutes to 74 minutes. In terms of the used language, participants were given

the choice to conduct the interview either in their mother tongue (Arabic) or English; yet, all participants expressed their willingness to speak in English. Even so, because the method of interviewing is intertwined with the people's ability to make meaning through language (Seidman, 2013), I informed the participants that they can freely switch from English to Arabic during the interview whenever they feel that Arabic can describe their thoughts better.

The main themes of the interview schedule have been greatly informed by the discussed literature: educational experiences with intercultural teaching and IC (discussed in section 3.3.1); beliefs and practices related to intercultural teaching and IC (discussed in section 3.2.1); professional experience with intercultural teaching and IC (discussed in section 3.3.2); and contextual factors which influence IC teaching in the classroom (discussed in section 3.3.3). Accordingly, an interview schedule which includes the aforementioned themes and the corresponding interview questions was developed (see Appendix B). Although each theme has a pre-defined set of questions, there was flexibility in adding or rephrasing questions. Finally, interviewees were informed that there would be further opportunity to share thoughts or ask questions, should they have any.

4.5.1.2 Piloting the semi-structured interview

To evaluate and enhance the feasibility, clarity, and administration of the interview, the interview schedule was piloted twice with two non-participant Omani teachers at the selected university, which helped yield some useful modifications (Majid et al., 2017). For example, I noticed during the pilot interviews that some of the responses were unexpectedly very short and sometimes lack clarity. I aimed, therefore, to ask more probing questions (more than I originally intended to) to encourage the participants to elaborate and to ensure that the shared meanings are fully developed (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Forsey, 2012). Although this, in turn, made the duration of the conducted interviews somewhat longer, it resulted in eliciting more nuanced answers that better inform the findings of this study. In addition, some of the questions seemed to be unclear and, therefore, a rephrase seemed to be necessary. For example, instead of asking the participants to generally introduce themselves, I asked them to specifically talk about how many years of teaching experiences they had, their educational background (where they had their pre-college schooling) and their current teaching duties.

Another issue was related to a particular question in the interview which seeks to ask teachers about their understanding of the term IC. In this regard, I learned from the two pilots that pre-assuming that teachers are already familiar with such a technical concept can be somewhat intimidating on their part as this seemed to interrogate their knowledge level of the subject. To make the question less stressful I introduced it by saying for example, "*There is a term which might or might not be familiar to many teachers which is intercultural competence,…"* instead of directly asking "*What is your definition of intercultural competence?"*. By so doing, I aimed to refrain from articulating an interrogative tone and indicate to the respondent that it is totally normal not to be familiar with the concept.

4.5.2 Vignettes

In combination with the semi-structured interviews discussed earlier and to further elicit participant teachers' beliefs about IC and related practices, the vignette technique was used. Vignettes according to Finch (1987) are "short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond" (p. 105). These stories usually include simulations of real events (Given, 2008) which prompt respondents to base their beliefs upon. Parallel to this understanding, all participants in this study were given hypothetical teaching scenarios which included an interculturally-related classroom encounter (or problem) to which they were invited to respond.

Besides the general aim to elicit teachers' beliefs on the way IC is addressed in the lesson, vignettes were used in this study for two distinct reasons. First, they were utilised to explore teachers' beliefs about some of the relatively sensitive cultural aspects of teaching (Given, 2008; Hughes & Huby, 2004). Here, instead of asking participants straightforwardly about how *they* typically address some cultural issues in the classroom, they were given the opportunity to express their views on a pretended vignette character (Barter & Renold, 1999). This was particularly beneficial in overcoming the limits of semi-structured interviews where participants sometimes feel reluctant to elaborate on controversial or sensitive issues in the fear of being judged. By responding to a vignette, therefore, teachers can distance themselves from that scenario as they are given the opportunity to comment from a third-person perspective and thus respond in a non-threatening way.

Also, besides being flexible and practical in terms of time, procedure, and administration (Jeffries & Maeder, 2004), using vignettes in this study have also been useful in exploring teachers' intercultural beliefs about some practical dimensions of teaching which might not necessarily prevail during the conducted classroom observation (Given, 2008). Given the timing constraints associated with observational methods, I was aware that I would not have the time and opportunity to observe everything and, therefore, I would be likely to miss some important aspects of teachers' enacted intercultural pedagogies. Having used vignettes, I was able, to some extent, to mitigate this limitation and had a unique opportunity to unearth participant teachers' rational decisions about real-like intercultural encounters embedded within specific teaching contexts (Bernhardt, 2018).

4.5.2.1 Procedures and vignette framework

Studies which utilised vignettes in eliciting participants' beliefs seem to identify varied procedures in designing and administrating the vignettes (Bernhardt, 2018; Jeffries & Maeder, 2004; Stecher et al., 2006). There is a consensus, however, that the criteria of developing the vignette revolve around the nature of the enquiry (i.e., qualitative or quantitative), the research purposes, research questions, and the participants involved. Addressing these criteria is believed to increase the credibility (i.e., internal validity) of the vignette, which in this context refers to "the extent to which vignette content captures the research topics under question" (Hughes & Huby, 2004, p. 37). Based on this, I developed three different vignettes; each of which included an interculturally-related teaching situation based on the previously discussed conceptions of intercultural teaching (3.2.1) and on the specific issues the current enquiry aims to address (see Appendix C). To elaborate, the first vignette stems from discussions in sections 2.3.3 and 3.3.3.1 which both draw on the important role of religion in the way IC is operated in the EFL lesson particularly in the Omani social context where Islam retains a significant position in the nation's educational policy as well as in the daily life of Omani society. The second vignette responds to discussions in sections 3.3.3.2 and 3.3.5 which highlight the significant role of the student textbook in enabling or disabling teachers' intercultural teaching practices especially in the selected university in this study where teachers are mandated to follow a textbook selected by the institution. The third vignette aims to prompt participants to share their beliefs on the potential conflicts that may exist in the classroom when presenting two disparate sets of cultures

and how teachers could mitigate such conflicts. It also aims to elicit participants' views on addressing the issue of critical cultural awareness discussed in 3.2.1.4 which concerns, in part, the students' rational understanding of different cultural perspectives and ways of life.

It is commonly understood that vignettes should allow for independent (i.e., not directed) responses from the respondents (Jeffries & Maeder, 2004). For this, each participant was invited (after reading the vignette) to respond to an open question which reads "*Could you describe your thoughts after reading the above scenario?*". This type of question helped, in part, to elicit teachers' immediate thoughts after reading the vignette without directing them to a specific aspect in the scenario. Such an open-ended question has contributed to capturing teachers' priorities with regard to the interculturally related experiences the classroom.

In terms of administration and procedure, attention was given to the timing and location of utilising the vignettes. For that, I chose to utilise the first round of vignettes with participants at the beginning of the semi-structured interview. Evidence suggests that embedding vignettes within interviews helps build rapport between the participant and the researcher and can act as an icebreaker when presented as part of a longer series of interview questions (Barter & Renold, 1999; Given, 2008). It also helped engage the participants with the topic and prepared them for the more focused questions during the interview.

4.5.2.2 Piloting the vignettes

The vignettes were piloted to ensure that the designed hypothetical scenarios as well as the developed vignette framework were feasible, clear, and conducive to yielding relevant responses. At the first stage, all three vignettes were given to an Omani EFL teacher (who is not a participant in the study) to read and then comment on the clarity of the scenarios. Based on the feedback received, minor changes were made regarding the length of the scenario as well as the sentence structure. Specifically, I made the reading passages relatively shorter with a more simplified sentence structure. On the second stage, the vignettes were piloted along the pilot semi-structured interview. The responses to the piloted vignette indicated that the respondent was not clear of the specific context of the scenario (e.g., whether the hypothetical situation is in Oman; or whether the teacher is local or a native speaker). Because this study aimed to explore intercultural teaching in an Omani setting, I decided to give more context to the vignette (Barter

& Renold, 1999) by giving relevant (Omani) names to the characters in the scenarios and by stating clearly that the context is in an Omani higher education context. By so doing, I aimed to ensure that participants' responses are contextualised and, therefore, pertinent to the specific parameters of this study.

4.5.3 Classroom observation

The two methods discussed earlier (semi-structured interviews and vignettes) aimed primarily to elicit participants teachers' *professed* beliefs of IC. Because the study is also interested in exploring how IC is *actually* approached in the lesson, I utilised the method of classroom observation. Simply defined, classroom observation is the act of observing and noting intentionally and systematically what is happening in the classroom (Weade & Evertson, 1991). Exploring the *happening* aspect of teaching offered this study an opportunity to obtain "first-hand, live data in situ from naturally occurring social situations rather than, for example, reported data" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 542). Utilising an observational method also follows advocations by teacher cognition scholars (Borg, 2006; Olafson et al., 2014) that language teacher cognition research should embrace the complexity of teachers' inner lives (i.e., beliefs) in the context of their actualised activity.

Given its wide use in educational research, the literature identifies different types of classroom observation methods (Creswell, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2019; Menter et al., 2011; Verma & Mallick, 1999; Wragg, 2012;). For example, in terms of the nature of the collected data, observations can either be structured or unstructured. Structured observation, or sometimes *quantitative observation*, is mainly utilised to note down the frequencies of certain occurrences of observed incidents and usually "results in quantitative data, such as counts or frequencies and percentages" (Johnson & Christensen, 2019; p. 237). Unstructured observation, or *qualitative observation*, on the other hand, is done for exploratory purposes where the observer takes extensive notes of everything related to the phenomenon under investigation. According to Menter et al. (2011), qualitative observation "allows detailed information to be gathered in a natural context which provides understanding of issues, practices, problems and people when triangulated with other evidence, such as interviews" (p. 169). In these ways, the present study utilises qualitative classroom observation for its relevance and potential in unveiling the

instructional patterns figuring prominently in relation to intercultural teaching practice among the study participants.

In terms of the role of the observer, I adopted a non-participant observation role where the observer visits the classroom and records notes "without becoming involved in the activities of the participants" (Creswell, 2012, p. 214). Such a role aligns with the study's interest in observing and documenting the naturally occurring teaching behaviour. Apart from my physical presence among the observed group (i.e., teacher and students), my role throughout the lesson was as unobtrusive as possible where participants delivered their regular lessons with no prior input from the researcher on the content or the flow of the lesson.

4.5.3.1 Procedures and classroom observation schedule

Subsequent to the semi-structured interviews, I discussed with each teacher the preferable timing for conducting the observations. Upon their agreement, each participant was visited three times; (except for one teacher who after being visited twice expressed the unwillingness to be visited for the third time without providing any reason). Although conducting more observations might have been fruitful, there was a need to keep the number of observations in this study to a "manageable" number (Verma & Mallick, 1999, p. 132). In that, I aimed to conduct and finish all classroom observations, along with other methods and with all participants, within the twelve-week academic semester. Besides, because I decided to exclude the teachers' first academic week of teaching from my observation schedules (for the rapport between teachers and students during that week was still not built) and also to exclude the mid-term and final exam weeks (for teachers usually use these weeks to give exam preparation practice rather than to teach), I was aware that I technically had only nine teaching weeks where I can accommodate all of my observation plans. I, therefore, decided that observing each teacher for five hours within that timeframe would be achievable. By doing so, I managed to conduct 29 lesson observations in total, resulting in 48.2 hours of observational time.

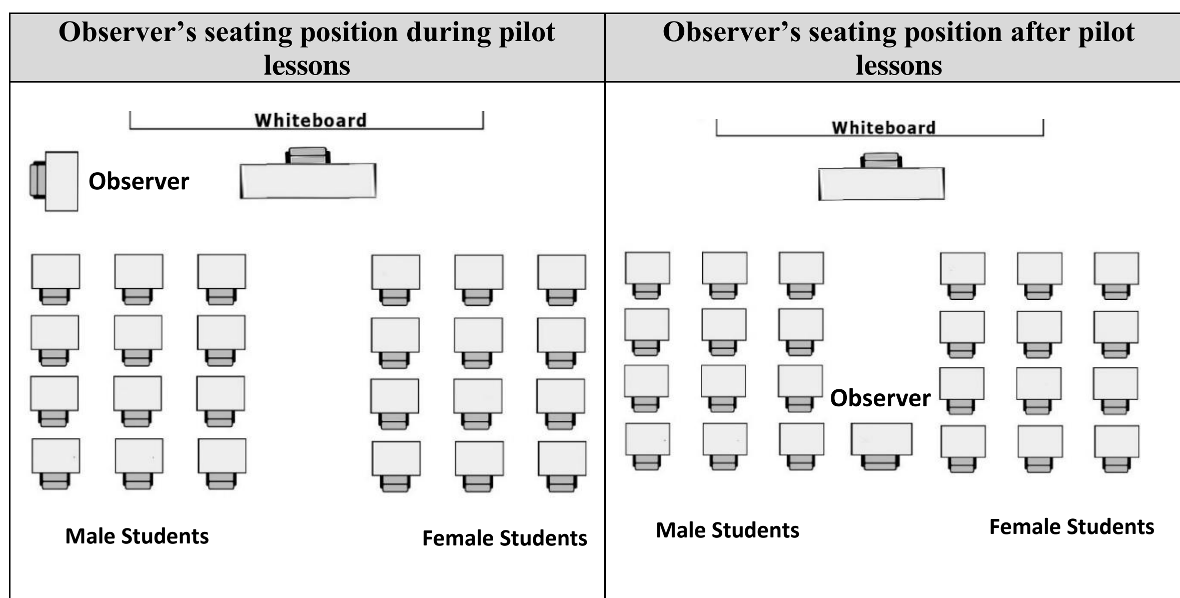
To maintain consistency in notetaking during observation, a guiding observation schedule was developed (see Appendix D). Using this schedule, I aimed to take notes of every teaching or learning behaviour which can be regarded as relevant to intercultural teaching. This has been guided by the already established theoretical understanding in the literature of what intercultural

teaching entails (section 3.2). Taking into consideration the discussion in section 3.2.1.1, I sought to document teaching episodes which include not only the tangible forms of culture (e.g., literature, folklore, music, dress, etc.) but also the non-material aspects (e.g., beliefs, assumptions, values, meanings, or worldviews). In addition, although the focus was primarily on observing the teacher, attention was also given to noting down the students' nature and level of engagement with the teachers' IC-related episodes. This was informed greatly by the discussion in 2.5.2 which highlighted the Omani learners' communicative struggles in the classroom. However, while assuming that some intercultural teaching practices can directly be noted down during the observation process, I was simultaneously aware that some other instructional practices cannot be duly documented by the researcher during the hectic time of observation. For this, I aimed during the course of analysis to persistently go over the audio-recordings of the observed lessons to further identify potential and relevant episodes which might contribute to understanding the phenomenon under investigation.

4.5.3.2 Piloting the lesson observation

During the piloting of the lesson observation, some emergent issues have arisen and were addressed. First, I noticed that my original seating position in the front corner of the classroom caused some students to be self-conscious about my presence (see figure 4.2 below). Despite the position's advantage in getting a better view of students' reactions and facial expressions, I became concerned that my located seating would negatively affect the students' comfort. Therefore, I decided to move to the back of the classroom where I kept away from students' direct eye contact throughout the lesson and where my presence would be less likely to affect naturally occurring events (Menter et al., 2011; Wragg, 2012).

Figure 4.2 *Observer's Seating Position in The Classroom*



Attention was also given to where the recording device should better be positioned. I noticed, for example, during the pilot that the teacher sometimes happens to make a direct eye contact to the recording device placed on his/her desk during instruction which might have possibly caused him/her a level of undesirable stress. I decided, therefore, to make the device less visible by placing it behind the classroom PC (on the teacher's desk) while at the same time ensuring that the quality of the recording is not affected. To further ensure that all classroom discourse (including students' input) was captured, I also utilised a second recording device on my desk (at the back of the classroom) which proved to be useful in recording the verbal exchanges of students' who are seated away from the main recording device placed on teacher's desk.

I also witnessed how the teacher's content on the whiteboard might sometimes have a potential in understanding the teacher's instructional input in the lesson. Therefore, with the teachers' consent, I took sometimes pictures of the whiteboard using my mobile phone. Some of these shots proved to be useful not only during the analysis of data, but to be used as stimuli in the follow-up stimulated recall interviews (more details about stimulated recall will follow). Moreover, it was sometimes challenging to follow what the teacher was talking about without having a copy of the textbook. Therefore, I decided to ask teachers before the lesson to provide me with a spare copy of the textbook (if possible) which proved to be useful not only in following with teacher's instruction during observation but also in making relevant and more

elaborate notes during the lesson. Finally, in addition to the main components of the classroom proforma illustrated earlier, I witnessed how some demographic characteristics may vary from one classroom to another (e.g., total number of students, male to female student ratio) and thus I decided to expand on the classroom profile and include information such as, number of students, and number of male and female students.

4.5.4 Stimulated recall

Conducting classroom observation was crucial and necessary as part of answering the research questions but *relying on* observations remains insufficient as it does not, on its own, offer conclusions for teachers' underlying rationales. That is, two participants may be observed doing the same teaching practice but potentially for varying reasons. Additionally, as observed by Borg (2003), teachers are active thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on real-time perception of the context of instruction. Therefore, to help unpack participants' underlying context-based decision-making, this study employed a Stimulated Recall (SR) technique which is generally defined as a research tool through which cognitive and thinking processes are examined by inviting participants to recall their thinking and reasons behind their behaviour and decisions during an event (Fox-Turnbull, 2009; Lyle, 2003; Sanchez & Grimshaw, 2019). Originally introduced by Benjamin Bloom (1953), the stimulated recall has widely been used to enable participants "relive an original situation with vividness and accuracy when presented with a large number of the cues of stimuli which occurred during the original situation" (p. 161).

Although conducted in this study in a form of an *interview*, stimulated recall sessions have distinct characteristics and serve different purposes from those of typical qualitative interviews. One defining characteristic of SR is the use of a stimulus, or prompt, during the interview which triggers the participants to recall their thinking during that event. Depending on the nature and purpose of the enquiry, the stimulus can either be a picture, an audio-recording, videotape, or a combination of these; which contain a documented/recorded event enacted by the participant (Fox-Turnbull, 2009; Gass & Mackey, 2017; Lyle, 2003). In light of this, this study used primarily audio-recordings of classroom incidents where certain interculturally-related behaviour was identified and then played back to the participant teacher as stimuli.

4.5.4.1 Selecting the stimulus

It is understood that the stimulus is the focal element of the stimulated recall since teachers' responses typically revolve around the stimulus they are prompted with (Gass & Mackey, 2017). Therefore, it was imperative that a set of criteria was taken into consideration when selecting the stimuli in order to ensure that the participants' responses are relevant and conducive to understanding the issue under investigation. As highlighted earlier, the aim of using stimulated recall in this study was to explore teacher's intentions and rationales behind the observed intercultural teaching practices. Therefore, the main criterion in selecting the prompts was to select episodes from the observed lessons which included a form of interculturally-related teaching/learning behaviour. Deciding on whether a specific classroom incident was interculturally-related or not was, in general, based on the conceptual characterisation of IC, discussed in (3.2.1). Although some studies (Gass & Mackey, 2017; Lyle, 2003) illustrate the merits of involving participants in the selection and control of the content of stimuli, this was deemed irrelevant to the purposes and parameters of the current study and, thus, selecting the prompts was conducted independently from the participants.

4.5.4.2 Procedures and protocol

With reference to recommendations made by existing scholarly work on the use of stimulated recall (Gass & Mackey, 2017; Lyle, 2003), the following procedures were implemented. First, participants were made clear beforehand about the procedures of the recall interview and what their role would entail (Gass & Mackey, 2017). Without necessarily using the technical terms identified in the literature (such as *stimulus*, *stimulated recall*, *cognitive processes*, etc.), I attempted to explain to participants in simple terms how this interview is different from the previously conducted semi-structured interview and what type of questions they might expect. Teachers were informed that the purpose of this interview was not intended to reflect on what happened in the classroom but to mainly recall what they were thinking during the prompted teaching episode and the reasons behind executing certain activities (Gass & Mackey, 2017; Lyle, 2003). To further ensure that, an attention was given to the type of questions to be asked following each stimulus. In that, the questions were general and non-leading in nature. For example, instead of asking the teacher "*why did you decide to give your students a cultural topic*

in this activity?, I asked *what were you thinking during this activity?*. This aimed to allow participants provide authentic input when reactivating their recollection of cognitive processes during the given event (Gass & Mackey, 2017). As warned by Lyle (2003), more focused, or leading, questions might interfere with the teachers' thinking processes and dangerously "impose an additional cognitive layer to the recall, which might influence the subject's account" (p. 870). Accordingly, the main SR questions included the following:

- *Do you recall this incident?*
- *What were you thinking at that time/during this activity?*
- *Was there a particular rationale/reason for saying/doing that?*

All stimuli were presented in the interview in the order they were originally observed in the lessons. This aimed to aid participants to recall their thinking processes accurately and more easily (Fox-Turnbull, 2009). However, it occurred on several occasions that some participants while answering the above listed questions that they divert and start talking about other incidents which happened during the lesson and which were not necessarily interculturally-related. In similar cases, I did not stop the teachers since this may help them formulate genuine connections between their cognitive decisions. As advocated by Fox-Turnbull (2009) and Lyle (2003), the researcher's interference during the recall interview can sometimes alter or negatively distort the participant's recall process. It is also worth noting that participants sometimes offered merely descriptions of what happened instead of a recollection of what they were thinking about during the given event. On such occasions, I attempted to use probe questions in order to ask teachers to offer cognitive process-related accounts, such as the decision-making processes, reasons or factors involved during the recalled event (Lyle, 2003).

Attention was also given to the time between the observed teaching behaviour and the stimulated recall interview. Participants were invited to the stimulated recall interview as soon as possible after the observed lessons. Evidence indicates undesirable increasing memory decay with delayed stimulated recall interviews (Ericsson & Simon, 1980). It is worth to note, however, that due to some constraints, conducting the stimulated recall immediately after the lesson observation was sometimes impossible. This is due to the time needed by the researcher after each observation to listen to the lesson audio-recording and to take notes of incidents which would potentially serve as stimuli. Another timing constraint was associated with the busy

teaching schedules participants had and sometimes the duties they had to fulfil in the time slots between classes (such as marking exam papers, invigilation, meetings, etc.) which made it difficult to find a suitable time to conduct the interview immediately after the observed lesson. To mitigate the pitfalls which might arise from delayed recall interviews, I attempted to use stronger stimuli (i.e., more likely to stimulate participants' recollection of thoughts) and of more than one source (Gass & Mackey, 2017). For example, besides playing the audio, I sometimes asked the teacher to look at a related page on the textbook or a given handout in the lesson. In spite of these challenges, I managed to set a timeframe where all stimulated recall interviews were conducted within 48 hours after the observed lesson.

4.5.4.3 Piloting the stimulated recall

Two pilot SR sessions were conducted in order to enhance the administration of the instrument, to evaluate its feasibility and to identify unforeseen pitfalls. During these two pilot sessions, the following issues were observed and duly addressed. First, at the beginning of the interview and before playing the stimuli, the teacher seemed to express a level of anxiety by saying "*I am a bit nervous and to be honest I don't like listening to my own voice*". I was concerned that this anxiety might resonate negatively in the teacher's subsequent responses. To militate against this, I decided to start by asking participants to share what they enjoyed the most during the observed lessons (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). This proved on many occasions to facilitate a positive and relaxing atmosphere before commencing with the stimulating prompts and subsequently enrich the quality of the collected data. In addition, the teacher in one of the responses said that he did not remember exactly the context of the prompted teaching episode. For that, I decided to offer other cues such a related page from the textbook (whenever possible) or alternatively remind the teacher with what occurred earlier and after the given episode.

4.6 Interpreting the data: Thematic analysis (TA)

Following data collection, this study utilised a Thematic Analysis (TA) approach in interpreting and displaying the collected data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), TA is an analytical method for identifying and interpreting repeated patterns of meaning within the data corpus. These identified patterns, following certain analytical procedures, become the themes and sub-

themes which represent the salient, commonly shared, and most relevant features across the obtained data sets. Besides the general purpose of generating themes, utilising TA in this study served the combination of two other purposes which are data condensation and data display (Miles et al., 2019). Through data condensation, I attempted to compress the overloads of data which were collected from the four different instruments. Condensation hereby does not indicate reducing or discarding certain segments of the collected data; rather, transforming the piles of raw data "in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn and verified" (Miles et al., 2019, p. 8). In terms of data display, I aimed through TA to "assemble organised information into an immediately accessible compact form" (p. 9). This involved the transformation of extended bulky texts (from audio transcriptions and observation notes) into an arranged matrix of codes, sub-themes, and themes that are capable of being processed. Displaying the data in their original collected form (without transforming them into simplified patterns of meaning) would have been burdensome. In all, both data condensation and data display under the TA process were facilitative in drawing conclusions upon which the research questions could be answered.

4.6.1 Inductive versus deductive

Typically, there are two approaches to TA; one which is inductive and the other which is deductive (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inductive analysis refers to a bottom-up approach where codes and themes are chiefly data-driven i.e., emerging from the data without attempting to fit them into a prior coding frame or analytic preconceptions. Deductive analysis, on the other hand, follows a top-down method where codes and themes are driven principally by a priori conceptual structures or research questions allowing a starting point for analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While acknowledging that each has its own distinct interpretation in the qualitative discourse, the current study follows Ormston et al.'s (2014) position that there is no such a thing as a pure inductive approach or a pure deductive approach. Subscribing to this, my adopted analytical strategy is better described as a hybrid approach where both data-driven as well as theory-driven themes and subthemes are considered. In doing so, the analysis conducted in this study recognises the position of a priori research questions and theoretical concepts in identifying the main themes (e.g., schooling experiences, teacher training experiences, in-service teaching experience, and contextual factors) while allowing for other sub-themes (and

sub-sub themes) to be constructed from the data using inductive coding. More details on the theme-generation process now follows.

4.6.2 Analysis procedure: Six steps

In terms of procedure, Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six main steps in implementing TA; these steps are (1) familiarisation with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) generation of themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report (pp. 86-93). Accordingly, I started the analysis procedure by familiarising myself with the data. Familiarisation involves a deep engagement with the data sets to obtain breadth and depth of the content before starting the coding process. In this study, this has been achieved through transcribing the audio-recordings into a textual form; reading (and rereading) the transcripts; and noting down initial thoughts. Transcribing the data on my own, in particular, has been a good investment to increase the familiarity with all the data sets despite the tedious and time-consuming nature of the process. To make the process less time consuming, though, I utilised Adobe Audition CS6 software, which allowed variable speed playback during transcription and features useful tools which enhanced the quality of some inaudible recordings.

Following transcription, I moved to the coding phase. By coding, I follow Saldana's (2016) definition that *code* is "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 4). To commit to the summative feature, I was cautious that codifying single words or very short phrases would riskily decontextualise participants' response and may not capture the full essence of their processed thought. For this, the codified portions were sometimes more than a sentence and in some cases a paragraph. However, exceptional cases were made where there was a need to highlight a noticeably recurring word, or phrase within the participants' discourse that might potentially add relevant meaning to the analysis (see Appendices I to K for sample coding from different data sets).

Following the codification process, I moved to the generation of themes which, as its name suggests, refers to organising the array of codes into potential themes, subthemes, and sub-subthemes. Although an absolute distinction between code and theme might not be easy to establish (Clarke et al., 2015), a theme in this study is distinguished from code in that it is "a

common, recurring pattern across a data set, clustered around a central organising concept" (p. 2). To account for such a distinction, the generation of the themes involved either (1) the promotion of big codes which recur across the data into themes or (2) the clustering of similar codes together into one unifying concept. Nonetheless, the generated themes were not purely based on frequency but consideration was made that they should provide meaning that relates to the research questions and potentially provide an eventual answer to these questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As mentioned earlier, the main themes (from the semi-structured interviews as well as the SR) were heavily driven by the research questions and the theoretical components identified Borg's model (see themes in Appendices I & K). However, analysing the notes from classroom observations involved the identification of the patterns figuring prominently in relation to intercultural teaching practice. Thereby, identifying themes from the classroom observations become "a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82) (see themes in Appendix J).

Following the generation of themes, these themes (and sub-themes) were reviewed by crosschecking that the collated extracts and codes under each theme fit with the constructed theme. In terms of naming the themes and sub-themes, I gave attention to the literal words or phrases used by participants. In this, I followed what is called an *In vivo* coding (or sometimes called literal coding) (Saldana, 2016) in which the actual utterances of the participants become the labels which designate the theme. By doing so, I aimed to capture the meanings inherent in teachers' elicited experiences as much as possible. Finally, producing the report included the presentation of generated themes and subthemes. This involved the selection of vivid and compelling extracts from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in the two Findings Chapters (Five and Six) alongside the interpretive account on how these findings can build towards targeted conclusions. Following this, the analysed data were synthesised in relation to the research questions and related literature in the final chapter, Discussion and Conclusions. It is worth noting that although the six TA steps represent a seemingly linear procedure, analysing the data was rather reflexive and iterative where I had to move back and forward across these steps. By doing so, I considered the analysed data as continuously evolving and not passively emerging (i.e., data were not waiting to be uncovered).

4.6.3 Utilising the Nvivo software

The analysis in this study was computer-assisted by the Nvivo software (version 12 Pro). Using a data analysis software instead of traditional by-hand coding was largely useful and practical (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). Given the multiple data sources consulted in collecting the targeted data, I was concerned that multiple coding can sometimes be messy and hard to document on a practical level and, therefore, the decision to use a software aimed to make the presentation of data piles clearer and more understandable. It was especially useful when attempting to recategorise codes and themes by utilising simple drag/drop features; a practice that would have been time-consuming using conventional manual methods.

4.7 Reflexivity

Reflexivity, or positionality (as in Bourke, 2014), refers to the researcher's self-consciousness of his pre-conceptions and biases and how these might impact the research enquiry (Watt, 2007). Scrutinising my biases aligns with my commitment to the philosophy of interpretivism, discussed in 4.2.2, which assumes that the researcher's personal epistemologies are ultimately amalgamated in the research process and, therefore, an acknowledgment of his reflexive position as a researcher becomes necessary. It is worth to mention, however, that articulating my reflexive position is not solely limited to the content of this section. As suggested by Mauthner and Doucet (2003), reflexivity is not a separate entity which can stand out of the research process. Instead, it is interdependent, interconnected, and inescapably infused throughout the whole study. Nonetheless, in an attempt to operationalise reflexivity in a systematic way and translate it into practical terms, my reflexive account in this study is primarily guided by Mauthner and Doucet's (2003) four reflexive strands, namely: (a) the social location and emotional responses to respondents, (b) the academic and personal biographies, (c) the institutional and interpersonal contexts, and (d) the ontological and epistemological conceptions of subjects and subjectivities. While the latter has been already addressed earlier in this chapter (Section 4.2), I aim in this section to address the former three components.

4.7.1 Social location and emotional responses to respondents

Given the fact that I have worked for almost eight years in the selected institution where this study was conducted, this may have brought different implications over my social attachment to the research location as well as the engagement with the study participants. In terms of the location, by the time of conducting the study I was already acquainted with the different premises of the university, the infrastructure of the English Language Centre, the classroom settings, the meeting rooms, and the staff rooms. This made some of my logistic planning less stressful and less time-consuming. For this, I believe, that being familiar with the setting, has resonated positively during the utilisation of research instruments (Barley, 2011).

In terms of the participants, my relationship with some of them has already been established at the time of conducting the study given the several years I worked with them. In these years, I have been assigned a supervisory position where part of my job was to mentor and evaluate teachers on a regular basis. Although I had never conducted classroom observations on the participants selected in this study, I was aware that my prior supervisory position may have implications over the participant's decision to accept my invitation to take part in my study. Therefore, I was very keen to inform the teachers that taking part in my study is totally voluntary (Bryman, 2016) and either accepting or rejecting the invitation to participate will have no effect on their job status.

Also, given the assumption that my participants and I share similar cultural backgrounds, I was concerned that this might affect the input of the interviews and observations. I was specifically worried that participants will have pre-assumptions of what I am particularly after in this study and thus state things which they want me to hear. In order to mitigate this phenomenon, I attempted to ask participants during the interviews to elaborate and give rationales for their stated beliefs and not take their stated responses for granted. An example of this is when one of the participants during one of the SR sessions said, "*well, Mr Idris I am a Muslim and you are a Muslim so I think you know why I did that in the lesson*". Here, despite the participant's assumption that I might be aware of their intentions, I attempted to give follow-up probing questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018) to allow participants elaborate and explicitly state their rationalities.

4.7.2 Academic and personal biographies

Besides being aware of my relationship with study participants, I attempt to be equally aware of my *own* biography and how it may have contributed to some of my research choices. I describe myself as an indigenous Omani citizen who lived almost all of my life in Oman. The only time I resided outside the country was the time when I did my full-time master's degree in the UK in the academic year 2009/2010 and during the time of conducting the current doctoral study (also in the UK). My physical and emotional attachment to my country has undoubtedly shaped a major proportion of my current *Omani* cultural outlook. While I consider myself attitudinally open to different cultures, I still see myself embracing the common cultural norms prevalent in the hometown where I grew up. These include, for example, my observance of the common Islamic practices, my attachment to the traditional Omani costume, the *dishdasha* and *kummah*, in running my everyday errands, having traditional food in traditional occasions, such as Eid and Ramadan, and committing to a level of attachment to my bigger family (my parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts).

At the same time, I seem to have grown a sense of tolerance towards some (foreign) cultural patterns which might be uncommon in the Omani society. This level of tolerance can be seen in, for example, my attachment to the Western (mainly American) music since my early ages and my interest in Western literature, among other examples. This combination of embracing my own cultural identity, on the one hand, and my openness to other cultures, on the other hand, contributed, in part, to my interest in the topic of interculturalism and intercultural communication (which both entail the interaction between different cultures). One possible implication of these experiences over my study today is the immediate personal interest in exploring further the topic of IC and understand the ways through which one can be interculturally more competent. Alongside this interest, however, I was keen that my research questions and specific study aims are systematically and critically developed and are purposed to address identified gaps in the literature (Cohen et al., 2018).

4.7.3 Institutional and interpersonal contexts

I consider myself as being strongly linked with the selected HEI context given my work experience as an English language tutor at a tertiary level for around 8 years. Besides my core

teaching duties as a tutor, I have been assigned different administrative roles; the most important of which are the Post-foundation Programme Coordinator and Head of Section for Curriculum and Teaching Methods. In these two positions, my duties involved monitoring and evaluating teachers' work as well as convening professional development workshops for the English language department. My constant engagement with the teacher might have an implication in selecting the teacher as the focal element for my research (i.e., studying IC from the teacher's perspective instead of the student's perspective).

In addition to the institutional context, my interpersonal relationships with the surrounding political and social contexts in Oman may have drawn the following implications. In line with the current Omani political agenda which promote the recruitment of Omani citizens and lower the expat rates in different educational sectors, I became interested to focus on *Omani* teachers only. Such a focused selection, however, was never based on prejudice but on the intention to make the outcomes of this study more relevant and useful for the Omani higher educational future where Omani teachers will potentially outnumber the expats. This selection also goes in line with the identified gap that the IC beliefs and practices among *Omani* language teachers remain under-researched as highlighted in earlier chapters.

Finally, my familiarity with some of the common social patterns in the Omani cultural context made me draw attention to the following two issues during the study. First, it was my personal preconception that Omani female students are usually reluctant and unwilling to be videotaped during classroom observations. This made me more in favour of using audio-recording over video-recording methods as not to interrupt the natural engagement of students during the lesson. However, to address the pitfalls which might result from the absence of video-recording, I was aware during the lessons to take notes of all relevant incidents and observations which may not be captured via audio-recording methods (Bryman, 2016). Second, my awareness of some of the cultural taboos in the Omani society made me aware not to introduce these taboos during the interviews in order not to irritate the interviewee and, hence, avoid the possibility of interrupting the interview. Examples of these taboos include topics related to sex, atheism, slavery, among others. Only in the rare occasions where the interviewees deliberately initiate discussion on some of these taboos, I was ready to ask them to elaborate and offer further explanations.

4.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, or rigour, is central to effective qualitative research (Bryman, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018; Golafshani, 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Usually referred to in quantitative research using the term *validity*, trustworthiness in qualitative research refers, as its name implies, to the degree of trust in the correctness of study findings. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are four main criteria usually needed to be met in order to maintain trustworthiness in qualitative research which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (paralleling internal validity, external validity, dependability, and objectivity in quantitative research). Subscribing to this, I aim in this section to explain how I sought to take into consideration the above criteria when conducting this study.

First, to maintain *credibility*, which refers to the extent to which participants' responses are congruent with the researcher's description of them (Schwandt, 2001), it was imperative first to appreciate the multidimensional and everchanging nature of reality in which this study was situated. This, in turn, necessitated a prolonged engagement in the field as well as an in-depth observation of the phenomenon under investigation to capture a holistic and robust description of teachers' IC views and practices. Credibility, therefore, was sought in this study through a multiplicity of data collection procedures which took place in a course of around five months; allowing different sets of interviews (i.e., semi-structured, SR, and follow-up vignette interviews) as well as multiple classroom observations in the pursuit of understanding teacher's espoused and enacted beliefs. Such a triangulated approach (i.e., combining different data sources) allowed for not only the possibility of cross-checking of data but also developing "coherent justification for themes" during the discussion of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). Moreover, to further ensure credibility of data, interview transcripts were sent back to respondents for checking to ensure an accurate record of data - a technique called "respondent validation" (Bryman, 2016, p. 385).

Another key aspect of trustworthiness adopted in the present study was *transferability*, or applicability (Golafshani, 2003) which refers to the extent to which the findings of qualitative research can be transferred to or applied in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Unlike quantitative research, transferability in qualitative research is not directly accessible and it has

been acclaimed that it does not typically aim to generalise but to present the contextual uniqueness of the phenomenon under investigation (Bryman, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018). As such, the current qualitative study aimed to provide detailed and rich description of collected data or what is usually referred to as “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). Thick description is deemed necessary to allow readers make judgments about the degree of fit or similarity of findings to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The thick descriptive data about both the Omani political, sociocultural, and educational context (Chapter 2) as well as the specific research site where participants were situated (Chapter 4) were provided.

Another utilised strategy to achieve rigour in this study was *dependability* which is according to Cohen et al. (2018) synonymous with notions of consistency and stability of findings over time. One way to achieve this in this study was by following Bryman’s (2016) advice that complete records of all stages of the research process— selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions, and so on— should be kept in an accessible manner. As such, all decisions associated with this study were made constantly accessible to both supervisors in order to verify that findings are consistent with the collected data and to provide an assessment of the trustworthiness of the research project throughout the research process.

Finally, I attempted to maintain a level of *confirmability*, or neutrality (Golafshani, 2003), which represents the degree to which the results can be confirmed by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Usually referred to using the term objectivity in quantitative research, confirmability entails the recognition that complete objectivity in qualitative research is next to impossible and, therefore, a reflective account of the researcher’s subjective self in relation to the study is mandatory. This was sought in this study through providing a reflexive account (Section 4.8) which aimed to clarify the potential bias the researcher brings to the study (Watt, 2007). In this, my reflexive position aimed to maintain transparency as it allows readers understand how the research assumptions, procedures, and findings are possibly shaped by my background as well as my relationship with the different study elements (mainly participants and research site). Confirmability was also maintained by providing context to the participants’ quotes in the analysis (whenever necessary and relevant) to increase the transparency of the findings.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Almost any research that involves human beings has ethical implications that must not be ignored (Cohen et al., 2018). Although conducting this study was assessed and approved on ethical grounds by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow, it is worth to highlight the key ethical considerations which were addressed prior to, during, and after collecting the data of this study. First, using consent forms, all potential participants, including students and teachers, were given the opportunity to take an informed decision on whether they want to participate in the study (Cohen et al., 2018). To make sure that participants make such a fully informed decision, it was necessary to orientate them in some detail about the research process (Bryman, 2016). For this, all consent forms were accompanied with plain language statements, which included key information related to the purpose of the study, data collection procedures and instruments, risk assessment and privacy measures (see Appendices E to H). While teachers' consent forms were written in English, students' consent forms were all written in Arabic to ensure that they fully comprehend the implications of their participation. Further, both teachers and students were given enough time to read and understand the content of the forms and the opportunity to ask questions before giving a decision to accept or refuse participation. In addition, they have been informed that their participation in this study is entirely voluntary and if they choose to participate, they have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice and without providing a reason. It is worth to note that among all those who did participate, only one teacher decided to withdraw for he has been transferred to a different institution. This occurred after conducting the semi-structured interview with him and, thus, the collected data from that interview were not used in the data analysis.

Second, because the study involved classroom observation, I was aware that my intruding presence might negatively affect the normality of participant's teaching performance as well as the students' learning experience. I was concerned that the participating teachers might alter some of their teaching delivery plans for the benefit of my lesson observation (i.e., defer scheduled quizzes or postpone writing exercises) and thus compromise the institution's prescribed teaching agenda. For that, I informed teachers beforehand that my observation should not entail any alteration of teaching plans. Further, I aimed to refrain from scheduling lesson observations during the exam weeks were teachers usually give more focus to practice and exam

preparation rather than teaching. As for students, I informed teachers that if they noticed any unusual behaviour from their students due to my presence (e.g., being reluctant to speak or shy to participate) to report it immediately to find ways to resolve the issue.

To ensure privacy, which is strongly linked with issues of anonymity and confidentiality (Bryman, 2016), certain measures were taken into consideration. First, all participants in this study were referred to using pseudonyms and any details that could make a participant identifiable were made inaccessible. This includes, for example, personal details obtained during the interviews, such as participants' age, the name of the university they graduated in, or the hometown where they live. Also, participants were ensured that all raw data (the audio recordings and observation notes) are kept in password-secured electronic devices (offline and online) that only the researcher could access. This aimed to prevent harm that might occur from unintentional release or mishandling of confidential data. However, the participants were informed that because of some factors outside the control of the researcher, a 100% confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee.

Finally, given the fact that this research is sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation in Oman, it is important to declare that I, the researcher, had no obligations to the sponsor to meet a particular objective from this research. Apart from the sponsor's expectations to execute a rigorous and high-quality research, all of the decisions which were taken during the course of conducting this study including the topic of research were totally independent from the sponsor and thus the findings and recommendations bear no conflict of interest of any sort.

4.10 Summary

This chapter presented the methodological framework of this study in its both philosophical and procedural realms. The chapter started by stating the overarching research questions which the study aims to answer. It then articulated the researcher's ontological and epistemological standpoints which undergird the philosophical foundations of the conducted study. Next, it moved to describe the multi-method qualitative design adopted in this research and the multiple rationales behind the decision to choose this design. Following this, the chapter highlighted the

purposive recruitment procedures and offered a brief overview of the participant profiles. Subsequently, an account of the research site was provided with specific attention to the General Foundation Programme (GFP) selected for this study. Later, it gave a detailed description of the deployed instruments in this study which are semi-structured interviews, vignettes, classroom observation and stimulated recall – highlighting the rationales and the procedures associated with the deployment of each of these instruments. Following this, the chapter explained the TA procedures followed in interpreting and presenting the amassed data sets. Next, a reflexive position of the researcher was provided followed by the trustworthiness measures which were pursued to increase the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study findings. Finally, the chapter discussed the ethical considerations that emerged during the study.

Chapter 5 | FINDINGS (A): SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND VIGNETTES

5.1 Introduction and general overview of findings

Having illustrated in detail the proposed methodology in the previous chapter, the following two chapters, five and six, aim to present the findings collected from the four utilised instruments. Table 5.1 below presents the link between the applied research instruments and the study's proposed research questions. Having deployed these instruments with participants, this chapter aims to present the first set of collected findings which are collected from the semi-structured interviews and vignettes. In presenting the findings from these two instruments, the chapter lies closely to the teachers' elicited beliefs of IC. The subsequent chapter, which reports the data from classroom observations and SR, will complement and triangulate the findings from this chapter, yet by focusing on the way IC is actually implemented in the classroom and the distinct rationales associated with the observed enactments. Later, the key findings from both chapters will be synthesised in the discussion chapter to offer condensed conclusions which will answer the research questions and ultimately meet the research aims.

Table 5.1 *The Link Between Research Instruments and Research Questions*

Chapter	Instrument	Rationale(s)	Related research Question(s)
Chapter Five	Semi-structured interviews	• to elicit participants' beliefs and reported practices which are related to IC in EFL teaching	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3
	Vignettes	• to explore teachers' beliefs about some of the relatively sensitive cultural aspects of teaching • to explore teachers' intercultural beliefs about some practical dimensions of teaching which might not necessarily prevail during the conducted classroom observation	RQ1, RQ3
Chapter Six	Classroom observation	• to obtain first-hand and live data on how IC is actually approached and operated by participants in the EFL lesson	RQ1
	Stimulated Recall	• to explore some of the underlying context-based intentions and rationales behind the observed intercultural teaching practices	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3

The findings that will be discussed in this chapter include the three major themes which this enquiry is structured around. These themes are (a) the teachers' educational and teaching experiences with intercultural teaching **(section 5.3)**, (b) the contextual factors which influence intercultural teaching (**section 5.4**) and (c) the way IC is perceived and implemented in EFL practice **(section 5.5)**. I shall now provide an overview of how these themes with their related codes and subthemes have been identified.

5.2 A brief overview of the identified codes and themes

The obtained data were thematically analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps which were discussed in detail in section 4.6. Before presenting and discussing the analysed findings in detail, I shall provide an overview of the generated themes – offering a brief description of how they were generated in concurrence with the research purposes and highlighting some key challenges associated with the analysis process.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Educational and teaching experiences with IC

The first theme presents the elicitations collected from the study participants about how their educational and professional (teaching) experiences could shape their current views and practices of IC. This theme includes three subthemes which are *Schooling experiences with IC*, *Teacher education and IC*, and *Teaching experience and IC* – each of which has been further subdivided into sub-sub-themes for an increased depth and for capturing the nuances within the bigger subtheme (see Table 5.2 below). The emergence of the three subthemes has been predominantly influenced by the interview questions which have advertently asked participants about the influence of schooling, teacher education, and teaching experience on their understanding of IC. However, the sub-sub-themes were largely data driven allowing for new insights to emerge organically. One of the main challenges associated with generating the above (sub)themes is the overlapping ideas inherent in participants' discourse. For example, many participants have described their former educational experiences in close connection with their current teaching practices. However, the identified overlap has been an eyeopener for exploring the intersection of teachers' previous schooling experiences and today's teaching experiences – generating the sub-sub-theme "*Now that I am a teacher*" that attends to such intersection.

***Table 5.2** Overview of Theme 1: Educational and Teaching Experiences with IC*

Theme	Subtheme	Sub-sub-theme
Educational and Teaching Experiences with IC	Schooling Experiences with IC	"It was a monocultural environment"
		"The focus on culture was missing"
		"Now that I am a teacher…"
	Teacher Education and IC	"There was no course or module on intercultural teaching"
		"But intercultural training was embedded"
	Teaching experience and IC	"The more experience, the better quality of IC teaching"
		"You need professional training for that"

5.2.2 Theme 2: The contextual factors which influence intercultural teaching

The second theme contributes to answering RQ3 concerning the factors which, according to the elicited responses, influence the participants' intercultural language teaching. This theme consists of three subthemes which are *the Omani society*, *the university*, and *the classroom profile* (see Table 5.3 below). Generating these three subthemes has been strongly influenced by the interview questions which are related to the three contextual dimensions identified in the discussed literature – see section 3.3.3. However, these subthemes further comprise sub-sub-themes which were grounded in the participants' elicitations allowing for the discovery of context-specific nuances. For example, the interview questions did not ask the participants about the potential role of religion in the way they would approach IC; yet, it emerged that there was a shared understanding of the inhibiting position of religion in their IC teaching.

***Table 5.3** Overview of Theme 2: The Contextual Factors Which Influence Intercultural Teaching*

Theme	Subtheme	Sub-sub-theme
The contextual factors which influence intercultural teaching	The Omani society	"Well, as an Omani teacher"
		"It is a unique society"
		"Religion is a red line"
	The university	"There are institutional lines"
		"The textbook has a role"
	The classroom profile	"Various student-related factors"
		"Students' English level"

5.2.3 Theme 3: Perceiving and implementing IC in relation to EFL teaching

The third theme mainly addresses RQ1 - *How do Omani EFL teachers perceive and implement Intercultural Competence (IC) in relation to their EFL teaching practice?* This theme encompasses three subthemes which are "*Intercultural teaching is important but …*", *The meaning of IC in relation to EFL teaching practice*, and *Operating IC in the EFL classroom* (see Table 5.4 below). The first two subthemes emerged to answer one part of the RQ1 – that is *perceiving* IC, whereas the third subtheme contributes to answering the other part, namely *implementing* IC in teaching. The main challenge in generating the themes has been in identifying clear patterns amidst diverse views and perspectives. In comparison with the first two themes, this theme in particular has been associated with more variegated views across the ten participants. However, through iterative analysis and multiple rounds of refinement, I was able to synthesise the identified codes into the listed sub-sub-themes shown in table 5.4 below. Altogether, the discussion in this theme complements the discussed findings from the observational data (to be discussed in the next chapter) towards establishing a comprehensive answer to RQ1.

Table 5.4 *Overview of Theme 3: Perceiving and Implementing IC in Relation to EFL Teaching*

Theme	Subtheme	Sub-sub-theme
Perceiving and implementing IC in relation to EFL teaching	"Intercultural teaching is important but …"	-
	The meaning of IC in relation to EFL teaching practice	"To know about cultural differences"
		A broader concept
	Operating IC in the EFL classroom	Providing cultural knowledge
		Utilising compare and contrast
		Fostering critical thinking
		Facilitating classroom communication and interaction

5.3 Educational and teaching experiences with IC

In tracing the key educational and professional experiences which inform the IC-related beliefs of study participants, the conducted thematic analysis guided by the concepts discussed in the literature, brings about the following three related dimensions which are, the schooling experiences, pre-service teacher education experiences, and in-service teaching experience. An

illustration of how each of these experiences relate to the way teachers approach IC in their EFL teaching practice now follows.

5.3.1 Schooling experiences with IC

All participants were asked in the semi-structured interviews about their former schooling experiences and how these experiences might resonate with the way they understand and implement IC in their teaching today. As one may expect, novice teachers (such as Al-Muhalab and Nihal who have less than two years of teaching experience) were slightly more able to retrieve their recent schooling memories as compared to experienced teachers (such as Tahani and Amjad who left secondary school over ten years ago) - see Table 4.1 for participants' profiles. Nonetheless, the analysed data seem to indicate some common features in the beliefs of both groups, experienced and novice. In recalling their schooling histories (in relation to cultural and intercultural teaching), participants seem to draw primarily on (a) the absence of cultural diversity in Omani government schools, (b) the minimal focus on culture in the language lesson, and (3) the re-interpretation of past schooling experiences in light of teaching experience.

5.3.1.1 "It was a monocultural school environment"

All selected participants had their primary and secondary education in Omani government-based schools (except for Nihal who spent four years in a private primary school before moving to a public secondary school). In recalling their schooling history within the Omani school system, most participants describe their learning experiences as being contained within a monocultural school environment. In this, the vast majority of enrolled students and recruited teachers at Omani public schools were Omanis (except for few cases of teachers coming from neighbouring Arab countries). In Nasir's words:

> *I am not sure if there was an intercultural experience per se. I mean, it was a monocultural school environment. The students and even teachers were like from the same wilayat or even from the same neighbourhood* (Nasir, Int1).

Based on the above quote, what even exacerbated such a perceived monocultural schooling environment is that both schoolteachers and students come from the same regional area where the school is located. This, in turn, made the cultural demography of the classroom in Omani

government schools even more culturally homogeneous which eventually made the authentic exposure to diverse cultures in the EFL classroom considerably poor.

In reflecting on how such a cultural homogeneity could have impacted their intercultural teaching today, participants' responses varied. Shujoon, Muhammed, Maimoona, and Tahani, for example, think of the perceived monocultural environment quite positively suggesting that having teachers with a similar cultural background is a facilitative of the comfortable mode of learning since teachers can always understand students' cultural preferences. Reflecting on this *positive* schooling experience today as professional language teachers, Shujoon and Tahani hold that understanding students' cultural background is significant when addressing cultural topics in the lesson.

Quite on the contrary, participants such as Al-Muhalab and Nasir seem to associate negative perceptions indicating that the predominant Omani culture which pervaded their language learning setting has displaced them "from discovering the outer world" (Al-Muhalab, Int1). Nasir believes that because of such a condition, "all the examples, the content, the topics [in the EFL classroom] were mostly about the Omani or Arabic culture" (Nasir, Int1). Reflecting on this *negative* experience in relation to their current intercultural teaching practices, Al-Muhalab and Nasir seem to come to an understanding that Omani EFL classrooms today need to be more culturally diverse for an optimised intercultural experience to occur. In Nasir's words

> *Something was missing, I guess. We didn't have the chance to deal with teachers from different cultures on regular basis. When I went to college and had the opportunity to be taught by foreign teachers I started to engage more with new cultures.* (Nasir, Int1)

In all, in spite of the mixed perceptions, participants seem to share a consensual belief that their schooling histories as language learners within the Omani public schools have had an impacting role in the way they view intercultural teaching today. By attaching the lack of hetero-cultural learning setting in their school as part of their recollections of schooling experiences, they seem to appreciate that the demographic structure of the school, in terms of cultural diversity, might have a bearing on the way they view intercultural teaching today.

5.3.1.2 "The focus on culture was missing"

Although participants believe that former schoolteachers have a form of impact on their ELT pedagogy, they seem to associate a level of difficulty in specifying how these teachers impacted their intercultural teaching in particular. One possible explanation to this, as indicated by the findings, is that the cultural aspect of teaching was most likely overshadowed by the schoolteachers' focus on teaching language forms (i.e., grammar and vocabulary). More than five participants suggested that their English language classroom was characterised by an overwhelming focus on language structure which made the element of culture quite "unnoticeable" (Muhammed, Int1). As further elaborated by Muhammed, English language lessons in Omani schools were merely "a place to learn English grammar and vocabulary" (Muhammed, Int1). Similarly, Nasir (Int1) believes that the minimal integration of cultural content may have "limited the opportunities needed for sociocultural development". Added to this, Abrar indicates that although the (government-mandated) textbook usually features reading texts with (foreign) cultural content, students' engagement with the content was limited to answering the questions with no opportunities facilitated by the teacher to engage students with meaningful and constructive conversations around the content in that book. In Abrar's words:

> *Yes, the school textbook was not bad, I think, but we rarely discuss the content of the book. The teacher uses that content to focus on linguistic or grammatical features.* (Abrar, Int1)

Al-Muhalab and Nihal also think that because the focus was on language forms, the way their former teachers teach had no direct impact on them when it comes to cultural teaching (Int1). They believe that they can hardly associate any of their current intercultural teaching choices to any of their former schoolteachers simply because they think that the position of culture was not noticeable during the lesson:

> *Almost no impact … I do not remember that teachers would spend some time and discuss cultural matters or not even culture content. I do not remember that culture was a main part of the English language lessons.* (Al-Muhalab, Int1)

> *I don't think it was a rich learning experience in terms of culture so the impact on me is limited because as I said teachers were struggling within a short lesson duration to teach us the basic language skills.* (Nihal, Int1)

Here, although it would be a sweeping generalisation to propose that the majority of teachers at Omani schools focus on teaching grammar and ignore *culture*, foregrounding this phenomenon by many participants in the interview in relation to their recollections of former schooling experiences is worth highlighting. At some level, such elicitations (about focusing on language forms and structure) seem to affirm the pitfalls associated with ELT teaching in Oman (discussed in 2.4.3.1). These elicited pitfalls seem to oppose contemporary objectives of ELT which are no longer confined with mastering the linguistic features but also on the communicative, sociocultural, and intercultural characterises as well (discussed in 3.2.1.3).

5.3.1.3 "Now that I am a teacher, …"

At play within the territory of pre-tertiary educational experiences, a salient feature across many responses has been the role of teachers' current expertise in re-interpreting former schooling experiences. Many participants indicate that the way they used to view early teaching observations in the past is not the same way they view it today. Nasir, Jalal, and Maimoona, for example, indicate that what they used to think of as a *negative* teaching approach by their former teachers is now perceived as a justifiable and sensical teaching approach. Jalal remembers, for example, that schoolteachers rarely provided an opportunity during the language lesson to allow students actually speak the language which, in turn, constrained the development of their communicative skills. However, after engaging with some teaching experience, Jalal has seemingly developed an experientially-based understanding that EFL teachers cannot always facilitate extended speaking activities in a relatively populated classroom and with students who barely have basic knowledge of linguistic structures. In these ways, both Jalal and Maimoona seem to sympathise with what used to be perceived as a *negative* intercultural teaching practice when they were at school:

> *When you are a student, it is very easy to judge your teacher because you do not know what is going on behind the classroom. Now that I am a teacher, I know how difficult it is to attend to all students' needs with all the demands required by school management to finish your coursework in the given timeframe.* (Jalal, Int1)

> *… but if you look back, you start to think, "what would I have done if I was that teacher? Would I had done something different?" It is hard to tell because each teaching situation and each type of students demands a certain way of teaching. I am a teacher now and I strongly believe in this.* (Maimoona, Int1)

On the basis of such findings, it can be suggested that participants make reflections on their past schooling memories based on the teaching experiences the gain (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Davin et al., 2018). In these ways, professional development (i.e., including teaching experience) can act as a filter through which early conceptions of teaching are constantly reinterpreted. More details on the participants views on the role of *experience* will be illustrated in section 5.3.3.

5.3.2 Teacher education and IC

Besides schooling, the interview probed participants' responses about pre-service teacher education experiences and how these experiences prevail today within their overall beliefs and practices of intercultural teaching practice. The analysed findings have yielded two recurring patterns of shared meaning in this respect which are (a) the lack of explicit training on intercultural teaching and (b) the implicit form training on intercultural teaching.

5.3.2.1 "There was no course or module on intercultural teaching"

All ten teachers stated that they did not have an explicitly dedicated training on intercultural teaching during their undergraduate teacher training studies (see Table 5.5 below). Only one teacher, Abrar, had related training during her post-graduate courses which, according to her, tapped into issues related to culture in ELT. All participants undertook educational degrees in the specific major of ELT (hence intentionally prepared to be fully fledged English language teachers) and they indicated that issues related to incorporating culture into ELT were almost absent during their undergraduate studies. In responding to my interview question enquiring about any course or a module during the teacher education programme that might have addressed the cultural element in EFL teaching, some of the responses turned to be definitive in tone which might suggest a remarkable negligence of the element of culture during the teacher education programme. To recite some examples, Amjad, Jalal, and Nasir stated

> *Not really, I don't recall doing or taking a course in to tackle such issues, no.* (Amjad, Int1)

> *No. Not how to teach culture but there were courses on ... like for example, we had a course, sociolinguistics, which talks about culture. And there are many other ... in*

literature, for example, there are many other that addressed culture but not on how to teach culture, no, never. (Jalal, Int1)

Actually, in university I was from 2004 up to 2009, for five years. I don't remember there was a specific course or a specific unit that deals with culture. (Nasir, Int1)

Table 5.5 *An Overview of Participants' Qualifications and Training Experiences in Relation to Intercultural Teaching*

	Participant (pseudonym)	**Qualification(s)**	**Formal training on cultural/intercultural teaching during Bachelor's**	**Formal training on cultural/intercultural teaching during Master's**
1	Al-Muhalab (M)	BEd in English Language and Literature (Oman) MA in TESOL + CELTA + DELTA	**No**	**No specific module/course** but some scenario-based cultural activities during class
2	Nasir (M)	BEd in English Language and Literature (Oman) MA in TESOL	**No**	**No specific module/course** but discussed intercultural issues in general
3	Amjad (M)	BEd in English Language and literature (Oman) MA in TESOL	**No**	**No specific module/course**
4	Tahani (F)	BA in English teaching and Literature (Oman)	**No**	N/A
5	Shujoon (F)	BEd in English Language and literature (Oman) + CELTA	**No**	N/A
6	Maimoona (F)	BA in ELT (Oman) MA in ELT	**No**	**No specific module/course** but discussed intercultural topics in general
7	Nihal (F)	BEd in English Language and Literature (Oman)	**No**	N/A
8	Abrar (F)	BEd in English Language and literature (Oman) MA in TESOL + CELTA	**No**	**Yes** An introductory module on intercultural teaching
9	Muhammed (M)	BA in ELT (Oman) MA in TESOL	**No**	**No specific module/course** But discussed cultural issues in general
10	Jalal (M)	BA in ELT (Oman) MA in Applied Linguistics + CELTA	**No**	**No specific module/course** but some scenario-based cultural activities during class

It might be conceivable at least at this point of analysis that the illustrated lack of specific training on intercultural teaching seems to highlight a disconnect between the state's general aims towards providing intercultural education in educational institutions (as pointed out in 2.4.2), on the one hand, and the amount of related provision in current Omani teacher education programmes, on the other hand. Although the Omani educational policies represented in the state's Philosophy of Education (2017) delineate how issues related to intercultural understanding and global citizenship are key principles to be followed within all Omani educational institutions, there seems to be a lack of explicit training, as reported by participants, that prepares teachers on how such interculturally-related principles can be translated in pedagogical contexts. Mirroring similar observations by Cushner & Mahon (2009) and Guiherme et al. (2007) over the inadequacy of some teacher education programmes across several educational contexts, participants in this study indicated that there was no specific training/module/course on how culture should be integrated in their teaching throughout the whole teacher education programme they have undertaken. Worth noting, this has been reported not only by experienced participants but also those who recently graduated (like Al-Muhalab and Nihal) which indicates that even recent educational programmes in Omani colleges are yet to incorporate a more visible (or explicit) position of culturally-focused pedagogy within their ELT teacher education programmes.

5.3.2.2 "But intercultural training was imbedded"

In spite of the aforementioned lack of *explicit* provision of intercultural teaching training, five participants indicated that some aspects of intercultural teaching were provided quite implicitly throughout the undergraduate programme. In Nasir's words, training on intercultural teaching was not offered as "a separate module" but it was "embedded" (Int1). Such *embeddedness* was also shared by Shujoon who recalls how the extra-curricular activities organised by the university where Omani students and foreign teacher trainers (who come from different cultural backgrounds) get together might have helped her understand how to address cultural issues in her teaching today:

> *Almost all of my teachers were British and Americans which is something good because we have two cultures. We have the Omani culture and the Western culture. So, I think this helped me somehow in my teaching.* (Shujoon, Int1)

Shujoon's experiences which revolved around the direct exposure to intercultural interactions with people from different cultures (i.e., interaction with Western teacher trainers within the HEI) seem to indicate an authentic level of intercultural training (Medina-López-Portillo, 2004; Romijin et al., 2021; Williams, 2005). Here, instead of providing prospective-teachers with explicit instructional strategies on how to implement cultural content or deal with intercultural encounters in the class, Omani prospective-teachers seem to have been exposed to these encounters on regular basis in their Bachelor's programmes with foreign teachers. Such a direct exposure, according to Muhammed, has counterbalanced the *monocultural* schooling experiences they had in Omani schools (illustrated earlier in 5.3.1.1):

> *Unlike schools, we had teachers from different countries. That was a new cultural experience...You start to experience some cultural miscommunications and you learn from them. This was also very useful because you learn different styles of teaching from different cultures.* (Muhammed, Int1)

Student-teachers' interactions with British, American, and other foreign teachers during teacher education programmes seem to resonate in some of their intercultural perspectives as well as pedagogies today. As explained by Shujoon, for example, the way these foreign teachers used to behave and interact has been a source of learning to her; particularly on avoiding prejudice and on utilising compare and contrast methods in raising students' IC:

> *The interaction with [foreign teacher trainers] was very good and it was effective. I was influenced by them and the way they taught us because they didn't insert their ideas within us. They didn't talk about which culture is better than others, for example. They were using comparison and contrast. How their culture is related to Omani culture as well. Because we are all Omanis and most of them were British or Americans. So yeah, they did influence me.* (Shujoon, Int1)

Besides undergraduate degrees, participants such as Muhammed and Al-Muhalab suggested that their postgraduate course taken abroad was useful in understanding the role of culture in ELT (Sarwari & Abdul Wahab, 2017; Schartner, 2016). Muhammed, for example, indicated that considering students' cultural background was a common teaching principle that he learned during his MA studies:

> *One thing I can remember that when we were practicing and writing our lesson plans for our classes, the cultural thing should be over there so like the cultural topics that we were choosing in the lesson.* (Muhammed, Int1)

A more concrete example of how post-graduate studies have been an educational source for some of the teachers' beliefs of IC has been provided by Al-Muhalab who recalls how foreign teachers during his Master's studies used to bring culturally-related teaching scenarios where he and his classmates are asked to comment on:

> *[In] my MA, we had different situations, they would bring scenarios of, for example, an American teacher, teaching in Saudi and he talked about boyfriend girlfriend, and then she ended up being suspended or something or terminated, and she didn't understand why it was a problem.* (Al-Muhalab, Int1)

In all, participants seem to agree that although there were no standalone courses for cultural and intercultural training in their teacher education programmes, the cultural encounters they experienced with their foreign teacher-trainers during their tertiary studies have implicitly contributed to their pedagogical understanding of IC and to how it can be manifested in their teaching today (Larkin & de Nobile, 2007; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Such a finding seems to bring attention, at least at this point of analysis, to the positive role of maintaining a culturally diverse teaching faculty in Omani HEIs, despite the current omanisation policy (Das & Gokhale, 2010) which aims to increase national Omani teachers and lower the number of expats.

5.3.3 Teaching experience and IC

Besides the learning experiences illustrated above, the current study was also interested in exploring the participants' professional in-service experiences associated with IC. Based on the analysed findings, there is a consensus among participants of the impacting role of teaching experience in general – acting as a significant mediator for their intercultural teaching enactments. Many of participants' responses illustrate how many of their current perspectives of intercultural teaching have been shaped *after* they started their teaching profession. The role of professional experience will be illustrated in light of the two sub-themes below which point to (a) the perceived relationship between teaching experience and teacher quality and (b) the need for more special in-service training for intercultural teaching.

5.3.3.1 "The more experience, the better quality of intercultural teaching"

Many respondents refer to teaching experience as a learning construct that is constantly needed for teachers' professional development irrespective of how ready they think they are and how many years of experiences they have. In other words, teaching experience is illustrated to be a form of ongoing learning experience and a continual source for knowledge growth (Shulman, 1986), as put in Abrar's words:

> *The teacher is in constant pursuit for development otherwise we won't be good teachers. We ask our students to be self-autonomous and to be self-taught but when it comes to ourselves we tend to forget that. Okay, yes we are teachers but it doesn't mean that's it; that's the end of the line. We still need to continue.* (Abrar, Int1)

Interestingly, this experience seems to be linked with the idea of being *in the reality* as put in Amjad's words below, which indicates how pre-service education is by contrast inadequate in displaying the hidden or actual reality of teaching (Gu & Johnson, 2014; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). In addition to referring to it as a "learning experience" (as in Abrar above), Amjad indicates that teaching experience allows a trial-and-error space where teachers' capacity to enact their interculturally related assumptions become enhanced within the everyday interrelated conditions of the classroom, which cannot be fully experienced during pre-service teacher education courses:

> *Maybe I was not a perfect teacher at the beginning when it comes to dealing with culture. The things that I have done, I might not do now. You learn a lot from experience, from going out there, from meeting the students, from being in the reality* (Amjad, Int1).

Most notably, participants seem to associate having teaching experience with being delivering a *better* intercultural teaching. This was illustrated in Abrar's quote earlier that without constant development, she would not have been a "good" teacher. Similarly, Amjad indicates that due to lack of initial experience "he was not a perfect teacher at the beginning". This seems to indicate that teachers' views on what seems to be positive or good in teaching is largely interrelated with the amount of experience gained (Arnon & Reichel, 2007). This is further highlighted in Jalal and Muhammed's words below:

> *I knew that I should get students to work together in groups, and so on, and so forth. I knew this will benefit their intercultural awareness among each other. I knew that I shouldn't talk much, teacher-talking time, student-talking time but I couldn't do it in the very right way. With experience, I've been doing it better now.* (Jalal, Int1)

> *Now I believe that experienced teachers, are better. Because they are experienced teachers, they are managing certain cultural aspects of teaching definitely better than the teachers who are just starting the job.* (Muhammed, Int1)

Being a *good* or a *better* teacher through experience is further indicated by Nihal, who warns that pre-service education is usually characterised with gaining theoretical knowledge as opposed to practical knowledge which is believed to be primarily gained through in-service teaching (Zeichner & Liston, 1996):

> *We were taught that the first step is everything should be culturally appropriate, and we didn't have a lot of practical things for this. Most of what we studied is theoretical. You will not understand it well without teaching experience. Maybe in the end we had the teaching practice as part of the [teacher training] programme, but it was only for a few hours.* (Nihal, Int1)

Although Nihal is the least experienced amongst the participants (having only 2 years of experience), she seems to indicate that the amount of influence these two years had on her perceptions have been immense. Nasir also indicates how experience is vital in some interculturally-related decisions enacted by teachers. In response to one of the vignettes, Nasir's immediate and first comment about the given scenario was: *"Is the teacher, Ali, an experienced teacher in this context or he's just a new teacher?"* (Nasir, Int1). When I asked him how this would make a difference to the given teaching scenario, Nasir replied:

> *Yes, because for some experienced teachers they may be considerate of this or they take this in their thoughts here.* (Nasir, Int1)

Nasir, who has almost ten years of teaching experience in total, further elaborates how experience made him shift from focusing on delivering ELT-specific objectives (such as those related to assessment, textbook, learning outcomes, etc.) to other general objectives (i.e., lifelong skills) including culturally-related skills which are not necessarily linked directly with the taught (English) subject:

I was teaching the students just for the sake of just understanding the content of the book. They're doing very well in their exams, passing the grade, going to the second stage. So, that was my beginning, maybe I would say, for the first four or five years. However, eventually, I have changed my approach because we know that English is not like mathematics or like science. Students go and memorise some vocabulary and they go to the test for exams, they have to have a general idea. So, I start to expose my students to cultural videos, with this media. I start to expose my students to reading about other cultures outside the classroom and also to speak with different people, whether they are Omanis or not. (Nasir, Int1)

The response above, overall, seems to indicate that because intercultural objectives are not usually stated as explicitly as other curricular objectives (such as those related assessment plans or language achievement), teachers tend not to straightforwardly incorporate them in their first years of teaching. Only through prolonged experience where they can understand their students' needs better, teachers may start to realise how other objectives (other than language structure and assessment) might also be significant and, thus, start to incorporate them into their teaching delivery (Tsui, 2003).

5.3.3.2 "You need professional training for that"

A notable finding shared by at least six participants (Talal, Amjad, Tahani, Maimoona, Muhammed, and Al-Muhalab) that in-service training in their current institution is quite poor. Although a Professional Development Committee within the university does exist (which is responsible for planning, organising, and facilitating in-service teacher development), the provided training, according to participants is far from being sufficient.

We do have few workshops maybe between the academic semesters and they are sometimes useful but these are not meant to enlighten you on the new innovations or trends in teaching or on specific areas like intercultural teaching. You need more professional or technical training for that. (Amjad, Int1)

You develop as a teacher because of the experience you gain along the years but that's a different kind of development. Sometimes you need training, like training which tells you about the best teaching practices to deal with cultural diversity or Omani students. (Jalal, Int1)

The two examples above seem to signify the teachers' understanding that teaching experience alone does not portray a full professional development experience. Instead, part of professional

growth (while being in-service) is to access some technical training opportunities where teachers can gain new pedagogical knowledge (Deardorff, 2006). However, Maimoona and Tahani seem to assert that it is not the sole responsibility of the institution to provide in-service teacher training but also the responsibility of the teacher to find avenues where they can develop professionally like "attending seminars, keeping updated with the ELT scholarship, building networks, or undertaking higher qualifications" (Int1). In either case, teachers in general seem to share an agreement that professional training, either directly provided by their institution or pursued independently by the teacher, is key for better intercultural teaching practice.

5.3.4 Concluding remarks (Themes 5.3.1 to 5.3.3)

The preceding analysis which focused on the participants' educational and professional experiences in relation to IC brings about the following concluding remarks:

- In general, participants seem to portray two different, yet linked, dimensions of schooling experiences to their current perceptions of IC teaching; one which is related to the way former ELT schoolteachers teach (i.e., focus on teaching language structure) and one which is more related to the schooling experience as a whole (i.e., perceived monocultural schooling environment). The former represents the participants' early observations of their schoolteachers' during the language lesson (Johnson, 1994) whereas the latter is associated with the way they perceive their own learning (Dávila & Jarquín, 2020; Richards & Lockhart, 1996).

- Participants' early observations of the overwhelming focus on language structure during the EFL lesson and the limitations ensued by this experience have made them self-aware of the significance of giving focus to developing non-linguistic competences in their teaching today (Andrews & Smith, 2010). Additionally, the perceived monocultural schooling environment allowed them to recognise the value of cultural diversity in the learning setting as a facilitative of intercultural development.

- It is suggestive that the way some participants used to perceive teaching approaches of former schoolteachers has, somehow, changed after engaging with teaching practice. This indicates that participants' current engagement with teaching (i.e., accumulative teaching experience)

has offered an enabling role to re-interpret past schooling experiences based on newly experienced circumstances Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Davin et al., 2018).

- In terms of pre-service teacher training, findings have shown that the authentic intercultural interaction which participants had with foreign teachers during their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes has contributed to their understanding of intercultural teaching (Larkin & de Nobile, 2007; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Having experienced a direct intercultural exchange with teacher trainers from different cultures seem to have helped them develop implicitly an awareness of the potential miscommunications that can emerge in intercultural communications in general. Based on this awareness, participants reflect today on this experience to handle cultural issues that might arise in EFL classroom in a more efficient manner. However, in spite of this tacit form of intercultural training, findings demonstrate a considerable lack of formal training which focuses on intercultural awareness within teacher education programmes in Omani HEIs.

- The ongoing professional development, represented in the case of study participants (primarily by classroom teaching experience) seem to help them fill the limitations they brought from pre-service teacher education (where formal training on how to manage cultural issues in the ELT was neglected). In particular, teaching experience is useful in facilitating a trial-and-error space as well and a constant assessment and reflection on teachers' own methodologies (Gu & Johnson, 2014; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Such a positive role of experience does not, however, intend to indicate that experience alone is enough for an optimised IC teaching practice since, according to many participants, intercultural teaching involves a level of technicality (theory, concepts, propositions, etc.) that should be learned through guided, professional, and specialised in-service training.

5.4 The contextual factors which influence intercultural teaching

One key aim of conducting this study has been to investigate the contextual factors which may mediate the way Omani EFL teachers approach intercultural teaching. Accordingly, participants were asked during the semi-structured interviews to share their beliefs in this regard. By looking at collected responses, the key factors which may impact teachers' IC-related beliefs and

practices converge around three overarching circles namely, (a) the Omani society, (b) the university, and (c) the classroom.

5.4.1 The Omani society

The illustrated findings in this section demonstrate evidence that the broad social setting which surrounds participants' EFL practice has a perceived impact on their intercultural teaching (Byram, 1997; Nieto & Bode, 2018). By using the dual words *broad social* I refer to the macro social domain which extends beyond the boundaries of the university. This domain encompasses the common cultural norms which portray the Omani society landscape. Based on the analysed input from participants, the impact of this domain revolves around (1) the teacher's self-affiliation to the Omani culture, (2) the influence of the Omani society as a whole, and (3) the distinct role of religion in relation to EFL teaching.

5.4.1.1 "Well, as an Omani teacher"

The analysed data from both semi-structured interviews and vignettes seem to indicate that participants exhibit a sense of self-belonging to the *Omani culture*. Responses appear to illustrate how teachers' views of IC can be influenced, in part, by the lifelong interactions they have experienced with the social surrounding in Oman throughout the different stages of their lives. The participants' self-identification of being *Omanis* and the self-perception of their Omani cultural background in relation to teaching have been explicitly reflected in several statements such as the following:

> *I mean because I am Omani, I know the Omani culture. I know the Omani lifestyle and I do use it in class.* (Jalal, Int1)

> *Now as an Omani teacher I don't want female and male students to be working together.* (Abrar, Int1)

> *I am influenced by my Omani culture, I would say directly and indirectly.* (Nasir, Int1)

> *There are some behaviours that I don't accept, for example, and this is coming from my Omani background. So, I think it affects a lot.* (Shujoon, Int1)

I have to bring this identity with me. Like, "..., I am Omani ... and I am proud to be Omani." (Maimoona, Int1)

The above examples seem to indicate how teachers' self-perception of their Omani cultural identity is connected with some of their reported perspectives and practices of intercultural teaching. They seem to reflect how their cultural identity can act sometimes as a point of departure (or rationale) when enacting a teaching behaviour in the classroom (Gong et al., 2021; Yang, 2018). However, although the majority of participants indicate their awareness of their cultural affiliation, the way this influence resonates in teaching seems to vary. To Abrar and Jalal, for example, being Omani shows the deep awareness of their own culture, hence, the ability to approve some cultural behaviours which are deeply rooted in the Omani culture and the ability to disapprove others. Jalal's self-awareness of his Omani identity helps him understand that teaching a unit on *dating* is culturally inappropriate whereas, on the other hand, presenting cultural content that accords with the Omani cultural is always appropriate. Moreover, the self-belonging to Oman encompasses the knowledge about how Omani students think, live, and feel about different cultural aspects, which help teachers, in turn, deliver the lesson in a way that is culturally more suitable to students:

If I don't understand the Omani culture, I will not understand how my students think, how they feel about different things, how they live their life. I don't understand the backgrounds, I don't know their mentalities, I don't know about their schooling. (Jalal, Int1)

Al-Muhalab, in particular, believes that being aware of his own cultural background allowed him pay attention to and navigate cultural differences when interacting with foreigners (Byram & Feng, 2004; Fantini, 2009) which, according to him, has influenced his current teaching when helping his students develop their intercultural awareness:

In the foundation programme, I felt there was a gap. I felt some of the foreign teachers were coming from various cultural backgrounds and I am Omani. I didn't feel connected to them at a personal level. Not in terms, I didn't feel that they came from the same walk of life that I have been in. So, I thought okay, I've been through this whole multicultural experience and I could help the students. (Al-Muhalab, Int1)

Besides Al-Muhalab's view above, Shujoon thinks that since she and her students are Omanis, it is better to make the cultural content in the lesson more Omani-like. In her words:

Now because we are Omanis, so I provide something related to the culture - providing the context itself, providing names, activities, which are culturally related to Oman. Whenever we are having discussion should be something related to our culture. (Shujoon, Int1)

In all, it can be suggested that the sense of belonging to an Omani culture (as shared by many participants) seems to portray, at some level, a collectivist image of the Omani society. In that, many participants hold assumptions of what looks like a uniform national characteristic that depicts a patterned image of Omani-ness.

5.4.1.2 "It is a unique society"

It has been discussed earlier in this thesis (2.3.1) that there are common social patterns which seem to be shared collectively across different communities in Oman. Several participants seem to agree with this and tend to acknowledge the existence of what seems to be a dominant cultural ascription that represents commonly shared social norms among the majority of Omani nationals. This can be illustrated in the discourse below which appears to indicate how participants view the Omani socio-cultural context is somewhat unique:

That is only specific to Oman and not other parts of the world. (Abrar, Int1)
They mentioned something about girlfriends boyfriends in these countries. We don't have these things in Oman. (Muhammed, Int1)
It's not like we give them anything. We have to take the local Omani culture into consideration. There are certain things which are commonly approved or disapproved in the society. (Amjad, Int1)
… because this idea doesn't exist in the Omani culture, I just skipped it. (Jalal, Int1)
There are certain things that might be beyond the limits of what is appropriate here in Oman. (Abrar, Int1)
This does not apply much in our Omani culture. I should consider other cultures but others should also consider our unique culture. (Tahani, Int2)

In relation to the above, it has been highlighted in that literature (2.3.1) that among some of the commonly shared social patterns in Oman are, for example, the value of generosity, honour, and more commonly the significance of loyalty or affiliation to a social group (e.g., allegiance to the

bigger family, tribe, community, etc.). The latter, in particular, reflects how many Omani nationals seem to pay attention to the needs of not only their individual self but the wider community they belong to. This characteristic was echoed in some of the teachers' responses where they reported a tendency by their Omani learners to adhere to their parents' social and cultural orientations and behave accordingly. Maimoona, for example, observes that even though her adult students are expected to have an independent critical mindset, they tend to follow their parents' views in relation to certain cultural issues. Nihal shared a similar thought and suggests that because of the strong influence which parents have over their children (even at the adulthood level), the way teachers address cultural topics in the classroom become subsequently impacted. She gave the following example:

> *We had a video about a tribe in Africa. In this tribe, the woman chooses the husband. So, the men get dressed up. They put makeup and everything and then the woman just come and choose the husbands. So, we were talking about it in class. I think week later, the parent came. He was like, "Why are you teaching my son that the woman should choose him as a wife?" And I said, "I didn't teach him" but I told him that "this concept applies to Africa and other places."* (Nihal, Int1)

Nasir, Jalal, Muhammed, and Al-Muhalab believe that common social norms should be respected. Nasir cautions that teachers need to "filter" any cultural content which does not accord with the Omani culture. Relatedly, participants were asked during the interview of the topics or themes which they tend to avoid in their lesson. Their responses are summarised in Table 5.6 below:

Table 5.6 *Cultural Topics Which Participants Tend to Exclude from Their Teaching*

	Participant	Cultural aspects they tend to avoid
1	Al-Muhalab	Sex, homosexuality, how different people dress, religion
2	Nasir	Religion
3	Amjad	Culture of having a boyfriend or a girlfriend
4	Tahani	Omani traditions (because they are not interesting to students)
5	Shujoon	Religion
6	Maimoona	Religion, alcohol, girlfriend and boyfriend, how different people dress
7	Nihal	Sexuality, religion
8	Abrar	Drugs, alcohol
9	Muhammed	Culture of having a boyfriend or a girlfriend, alcohol
10	Jalal	Religion, homosexuality

On the whole, it appears that the topics which participants tend to avoid in their teaching are those regarded as *taboos*, which can be defined here as the "expression of disapproved behaviours in a society" (Chu, 2009). The most common examples of these *taboos* include homosexuality, religion, sex, and alcohol. While taboos are common almost in almost every society, it is understood from the intercultural educational point view that a total abandonment of discussing these taboos may deprive students from "challenging viewpoints that perpetuate inequality and discrimination" (Raţa, & Samfira, 2017, p. 186). In these ways, participants' choice in excluding some cultural values which exist in different parts of the world would eventually lead to students' lack of awareness of the existing cultural diversity around the world. As suggested by Byram (1997), students need to be confronted with culturally irrelevant or conflicting behaviour (i.e., taboos) in order to try to interpret that behaviour and then learn to conduct themselves effectively in real intercultural conditions.

5.4.1.3 "Religion is a red line"

Findings show that among various sociocultural factors reported by participants, religion emerged as a salient factor that forms an integral part of the way IC is approached (or avoided) in teaching (Leganger-Krogstad, 2011) and could sometimes be a problematic facet in intercultural pedagogy (Riitaoja & Dervin, 2014). Although the interview questions did not directly prompt the topic of religion, it was a recurring theme running through many of the participants' elicited responses when referring to intercultural teaching. Such a finding seems to indicate that religion is inseparable from the participants' understanding of culture. As explicitly stated by Jalal and Nasir,

> *When it is religiously inappropriate, it is culturally inappropriate.* (Jalal, Int1)
>
> *Religion is a key part of the culture.* (Nasir, Int1)

In general, there is a perceived tendency by most participants to refrain from engaging students with intercultural differences which are based on religious grounds. Nihal, in responding to Vignette 3, believes that despite considering herself being raised in a way "not to be too conservative" and in a way that she accepts religious differences, she believes that she cannot bring this religious openness to the class. Jalal considers religion as one of his areas of interest and believes that discussing interreligious differences, in principle, is rewarding and may

contribute to intercultural understanding. However, similar to Al-Muhalab and Nihal, he finds himself unable to simply incorporate such religious discussions in his classroom due to the existing structural religious landscape of the Omani society which sometimes challenges teachers' autonomous capacity to introduce interreligious tolerance with Omani students:

> *I think even other topics are related to religion because even like social issues, you cannot talk about them because of religion. I mean I like to talk about religion, it is my own area of interest but the problem is that our society is based on religion. In our society most of the social norms are derived from religion. So, religion is the base and you cannot simply discuss what you like or dislike as a teacher in this situation.* (Jalal, Int1)

Similar to Jalal, Shujoon says that she usually filters a lot of her language materials because of religion and believes it is as a "taboo" to talk about it in the classroom (Int1). When prompted with the same vignette given to Nihal (Vignette 3), she agrees with the teacher's response in the vignette in asking the student to refrain from inserting religious comments in the classroom discussions. She suggests that:

> *… the way the student answered the question; it's something questionable. I mean that she related it to religion, which is something not accepted. We cannot say that this is something Halal (permissible) or this is Haram (forbidden). We can't say this lacks respect and this does not.* (Shujoon, Int1)

Maimoona also thinks of religion as "a red line" and indicates that she will never teach anything that has to do with religion. She suggests that introducing religious discussions into class may, in one way or another, contribute to changing some of students' religious beliefs. She warns that this is not acceptable, and teachers should do their best not to negotiate religious perspectives with students. In particular, and in response to Vignette 1 where a student expressed his resentment with using music in class, Maimoona responded:

> *… the student felt it was inappropriate to listen to music in class because of his religious beliefs and stuff. And, by the way, you cannot argue with them because you are not here to change their perspectives when it has to do with religion.* (Maimoona, Int1)

In all, the excerpts presented above seem to affirm the dominant role religion plays in the Omani cultural landscape (discussed in section 2.3.2). Such a role seems to implicate a cautious

approach by participants when incorporating any cultural discussion or material that may have a religious undertone. In turn, such a refrainment from even discussing these culturally related topics with the students might recall one of Byram's savoirs, *attitudes*, which refers to the learner's openness to suspend disbeliefs about other cultures and about one's own. Without facilitating a conversation with students where they can openly reflect on their persistent, pre-conceived and deeply rooted beliefs of their own religion and culture, their openness towards religious differences across different cultures might negatively be affected.

5.4.2 The university

Besides the Omani society as a whole, some reported factors seem to be institutionally-related. It should first be acknowledged that the term *institution* can carry different connotations and sometimes encompass variant dimensions but here it specifically refers to the selected university where teachers' professional practice is based. As suggested by the analysed responses, the influence of this institutional context coalesce around (a) the regulations and policies within the institution and (b) the institution's mandated textbook.

5.4.2.1 "There are institutional lines"

Some participants seem to indicate how different institutions in Oman may have different institutional regulations which, in turn, make teachers in each institution approach their teaching accordingly. Al-Muhalab, for example, suggests that although he used to implement certain intercultural practices in previous institutions, he now "stopped doing them" because simply he "was told by management not to do it" (Int1). As an example of these practices, Al-Muhalab mentions that some HEIs in Oman would allow mixing boys and girls during classroom assignments and assessment projects whereas in other institutions it seems to be frowned upon. According to Al-Muhalab, allowing male and female students to work closely with each other can increase their self-confidence in enacting their future job roles within the wider professional community where the idea of male and female working together is becoming the norm. In relation to this, it is worth noting that within the institution's Common Pedagogical Framework, a document which lists the institution's guiding principles of teaching, one guiding principle which is related to cultural teaching mandates that any teaching practice must be:

> ***Culturally Attuned:*** *Commitment to teaching should consider the cultural ethnicity of the learners and the community thereby encouraging pride and respect of identity and national development. (Common Pedagogical Framework, p. 11)*

Jalal perceives such guidelines as "limitations" to intercultural teaching. He complains that he is personally in favour of facilitating a degree of cultural "openness" in his lessons but because of the institutional demand to be culturally attuned he becomes wary of the consequences of adopting such openness:

> *Sometimes you want to say something but you watch your mouth before you say it and you think about it. Are students going to take it outside to the management? Are they going to take it sensitively? Are they going just to accept it? You don't know how they are going to react. I think cultural discussions should be open but there are institutional lines, limitations to what we can do.* (Jalal, Int1)

Similarly, Amjad (Int1), is concerned that the institutional "authority" makes teachers feel "pressed" and "tied" when it comes to choosing intercultural or cultural topics into the institution's prescribed regulations. Abrar also indicates that teachers "have certain policies that don't allow (them) to talk about certain things" (Int1). By means of example, she suggests that teachers are "not allowed to talk about politics in the classroom" which according to her can detach students' meaningful learning experience from what is happening in their world.

So far, the responses show that the internal regulations within the institution can control (or inhibit) some of teachers' preferences in terms of the type of cultural content they can incorporate in the lesson. However, some participants such as Muhammed, Nihal, and Shujoon do not seem to reject a level of institutional control over teachers' intercultural pedagogies in the classroom. Shujoon believes that allowing *full* teacher autonomy is not always desirable when it comes to intercultural teaching. She suggests that it is a "conservative" society after all and some teachers "might impose their ideas on students" (Int1). This implies that the institution, by deploying a level of authority, can ensure that only culturally appropriate teaching practices are in place. Similarly, Muhammed seems to indicate that allowing teachers to feel entirely free about their interculturally-related choices in their teaching would have negative implications over the "conservative" mindset of Omani students. This is especially the case with foreign teachers who share different cultural backgrounds from those of students:

> *[Foreign teachers] don't know a lot about our Omani culture if they are new. They are still in their first or second year in Oman. Definitely, I mean, this is devastating, I would say and we really harm our students' willing and motivation to learn.* (Muhammed, Int1)

However, this control, according to Muhammed, does not have to be imposed in a top-down form (i.e., management-to-teacher). Instead, teachers can proactively suggest what seems to be interculturally useful for their lessons and ask for the green light from the concerned directors for using culturally debatable or controversial content. Examples of controversial cultural content, according to Muhammed, can include videos from international contexts which might include women whose dress might be relatively revealing. In such cases, teachers need to get prior consultation from authority as to what extent these materials are culturally appropriate or not. This understanding arguably relates to empowering teachers' voice in deciding the type of content to be incorporated in the lesson while maintaining some boundaries by the institution. With this respect, Nasir hopes for "some flexibility for the teachers to include cultural content in their classrooms apart from the delivery plan" (Int1). Even Muhammed who advocates for imposing a level of control over teachers' intercultural content, simultaneously believes that "the management should have regular meetings with the faculty of teaching" to decide on the cultural topics that students require. This, according to Muhammed, would make decisions taken at an institutional level more tailored to the institutional context (e.g., tailored to the type of students within the institution.

In all, almost all participants seem to share a similar opinion that the institution's outlook towards issues related to culture and intercultural teaching can play a considerable impact over their IC teaching choices in the classroom (Gu, 2016; Luciak & Khan-Svik, 2008; Luk, 2012; Zamanian & Saeidi, 2017). While some indicate that certain institutional policies can inhibit teachers' autonomy in operating IC in the classroom, others believe that a total teacher freedom in selecting cultural content away from the management supervision can be problematic.

5.4.2.2 "The textbook has a role"

A common thread in the analysis of the institutional factors which influence teachers intercultural teaching has been the intuition's prescribed textbook. The university uses a textbook entitled *Pathways Series,* published by National Geographic Learning, which is

mandated as the main teaching resource in the GFP. The publisher of these international series claims that the textbook aims to bring the world to the classroom by offering students "the opportunity to learn about their world" and by helping them develop the language and skills they need "to be successful global citizens" (National Geographic Learning, n.d.). The textbook's promotion indicates, at least broadly, that its content is expected to cover cultural stories and information from many parts of the world and is hence regarded globally and culturally oriented in terms of its content.

Quite in line with the textbook's proclaimed intentions, participants seem to hold positive opinions about the textbook when it comes to the provision of intercultural and global content. This has been literally expressed using statements such as "I love the books we have, the Pathways" (Al-Muhalab, Int1) or the textbook "is a very good book with very good cultural content" (Maimoona, Int1), or "it is very effective and beneficial for [students'] cultural knowledge" (Shujoon, Int1), among other examples. Many responses seem to praise the textbook specifically for its wealth in terms of cultural diversity. Several teachers believe that the themes within the book cover stories and information from around the globe which, according to them, makes the textbook mostly interculturally-oriented. At a closer look, one common pattern identified across participants' elicited beliefs is that the key feature of the *Pathways* textbook is its emphasis on presenting cultural differences. As highlighted in the examples below, the textbook, according to participants, presents cultural content of *different* people, *different* places, *different* aspects of culture, etc.:

> *Well, I love the books we have, the Pathways, because they have so many different cultures from different places.* (AL-Muhalab, Int1)
>
> *The good thing is that this book, series of books, include different aspects of culture, of different people. So just like, for example, the things that people usually do in their daily lives. How they, for example, spend their routine, and their occasions, celebrations, festivals.* (Nasir, Int1)

By focusing on differences, teachers seem to appreciate the role their current textbook plays in offering students with the potential opportunity to engage with diverse cultural content which is away from students' local culture. This appreciation reflects an understanding of the positive impact their textbook can cast on the development of their students' cultural knowledge in particular and IC in general (Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2018). However, while acknowledging its

advantages, teachers seem to find the mandated adherence to the textbook sometimes problematic. For example, Amjad suggests that the textbook, somewhat, restricts teachers' pedagogical choices in terms of the cultural materials they would use for their lesson (Al-Issa, 2019). Having to strictly follow the prescribed teaching delivery plan and cover the content of the textbook units makes it sometimes difficult for teachers to have the time and space in choosing what they think is even more interculturally beneficial for their students:

> *But the textbook has a role. My hands would be tied to what I introduce because the cultures I am supposed to teach would have been introduced in the books already.* (Amjad, Int1)

In addition, Jalal, warns that in spite of the myriad advantages, international textbooks in general may be disadvantageous for containing content which may clash with the Omani cultural context and, therefore, teachers should be able to make important decisions to skip such unsuitable content (such as taboos). An example of this is provided in Jalal's quote below:

> *There was a unit about dating. Dating for us is not in our culture; it's not there. So honestly, I didn't teach that.* (Jalal, Int1)

For this Abrar and Muhammed think that teachers should not rely on the textbook's content in teaching:

> *The textbook is there to help you deliver the lesson but I think the textbook should not guide the teacher but the teacher is the one who selects the content of the textbook.* (Abrar, Int1)

> *But I have to say that as teachers we do not fully stick to the textbook. I mean they can choose the topics but as a teacher we bring our own cultural themes and cultural topics that we feel might be better for our students.* (Muhammed, Int1)

In all, findings indicate that teachers seem to acknowledge the cultural value the textbook brings to their intercultural teaching, particularly in terms of equipping students with diverse cultural knowledge. Simultaneously though, they believe that it is necessary sometimes to modify the content of the textbook in spite of the institutional demand to follow it strictly.

5.4.3 The classroom profile

Other elicited factors which can mediate (or hinder) the development of students' IC, according to participants, seem to be classroom-based. Within the same institution, different classroom settings with different student profiles can give distinct shape to the way teachers approach their intercultural teaching. In Amjad's (Int1) words, "students play a massive role" in the way teachers teach. Maimoona and Nihal show how different types of students make every classroom setting different, which in turn makes every approach to teaching different. Al-Muhalab thinks that despite teachers' pre-assumptions about Omani students' background in general, these assumptions can sometimes be confronted with mismatching expectations in some specific classroom situations. He shares concerns about how he sometimes gets "really excited to give a certain cultural topic especially when using something like visual-audio stuff but teachers don't always get the reaction they expected" (Al-Muhalab, Int1). For this, Maimoona thinks that teachers need to continuously revisit their prior expectations every time they receive new batch of students:

> *... you know that the first two weeks are very crucial. You need to know your students and what to expect from them. It's very important for you to know the background, you need to understand their culture. If you don't understand their culture you will create problems also for yourself throughout the semester.* (Maimoona, Int1)

Although all participants seem to agree on the impacting role of students on their teaching on the whole, they were at variance on the specific student-related characteristics which influence their IC practice. Nasir and Tahani, for example, think that students' age sometimes influences the way teachers approach intercultural teaching suggesting that the older the students, the less-stressful intercultural teaching becomes. The reason, according to Nasir is that older students are:

> *mature enough especially towards cultural aspects. They can understand the cultural content on the videos clearly or they don't just focus on small elements. I would change my attitude and my intercultural methodology accordingly.* (Nasir, Int1)

In addition to age and maturity, Nihal, Tahani and Abrar believe that because of students' nationality, teachers sometimes execute intercultural activities differently:

> *It would be way different because I taught expats before in a different institution. You know, they were willing to talk. Like, they want to discuss cultural differences; they want to debate; they have opinions about almost everything but Omanis, as a stereotype, they're taught not to fight with the teacher.* (Nihal, Int1)

> *My examples would be different, my choice of the things taught, even the textbook, I might change the whole thing if I have different students from different cultures. ... I will stop giving examples of the names Khalfan and Said [common Omani names], and we won't talk about shiwa [Omani traditional food] and Eid and other Omani stuff.* (Tahani, Int1)

> *The problem in our situation, where the students almost have the same culture, it's very hard to conduct group discussions on new cultural topics. It heavily relies on the teacher's explanation.* (Abrar, Int2)

In addition to nationality, Shujoon and Tahani think that students' attitudes towards each other during the lesson may impact the type of activities teachers choose. Students' classroom attitudes may include, in particular, their willingness to participate in cultural discussions, readiness to interact with each other or openness towards discussing culturally disputed topics.

> *[It] depends on the mentality of students. Some of them are conservative; some of them don't believe in others; some of them like living in a small box; they don't want to go out of the box. So, there could be some challenges.* (Shujoon, Int1)

> *I am different this semester because I've got very quiet students. With quiet students you don't feel like going deep into cultural discussions.* (Tahani, Int1)

In general, the above-mentioned characteristics are suggestive that even with the teachers' prior perceptions of the common social norms in the Omani society and how these norms are sometimes perceived as inherent in the majority of Omani students, teachers tend to negotiate these expectations with the different types of students they end up teaching in the classroom. In this, the classroom profile becomes another layer (besides the Omani society as a whole and the institution) through which teachers make culturally-related choices in their EFL teaching.

5.4.3.1 "Students' English level"

Among the different classroom-based factors, a salient feature from the analysed data has been the role of students' English proficiency in the enactment of intercultural teaching (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). Tahani and Muhammed seem to indicate that the type of English level determines what and how teachers operate cultural content in the classroom. As can be inferred

from the two quotes below, participants such as Tahani and Muhammed show that incorporating intercultural teaching and discussing cultural topics in depth usually require a level of basic English proficiency:

> *I would avoid culture and diversity until I feel the students are linguistically ready. Probably, at this stage, they're not; especially with their low language skills.* (Tahani, Int1)

> *Students' English level, I mean, makes the whole thing different. I mean, if they're having good English level, I can introduce many deep topics, rich intercultural topics. … But the reality is that you need to bring them very easy topics so you can encourage them to talk. Because their English language is not that much good.* (Muhammed, Int1)

Likewise, Maimoona, agrees that students' level of English can be a decisive factor which determines whether the provision of intercultural teaching becomes a principal or a peripheral part of the lesson. To Maimoona, the primary aim of the EFL lesson is to develop students' proficiency of English and, therefore, intercultural understanding can sometimes be of a second priority:

> *Sometimes you have to be pragmatic and think about your priorities. Yes, raising their intercultural understanding would be very beneficial but not at the price of their language. I think Mr Idris improving their language level comes first.* (Maimoona, Int1)

Interestingly, to account for students' low level of English, Jalal believes that "localising" teaching content (i.e., focusing on Omani culture) in many occasions matches students' linguistic capability. In his opinion, Omani students have the ability to talk about local cultural issues suggesting that they have the related terminology for that:

> *Maybe there are certain language items that you need to use which are related to your Omani culture. Students can find the right words easier when I focus on the Omani culture. This is one point, the language thing.* (Jalal, Int1)

At some level, the above example seems to indicate that the implementation of intercultural approaches in EFL teaching can riskily be compromised when basic English proficiency is deemed to be inadequate. Such an indication brings to question whether (high) English language proficiency is regarded as a pre-requisite for gaining IC, or instead viewed as merely a medium through which any intercultural activity can be facilitated in the EFL classroom. Suggesting that level one students (pre-elementary), for example, are linguistically unable to engage

meaningfully or intellectually with foreign cultural content may pose risks of presenting solely local (Omani) content, hence promoting a mono-cultural view of the world in the lesson. On the other hand, teachers feel pressurised to achieve language-specific learning outcomes in a relatively short period of time and, thus, act pragmatically to keep their lessons more linguistically focused.

5.4.4 Concluding remarks (Themes 5.4.1 to 5.4.3)

Overall, the themes from 5.4.1 to 5.4.3 have presented the contextual conditions which, according to study participants, could impact their practices of intercultural teaching. The most commonly reported conditions were found to be either sociocultural, institutional, or classroom-based. At this point of analysis, the following remarks can be suggested:

- Many participants express a sense of belonging to the Omani culture – reflecting a level of perceived group membership to the Omani nation. Such a perceived membership seems to allow for an awareness of the predominant cultural norms in the collective Omani society and utilise this awareness in fine-tuning cultural content and discussions in accordance with these norms.

- There is evidence, inherent in the participants discourse, that the common social norms which collectively prevail across the Omani society, such as allegiance to parents, the conservative nature of Omani communities, adherence to religious traditions, among others, have an impact on how teachers operationalise intercultural activities with their students. Religion, in particular, appears to have a greater impact when deciding on the type of cultural content given in the lesson. Findings show that, given the dominant role the Islamic religion plays in Omani people's lives, teachers consider religious assumptions and behaviour of one's own (as well as of others') as a red line that should not critically and openly be discussed or reflected upon in class.

- At the institutional level, findings show that current institutional regulations which demand teachers to commit to the social attributions attached with the Omani cultural identity make some teachers refrain from being totally open when introducing foreign cultural content. Although some participants welcome a level of monitoring by their institution over the type

of cultural content in the language classroom to maintain a level of appropriateness, teachers simultaneously believe that there should be room for teachers' feedback, in relation to what and how culturally sensitive topics can be handled in the classroom.

- Besides the conditions within the spheres of the Omani society and the institution, some classroom-based factors seem to also impact teachers' IC-related practices. Specific student characteristics such as age, nationality, attitudes, and most notably language proficiency were found to mediate into the choices which teachers make in enacting their IC teaching approaches. An insight from the findings suggests that although participants hold pre-assumptions about Omani students as a collective whole, some specific classroom profiles might include distinct characteristics which can challenge these broad assumptions. In such cases, teachers appear to negotiate their general expectations of Omani students (i.e., perceived at the macro level) with the demands of the proximity of the classroom profile.

5.5 Perceiving and implementing IC in relation to EFL teaching

This section presents teachers' beliefs of how IC is perceived and instructionally operated within their EFL teaching practice. Based on the analysed findings, the section starts by illustrating (a) the perceived significance of IC among participants, then presents (b) the various meanings they attach to the concept of IC and proceeds to report (c) the commonly shared instructional strategies in developing students' IC in the classroom.

5.5.1 "Intercultural teaching is important but …"

All participants believe that developing the EFL learners' ability to interact effectively with people from other cultures is necessary and significant. Such significance seems to stem from the participants' understanding that Omani learners will eventually encounter interactive situations with people from different cultures either in their future careers or in their personal networks in general, as explained by Maimoona:

> *… today communicating with people from other cultures is not a choice. Our students will end up working with foreigners, in one way or another. They have to be culturally ready to know how to communicate with them and work with them.* (Maimoona, Int1)

Maimoona's choice of the word *culturally*-ready in relation to students' ability to communicate with people from different cultures indicates that the ability to communicate in English is not solely confined to the mastery of linguistic features. In the same vein, Muhammed, Tahani, Amjad and Shujoon believe that the role of the EFL teacher should also embrace the teaching of extra linguistic skills required for learners to conduct effective communication with diverse cultures. As suggested by Muhammed:

> *I sometimes find difficulties when talking with some foreign teachers here not because of my language but sometimes I feel I need to know their culture. So as a language teacher, I have to be aware of this when I teach. Language is not everything.* (Muhammed, Int1)

Muhammed's statement above resonates with what appears to be a commonly accepted notion in the ELT tradition that language learning is no longer defined exclusively in linguistic terms. Instead, learners need to develop the communicative, sociolinguistic, and intercultural skills in order to maximise their effective language use in diverse cultural settings (Byram, 1997; Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2005). Nonetheless, Amjad and Nasir seem to caution that although incorporating IC in their teaching is significant, raising the learners' language proficiency skills in the majority of occasions remains a priority.

> *Of course, learning how to communicate with expats, with foreign people is important especially in the private sector but you need first the language skills to be able to communicate. Without language how can you communicate?* (Amjad, Int1)

> *Maybe the textbook tries to address both the language part and the cultural part but as a teacher sometimes you have to make the decision of what to focus on. Sometimes focusing on the language part is a priority.* (Nasir, Int1)

In all, there seems to be consensus among participants of the significant position IC can play as part of the EFL learning process. This significance, however, can sometimes be compromised when there is a perceived need to focus on some other priorities at play which, in the case of the presented findings, include the focus on raising learners' linguistic skills.

5.5.2 The meaning of IC in relation to EFL teaching practice

This study sought to enquire about how participants generally perceive the notion of IC in relation to their EFL teaching. The analysed findings suggest that some participants define IC

in terms of (a) the acquisition of cultural knowledge, whereas some others share a slightly (b) broader conception to the term.

5.5.2.1 To know about cultural differences

Drawn from many responses, there is a recurring reference to cultural *knowledge* as a defining constituent of IC. At least six participants indicate that being interculturally competent is somewhat synonymous to being culturally knowledgeable. In further exploring of what such knowledge entails, some teachers seem to emphasise the *cultural differences* as the principal element towards obtaining such knowledge. By means of example in the three extracts below, Nasir, Nihal, and Tahani stress the significance of recognising not only the merely existence of other cultures but also the awareness of the differences these other cultures have in order to equip students with IC:

> *I think intercultural is after its word. So, 'inter' means across the cultures. So, here we're all Omani, we have traditional Islamic culture, Arabic culture. We have to consider Asian culture like Indian, like Chinese culture and also, we have Western culture, includes European and American. So, students have to be familiar with these cultural differences.* (Nasir, Int1)

> *It's knowing about different cultures, not sticking to one culture.* (Nihal, Int1)

> *The first thing that comes to my mind is the training programmes we have with people from other cultures, mixed cultural programmes. There you will know about the different cultures people have around the world.* (Tahani, Int1)

Although Tahani's position above is somewhat distinguished in that it signals towards the actual engagement with other cultures as part of obtaining cultural knowledge, all three participants commonly indicate that IC is synonymous to being knowledgeable, or familiar, with the cultural traits other social groups might have (more on participants' views on operating cultural knowledge in the classroom will be illustrated in 5.5.3.1)

5.5.2.2 A broader concept

Unlike the above interpretations of IC teaching which are somewhat limited to acquiring cultural knowledge of other cultures, some responses (as in Al-Muhalab, Abrar, Shujoon and Jalal) seem to provide a relatively broader understanding of what IC might entail. For example, Al-Muhalab,

thinks that, besides knowledge of social norms, *language* in particular acts as another focal element in understanding IC. He indicates that being interculturally competent entails being aware of the different sociocultural meanings attached to different language items across different cultures. He further elaborates by providing the following example:

> *For example, don't say I drink every morning or, usually say I would have a cup of coffee, more than I would drink and drank is associated with the word drinking and it's alcohol and they're not aware of it.* (Al-Muhalab, Int1)

Interestingly, Al-Muhalab's response interrelates with Kramsch's (1993) argument that the meanings of utterances and expressions are shaped by the cultural norms, values, and beliefs of the society in which they are used. In that, language cannot be viewed separately from culture since language is the primary tool used during the intercultural exchange. According to this view, any incompetence in the linguistic level renders, in turn, a lack of IC. Similar to Al-Muhalab's (relatively) broader understanding, Abrar and Jalal insist that IC is not only awareness of the *what* aspects of culture but also the *how* and *why* aspects. In Abrar's words, the concept should not simply revolve around knowing about "food and clothes, and events, or weddings, or dances, or so on. It's beyond that" (Abrar, Int1). She believes that

> *Intercultural competence is how you deal with people from different cultures ... It's more of an approach of how to deal with people who are from different cultures.* (Abrar, Int1)

> *It is when you meet with other people, you get to understand how other people think, and live, and behave, what they do, what they eat, why they do these things, why do these things.* (Jalal, Int1)

Although it remains unclear of why the above four teachers (Al-Muhalab, Abrar, Shujoon, and Jalal) in particular share a relatively more encompassing interpretation of IC, it is interesting to note that these participants share one feature in common which is undertaking a CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) which might in part contribute to their broader view of intercultural teaching. This course situates the cultural dimension in ELT at the top list of syllabus components within its guiding documents. The course, as indicated in its syllabus (Cambridge ESOL, 2020), aims to train teachers on "teaching a class with an awareness of learning preferences and cultural factors that may affect learning" (p. 15). In addition, it aims to train teachers to appreciate and "understand the range of backgrounds and experiences" of

learners and how to facilitate learning in culturally diverse learning environments (p. 6). These might have partially influenced teachers positively in developing a broader sense of interculturality in teaching.

5.5.3 Operating IC in the EFL classroom

One key aim of this thesis has been to explore how IC is practically operated by the selected participants in their EFL classroom in terms of the specific strategies or methodologies adopted in doing so. Although participants shared a wide array of responses in this regard, the thematic analysis showed that the majority of reported IC approaches revolve around the following instructional approaches which are (1) providing cultural knowledge, (2) utilising compare and contrast, (3) fostering critical thinking and (4) facilitating classroom communication and interaction.

5.5.3.1 Providing cultural knowledge

All participants seem to believe that raising the learners' cultural knowledge is one key strategy in developing IC. Responses show that among the different constructs which are usually conjoined with mainstream conceptualisations of IC, such as cultural *attitudes* or cultural *skills* (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006), participants in this study seem to give greater emphasis to cultural *knowledge* as the main construct of intercultural development. However, teachers seem to report variable interpretations for what cultural *knowledge* entails. Most commonly, they seem to believe that knowledge about other cultures is necessary in order to unlearn pre-conceived misjudgements held by students about certain cultural or ethnic groups. Such misjudgements have been indicated by the participants' frequent use of the word stereotype, which is usually defined in terms of a collective agreement that a particular cultural attribute dominantly characterises a particular cultural group (Furumura et al., 2014). As in the examples illustrated below by Al-Muhalab and Abrar, participants seem to indicate that without cultural knowledge, learners would continue to have misunderstandings and sometimes distorted images of the world around them:

> *… there is a lot of hearing from one side, there is a lot of ignorance about, like, "what do you think of Hindus?" Oh, "they worship cows" and that's it. But that's what becomes a stereotype.* (Al-Muhalab, Int1)

> *we have a lot of so-called stereotypes when it comes to certain countries. For example, Japan is a premium example of that, a lot of people think that Japan is like the perfect place, perfect country, where they don't have any problems when it comes to cleanness and such things. But in reality, they also have challenges and so on, and so forth.* (Abrar, Int1)

Maimoona believes that by focusing on raising students' cultural knowledge they will acknowledge the existing cultural diversity around the world:

> *[students] need to know you are not the only person living in this world, there are other people.* (Maimoona, Int1)

In practice, although participants share an agreement that providing cultural knowledge is one key strategy in the development of IC, they seem to address it in their teaching in variable ways. One way, according to Amjad and Nasir is to focus on providing *new* cultural content which students are not conversant with. This includes the teachers' attempt to minimise the presentation of local cultural content (which is linked with students' own cultural background) and instead maximise the exposure to foreign cultural content:

> *I would give students a particular passage which might add to the students' knowledge and would motivate them to ask questions about something they are unfamiliar with or they don't know much about.* (Amjad, Int1)

> *[I would] expose the students to different cultural topics, to different texts, to different videos, to different scripts and listening about different cultures. So, it should be like they're embedded within the curriculum and the syllabus of the teaching.* (Nasir, Int1)

Jalal and Tahani trespass the boundaries of the classroom to suggest that cultural knowledge cannot be learned entirely in the EFL lesson. Instead, learners need to have the opportunity to directly engage with other cultures by, for example, travelling abroad (DeLong et al., 2011) or by communicating with teachers other than Omanis (Sawir, 2013).

In all, it can be indicated that participants value the significance of raising learners' cultural knowledge as part of their intercultural teaching which may contribute to students' appreciation of the existence of a cultural diversity across different communities and ethnic groups (Hajilari, 2013; Lai, 2014). However, it can be argued that responses seem to indicate, at least at this point

of analysis, that the provision of knowledge seems to be a form of presentation or merely transmission of cultural content and lacks the reflective approaches where learners relate the new cultural knowledge to what they already know. With the exception of Al-Muhalab who thinks that learners need to critically relate the cultural knowledge they acquire against their own context, many participants seem to indicate that cultural knowledge is typically presented as new information or facts about people and countries which learners merely need to know about.

5.5.3.2 Utilising "compare and contrast"

One of the frequently reported strategies in incorporating intercultural teaching in the class has been the practice of comparing and contrasting between different cultures. This, according to many participants, involves facilitating an activity (mainly through speaking or writing) where EFL students can identify similarities and differences between two sets of cultural practices. Participants seem to believe that such activities are significant to remind learners that despite cultural differences "we are all humans" and "we have a lot in common" (Abrar, Int1).

In practice, participants such as Al-Muhalab, Jalal, and Muhammed seem to report several examples of how compare and contrast practices can be executed. Al-Muhalab suggests that students can be asked to write an argumentative essay where they can present similar and dissimilar gender roles across different cultures. Jalal and Muhammed believe that the teacher can facilitate a speaking activity where students discuss the similarities and differences between two different countries in terms of certain cultural behaviours, such as eating patterns, traditions, travel, etc.

The above examples seem to address, in part, what Byram (1997) calls *skills of interpreting and relating* where students learn to identify relationships between one's own and the other culture and society. Towards achieving these skills, students are trained to identify ethnocentric perspectives in cultural behaviours and explain their origins. By so doing, learners will refrain from looking at other cultures from the perspective of their own (ethnocentrism) and develop an awareness to look at other groups by its own perspective (ethnorelative) (Bennett, 1993). Towards meeting such an objective with EFL learners, participants suggest the following:

Let them understand that they shouldn't be judging people. (Tahani, Int1)
Ask them not to talk about which culture is better than others. (Shujoon, Int1)
[Students] get to understand there is not only one way of doing one thing. (Jalal, Int1)
Giving students an activity, [let them] think if [they] were from this part of the world, how would [they] react to this? (Abrar, Int1)

The examples above, in general, indicate that teachers' focus on facilitating an ethnorelative outlook when comparing and contrasting between different cultural assumptions appear to echo the mainstream objectives of intercultural education (Byram et al., 2002; Deardorff, 2009; Parmenter, 2010) where language learners are encouraged not to make prejudiced judgements about other people, countries, cultures, etc.

5.5.3.3 Fostering critical thinking

Raising learners' critical thinking, according to some participants, is also one of the strategies which contribute to the overall development of learners' IC. Al-Muhalab, Jalal and Amjad, for example, believe that through critical thinking, students will consequently be able to develop the required autonomy through which they can make self-directed and unbiased conceptions about other social groups (Esen, 2021; Soboleva & Lomakina, 2018). In other words, without optimising students' critical thinking, they will potentially absorb or accept stereotypical misjudgements about other ethnical groups without processing a reflective reasoning process on the nature and origin of these. The two quotes below by Amjad and Jalal seem to suggest that one practical approach on how this can be achieved is by never taking students professed stereotypical views in class for granted:

If a student finds a theme about how people dress in Japan is inappropriate, I mean, I will not just say "All right, let's move onto another theme or unit." No, we will talk about it. (Amjad, Int1)

Bring more questions to students' minds, like, "Why?" Like, "Where?" Like, "When did it start?" Like so many other ... all critical questions can be brought to students' minds. (Jalal, Int1)

The latter example by Jalal where he emphasises the role of asking WH-questions seems to go in line with Muhammed and Tahani who also suggest that part of raising students' critical

intercultural awareness is to facilitate question-posing strategies. In that, teachers should help learners "question their mindsets" (Tahani, Int1) with regard to the cultural content they are presented with. Muhammed believes that by continuously asking "why", in particular, students will be able to be self-conscious about the rationalities behind the cultural practices they used to take for granted (Guilherme & Sawyer, 2021). In Muhammed's (Int1) words, students should be asked questions such as "*why countries are losing some traditions?*" or "*Why we are keeping other traditions?*" another similar questions in order to allow students to become actively aware of their cultural behaviour. However, Tahani cautions that by being critical, teachers should not aim to "oppose" or "challenge" (Int2) students' pre-dominant values and culture. Shujoon (Int2) and Nasir (Int2) also warn that teachers can encourage criticality but not on issues which are culturally sensitive in the Omani culture or those which can annoy students.

In all, the above reported conceptions about critical thinking seem to partially intersect with Byram's Critical Cultural Awareness, *savoir s'engager* (Byram, 1997). According to Byram, critical cultural awareness takes place when learners "evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products on one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 1997, 63). This awareness can ultimately develop the learners' capacity required for meeting transformative changes within their own identity in order to have a better view of others (Byram & Guilherme, 2000; Guilherme, 2012). In this vein, participants acknowledge that cultural perceptions and practices should not be taken for granted but, instead, discussed and questioned in the classroom. At the same time, promoting such critically seems to be conditioned, according to some participants, that it does not problematise or touch on the sensitive issues which are deeply seated in the Omani student's culture.

5.5.3.4 Facilitating classroom communication and interaction

Another reported strategy in raising students' IC has been the facilitation of *communication* in the classroom. Within the boundary of the language lesson, communication, according to participants, can take forms of teacher-student, student-student or students-students exchange of interaction. Maximising student's interaction as a means of intercultural learning seems to overlap with principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach (Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2005) which advocates for a lesser instructor role and more of a facilitator role.

Teachers according to this view are expected to facilitate opportunities where learners can communicate meanings and personal experiences instead of acting as a source of classroom content and teaching instruction. Jalal asserts that facilitating communication is key in order to raise students' IC and therefore teachers should incorporate learning tasks where learners are collaboratively working together:

> *... especially when I want to raise [students'] intercultural understanding, I knew that I should get students to work together in groups, and so on, and so forth. I knew this will benefit their intercultural awareness among each other. I knew that I shouldn't talk much, teacher-talking time, student-talking time.* (Jalal, Int1)

Additionally, some participants seem to suggest that instead of dedicating one task to provide students with cultural content, teachers can incorporate IC implicitly within other instructional tasks. As highlighted by Nasir, if the teacher, for example, aims to improve students' fluency as part of the curriculum, they can take this opportunity to tacitly incorporate culturally related topics when doing this task. As further elaborated by Maimoona below, facilitating communicative opportunities for students in general is beneficial to gain intercultural understanding without the need to explicitly articulate what the teacher is doing or why he/she is doing it:

> *Many days will pass by without you speaking about culture but from your practices, from things you do, from things you say, while you communicate with the students, students will learn how to communicate well with different people.* (Maimoona, Int1)

Interestingly, findings seem to show that *speaking* is foregrounded as a salient skill through which intercultural teaching can be facilitated. All participants seem to indicate that speaking discussions (either through group work or pair work) can contribute to raising students' IC (de Hei et al., 2020). On the other hand, only few participants indicated the role of reading or writing tasks when incorporating intercultural teaching in the lesson. This seems to bring to question the presence or absence of the communicatively focused activities in teachers' pedagogies when developing learners' IC in language lessons which are dedicated for reading or writing skills.

5.5.4 Concluding remarks (Themes 5.5.1 to 5.5.3)

The themes from 5.5.1 to 5.5.3 have focused on presenting how IC is perceived by participants in light of EFL teaching practice illustrating its shared meaning, significance, and the best approaches in developing the Omani learners IC. At this conjuncture, the following concluded features can be pointed out as per the analysed findings:

- Teachers hold highly positive perspectives on the role which intercultural teaching can play on their EFL students suggesting that it is significant to develop the Omani EFL learners' skills to communicate with people from other cultures. However, some participants seem to stress that it is not the principal priority of teaching since language achievement acts as a more principal goal – echoing findings from studies such as Chau and Truong (2019), Hoa and Vien (2019), Oranje and Smith (2018), Safa and Tofighi, (2022), and Sercu (2006).

- In terms of the meaning of IC, findings show two sets of understanding; one which associates IC firmly with acquiring cultural knowledge of different social groups while the other set appreciates a broader scope suggesting that IC includes an awareness of *how* and *why* cultural differences function across different social groups.

- In terms of how IC is practically operationalised and achieved in the classroom, the findings do not seem to conclude one uniform IC-teaching methodology that represents the entirety of study participants. Nonetheless, the analysis seems to conclude four salient features inherent in the variety of teachers' shared meanings, which are the provision of cultural knowledge, utilising compare and contrast, fostering critical thinking, and optimising students' communication and interaction.

5.6 Summary

This chapter aimed to present participant' professed beliefs which are related to the development of IC in their Omani EFL teaching context. The thematic analysis of the data collected from semi-structured interviews and vignettes centred around three main dimensions which are the teachers' learning and teaching experiences related with IC teaching, the contextual factors which impact teachers' IC teaching, and the meanings and instructional beliefs associated with

IC. The suggested concluded remarks in each of the above categories capture a tentative image of participants' elicited beliefs and practices of IC. However, towards formulating an even more robust image of teachers' beliefs, this study endeavoured to observe how IC is actualised in practice and sought to explore teachers' beliefs in relation to the observed enactments. This will be the focus of the following chapter which presents findings from classroom observations and SR.

6 | FINDINGS (B): CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS AND STIMULATED RECALL

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings from the semi-structured interviews and vignettes. This chapter aims to present the findings from two other utilised data collection methods, namely the classroom observation and the stimulated recall (SR). The thematic analysis from this chapter seeks to meet the intended research purposes in two levels. First, it aims to gain an understanding on the way IC is generally actualised by participants under the contextual conditions surrounding teaching delivery. Second, it aims to triangulate and cross-check the elicitations collected from the semi-structured interviews and vignettes, and, therefore, resolve toward robust conclusions in the following discussion chapter.

The chapter starts in **Part (A)** by presenting the analysed data from classroom observations which identify the salient observational patterns (from the analysed observation notes and transcripts) which characterise participants' intercultural teaching practice. The findings from this part contribute mainly to answering the first research question of this study concerning the way IC is implemented by participants in the lesson (although some of these findings bear relevance to answering the other two research questions too - as will be synthesised in the discussion chapter). Next, **Part (B)** presents the findings from the SR which illustrates the teachers' most recurring rationales behind the observed IC-related enactments. The findings from this part aim to complement and triangulate the findings from the semi-structured interviews towards answering the three research questions of this study - concerning the way teachers implement IC (RQ1), the role of teachers' educational and teaching experiences (RQ2), and the contextual factors which influence their IC teaching (RQ3).

6.2 Part A: Data from classroom observations

Classroom observations were utilised to gain an understanding of the common features which characterise teachers' actual teaching practice in relation to IC. Given my familiarity with the selected context, I initially had concerns based on my prior expectations that the lessons might focus primarily on executing tasks linked with the classical ELT components (i.e., reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, etc.) and, therefore, patterns of intercultural

practices might not recognisably prevail during the observations. However, in many of lessons which I have observed, a number of interculturally-related teaching episodes have been identified (irrespective of whether they were enacted intendedly for IC or for meeting other learning objectives). There were some exceptional occasions in which there was hardly any cultural content or culturally-related teaching practice which, in turn, triggered me to further explore the factors which make intercultural practices prevail in some classroom situations and not in other situations, as will be presented later in this chapter (6.2.2).

Using thematic analysis, the classroom observational notes were codified into the following themes: (a) relating foreign cultural content to the local Omani context, (b) the textbook as a basis for classroom instruction, (c) lack of student-student interaction, and (d) the pivotal role of students' level of English.

6.2.1 Relating foreign cultural content to the local Omani context

One recurring pattern across almost all the lesson observations I conducted has been the practice of relating foreign cultural content to the Omani context. By *relating* I refer to the process of establishing a connection between any given cultural topic introduced in the prescribed curricular materials (including textbook, video materials, pictures, reading passages, etc.) and the students' local cultural context (i.e., Omani context) (Brown, 2007; McKay, 2002). While there are certain subtle differences across participants on the mechanisms through which this relating process has been conducted, there are some common characterisations which seem to represent almost all participants' practices.

First, when relating foreign content to the students' local context, teachers seem to refer to the Omani context as a whole and not necessarily to students' individual or unique cultural experiences. It was observed that after introducing cultural content about certain foreign country or culture, a common question typically asked by the teacher is: *what about Oman?* This is further illustrated in Table 6.1 below which shows examples of the different cultural topics which are introduced in the textbook followed by the teachers' statements which contain a *relating* element.

Table 6.1 *Examples of Teachers' Relating Statements Based on Textbook's Content*

Teacher	Prescribed cultural content in the textbook	Teacher's relating attempt for the given content
Jalal (M)	A video (supplemented by the textbook) about Cheese in France and why it is considered precious in the French culture.	"What about Oman? What food is considered precious in Oman?" (Jalal, CO1)
Muhammed (M)	A reading text on "body language" in different countries and cultures.	"In Oman, we have people from different nationalities, people from different cultures. I am sure you had communications with them. Do you think we have a different body language in Oman?" (Muhammed, CO3)
Nasir (M)	A topic on beauty contests in the *Wodaabe* culture.	"Do we have beauty contests in Oman?" (Nasir, CO1)
Abrar (F)	A video on how some social communities in the US and Europe show responsibility for cleaning and saving the environment through conducting orientation programmes or visiting beaches and mountains.	"Do we have something like this in Oman?" (Abrar, CO1)
Shujoon (F)	A listening tape about *Pow-wow*, a native American gathering where people eat traditional food and dance traditional dances.	"Can you give me some examples of similar traditions here in Oman?" (Shujoon, CO2)

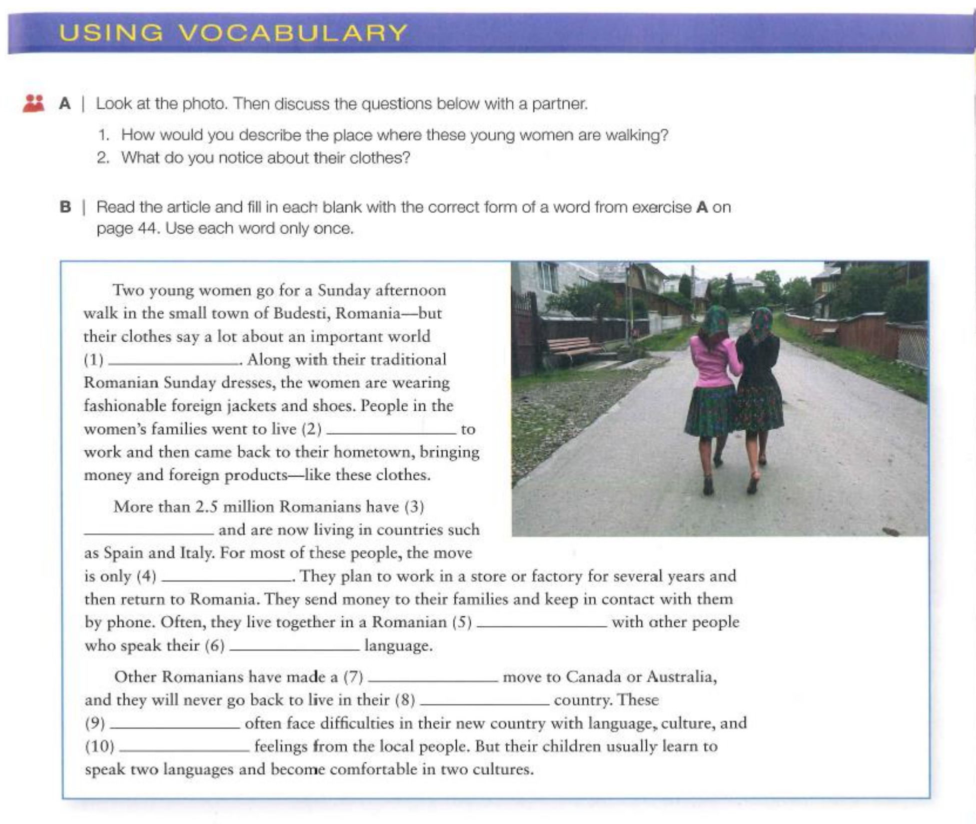
Referring to teachers' statements above, students were asked to relate the textbook (foreign) content to a collectivist description of the Omani society (see related discussion in 2.3.2). In this, there is a perceived national sense assumed by the Omani teacher that certain cultural practices might be illustrative of the majority of the Omani students. The teacher does not seem to ask students to elicit their own distinctive experiences about these cultural matters but to describe what permeates the commonly shared experiences by all students in Oman (e.g., precious food *in Oman*, beauty contests *in Oman*, cleaning the environment *in Oman*, traditional dances *in Oman*).

Second, and with reference to Table 6.1 above, the types of questions which teachers usually ask as part of the relating process seem to give focus on whether foreign cultural norms exist in Oman and not on *why* these cultural norms do or do not exist. While asking the commonly asked question "*Do we have this in Oman?*" may give students the opportunity to be familiar with the within-culture norms and those of foreign cultures, there seems to be lack of follow-up critical questions which encourage students to reflect on *why* it is the case. Such questions are necessary,

as argued by Deardorff (2011) and Kramsch (2009), for language learners to navigate and challenge their deep-seated cultural assumptions and biases.

Finally, it is found that the relating process comes only *after* introducing the international/foreign content (mandated by the textbook) and not the other way around. This suggests that the textbook acts as a point of departure in many of teachers' cultural topics and discussions in the classroom. An example of this is where Amjad had a topic in the textbook on human migration and how it impacts peoples' cultural norms (see Figure 6.1 below). A teacher-student dialogue was initiated by the teacher based on a given picture in the textbook of two young ladies from Romania who appear to wear a mixture of traditional clothes and fashionable foreign jackets and shoes because of their migration. This activity from the textbook later brought interesting discussion between the teacher and his students about how this is related to the Omani context and how students will be willing to see similar cultural situations in their social context.

Figure 6.1 *Lesson A - Pathways Listening, Speaking, and Critical Thinking 3 (Chase & Johannsen, 2012, p. 45).*



USING VOCABULARY

A | Look at the photo. Then discuss the questions below with a partner.

1. How would you describe the place where these young women are walking?
2. What do you notice about their clothes?

B | Read the article and fill in each blank with the correct form of a word from exercise **A** on page 44. Use each word only once.

Two young women go for a Sunday afternoon walk in the small town of Budesti, Romania—but their clothes say a lot about an important world (1) ________. Along with their traditional Romanian Sunday dresses, the women are wearing fashionable foreign jackets and shoes. People in the women's families went to live (2) ________ to work and then came back to their hometown, bringing money and foreign products—like these clothes.

More than 2.5 million Romanians have (3) ________ and are now living in countries such as Spain and Italy. For most of these people, the move is only (4) ________. They plan to work in a store or factory for several years and then return to Romania. They send money to their families and keep in contact with them by phone. Often, they live together in a Romanian (5) ________ with other people who speak their (6) ________ language.

Other Romanians have made a (7) ________ move to Canada or Australia, and they will never go back to live in their (8) ________ country. These (9) ________ often face difficulties in their new country with language, culture, and (10) ________ feelings from the local people. But their children usually learn to speak two languages and become comfortable in two cultures.

Amjad's relating attempt seems to show a positive indication about how some teachers attempt to make inter-relationships between different cultural realities (i.e., relating culture from Romania to the cultural reality in Oman), (Brown, 2007; McKay, 2002) and therefore developing the learners' skills of interpreting and relating (Byram, 1997). However, there is a concern that cultural aspects which are specifically related to the Omani (or local) context are introduced only when related aspects are first initiated by the textbook. This, in turn, brings into question the opportunities offered for students to discuss local cultural topics (related to students' unique context) which may have no reference within the prescribed teaching materials. In other words, to what extent are Omani students given the space to reflect on the cultural norms prevalent in the Omani culture if these are not first introduced in the textbook? This leads to another identified pattern which is related to the role of the textbook on teachers' intercultural teaching, the focus of the next section.

6.2.2 The textbook as a basis for classroom instruction

During the lesson observations, I was keen to take notes of the cultural content which the teacher and students usually engage with during the lesson. Thereof, I was curious to explore the teachers' instructional choices of the cultural content they tend to incorporate in their teaching (e.g., cultural topics, themes, discussions, etc.) and the sources of this content (i.e., either from the teacher himself, students' preferences, the textbook, etc.). An emergent theme from analysing my notes shows that the majority of the cultural content in the lesson has been usually influenced by the prescribed textbook. Teachers in general tend to follow the textbook content strictly. In all of the 29 lessons I have visited with no exception, the textbook was an integral part of the lesson (i.e., the teacher covers at least two to three pages from the textbook during the lesson). One explanation for this form of adherence is that the teaching delivery plan set by the ELT department is based on the textbook units and teachers are obligated to cover the content of these units.

The textbook, given its internationally-oriented outlook, seems to contain a plethora of cultural content from around the globe which in turn enriches the lesson with foreign cultural knowledge that might not necessarily be available to teachers (see 5.4.2.2). In this regard, the merit of the prescribed textbook in broadening the students' cultural knowledge cannot be downplayed. Table 6.2 below gives an overview of the different themes/topics which were introduced by the

Table 6.2 An Overview of the Main Themes in the Textbook and the Teachers' Incorporated Cultural Discussions

Teacher	Main theme in the textbook unit	Examples of cultural topics/themes/discussions incorporated by the teacher in the lesson
Al-Muhalab (M)	The human planet	• Food in Oman • Spicy food in India
	The Mongolian Empire	• What do you know about the Islamic empire?
Nasir (M)	Gender and Society	• Clothes in the Omani culture • Gender roles in Oman • Meaning of beauty in different cultures • Jobs for men and women in Oman
	Renewable energy	*(There was hardly any cultural element incorporated)*
Amjad (M)	Human migration	• Foreigners living in our country • Would you like Omani cities to be cosmopolitan cities? • Can you imagine leaving your own country?
Tahani (F)	Giving instructions	*(There was hardly any culturally-related element)*
	Top tourist destinations in the World	• Which countries would you like to visit? • Why do you think everyone wants to visit the UK? • Who wants to explore new cultures? who wants to go to Japan?
	Endangered animals	*(There was hardly any culturally-related element)*
Shujoon (F)	Saving the wild	*(There was hardly any culturally-related element)*
	Our changing world	• Oman in the past and now • Traditions in Oman • Traditional celebrations in Oman
Maimoona (F)	Focus on food	• Omani traditional food, Omani coffee • Do Omanis dry food? Omani food during Eid • Do Omanis eat insects? • Rice in Oman
Nihal (F)	Human migration	• Ethnic minorities in Oman • Do we change our traditions if we live in a different country? • Are Omanis good with immigrants?
Abrar (F)	The global trouble with trash	*(There was hardly any culturally-related element)*
Muhammed (M)	Inside the human brain	• Are mood signals different from one society to another? • Body language in Oman compared to different countries and cultures
Jalal (M)	Focus on food	• What food is considered precious in Oman? • Why do you think dates are important for Omanis? • What is the famous hot beverage in Oman?
	Giving instructions	*(There was hardly any culturally-related element)*

textbook (in the observed lessons) and also some examples of related cultural content incorporated by the teacher based on the prescribed theme.

The table above gives the following indications. First, there is a clear relationship between what the textbook presents and what the teacher incorporates in the lesson in terms of cultural content. Themes form the textbook which are highly culturally-related (e.g., Gender and Society, Our Changing World, or Focus on Food) seem to guide the teacher in incorporating relevant cultural discussions. At the same time, textbook units with themes which are somewhat technical or (relatively) less culturally-based (e.g., Giving Instructions, Renewable Energy, or Saving the Wild) seem to hardly include any culturally related activity/content/discussion throughout the lesson. While it is understandable that teachers adhere to the given theme and not to stray away from the main topic of the lesson, there is a concern about the dominant role of the textbook in inhibiting teachers' autonomous incorporation of their preferred cultural content in their instruction. In spite of the observed practice that teachers exhibit a level of flexibility in relating the foreign cultural content of the textbook to the students' context, the cultural topics or themes remain predominantly textbook-driven. This, once again, brings about the following question; to what extent would cultural content/discussion/questions be present within participants' instruction if there was no prescribed textbook to follow?

6.2.3 Teacher as a source of cultural knowledge

Another key aspect identified within participants' observed instruction is the teachers' recurring provision of cultural information to students, hence acting as a notable source of cultural knowledge in the classroom (Fantini, 2009, Tomlinson, 2013). Besides the textbook being one key source of cultural content, many teachers also share cultural stories, stereotypes, histories, and make cultural references to countries and social groups around the world. Examples of these references are illustrated in Table 6.3 below:

Table 6.3 Examples of Cultural Statements Stated by Teachers during Instruction

Teacher	Examples of cultural statements stated by teachers during instruction
Amjad (M)	"One reason why people started to migrate say, from Europe to America, is because of their religion. They have different religion, and they stayed in that country when not allowed, or they were not free to practice their religion, religious persecution." (Amjad, CO1)
Jalal (M)	"Well, some Omanis do not know how many children they have. It is usual in Omani culture because they have so many children." (Jalal, CO2)
Nasir (M)	"In Oman we see families encourage their boys to play football more than girls. In other countries it is different. So, the society can affect the gender abilities." "Their public transportation is very developed. They do not need to use their cars. In Oman we have buses, but people do not use them why? Because they are not improved." (Nasir, CO2)
Al-Muhalab (M)	"[The Mongolians] allowed all religions. They concurred places but allowed all people to practice their religions." (Al-Muhalab, CO3)
Maimoona (F)	"You know in Turkey, apricot is famous. Turkish people eat it a lot. They always advertise this. Why? Because of its benefits. It removes blood clots, it cures asthma. This only for your information." (Maimoona, CO1)

The above statements seem to reflect an indication of the frequent presence of cultural content within teachers' EFL instruction which, in turn, reflects a level of autonomous teaching behaviour to share cultural knowledge (although based on the themes prescribed in the textbook). This can, in part, aid the development of learners' IC since language teachers are encouraged, according to Fantini (2009), to draw on their own cultural knowledge and experiences to enrich classroom discussions and activities. However, it should be noted that the students' reflective input following these shared statements was, in general, missing. With this, there is a concern that a one-sided teacher-to-student form of communication encourages an imbalanced distribution of cultural knowledge in the classroom (Forsman, 2012; Oranje & Smith, 2018). Although there were opportunities for students to reflect on the cultural content of the textbook (as mandated by the textbook rubrics and instructions), there seems to be lack of similar reflective opportunities to culturally relevant statements espoused by the teacher. This, at some level, seems to treat culture as a merely transferable content which may dangerously contribute to promoting stereotypical discourse and a superficial and reductionist understanding of cultural differences in the classroom - as in Jalal's statement in the table above

(Pennycook, 2017). This phenomenon of the teacher-led cultural knowledge in the classroom is also linked with another identified pattern which is the lack of student-student interaction, the focus of the following section.

6.2.4 Lack of student-student interaction in interculturally related discussion

In the documented teaching episodes which are deemed culturally relevant, variable formats of classroom interaction among classroom members (i.e., teacher and students) have been identified. These forms include teacher-student interaction (i.e., teacher's dialogue with one student), teacher-students (i.e., teacher's dialogue with the class as a whole), and to a lesser extent student-student (i.e., interaction among students away from the teacher). The most dominant or recurring form of these across almost all participants has been teacher-students form. The teacher seems to play a central role when exchanging cultural dialogue with the classroom as a whole. This, in turn, demonstrated a minimised form of student-student interactions (i.e., through pair work or group work). Although some group-work among students has been observed in some lessons, a typical and more prevalent classroom dialogue would include an incident where the teacher asks a question to the whole class and then waits for any student to volunteer to answer that question. A good illustration of this is shown in the sample dialogue below between Nihal and her students about minorities in Oman which illustrates how the teacher plays a central role in directing (or controlling) the content of cultural discussion. In other words, students' responses seem to be limited to and merely revolve around answering the teacher's questions:

Nihal – CO1

Teacher: *What is an ethnic minority? Use a dictionary. Google it. And give me examples. (Soon later, teacher reads from a dictionary): "a group that has different culture from the main population". Ok in your own understanding, what is it?*
Student 1: *" أقلية عرقية" (ethnic minority)*
Teacher: *Ok we have a group which is different from the original society. Do we have similar groups in Oman? Are we killing people, are we treating people badly?*
Student1: *No.*
Teacher: *So, you say everyone in Oman is living in peace.*
Student 2: *Maybe 300 years ago.*
Teacher: *What happened 300 years ago?*
Students: *(silent)*
Teacher: *Now you are scared to talk about it. Ok did we have wars between tribes?*
Students: *Yes*
Teacher: *Ok. It is good that you say it. Ok, what about racism. Do we have it in Oman?*
Student 3: *No.*
Teacher: *From 1 to 5, how much do you think we have it in Oman?*
Students (collectively): *2, 3*
Teacher: *What about the past?*
Student 4*:* *5*

With the exception of few occasions, the majority of lessons which I observed lacked the type of activities where students have the opportunity to discuss culturally-related topics independently from the teacher. The lessons seem to lack the type of student-centred activities which have been proved effective for advancing learners' IC and in training them to overcome potential pragmatic failure during intercultural communications such as cultural problem solving, cultural assimilators, discussion, ethnographic tasks, or personalising activities (Hismanoglu, 2011, p. 815). Such activities can facilitate self-directed learning which is according to Kramsch (2009) can offer an authentic communication opportunity for learners through which they can explore their own as well as others' cultural assumptions. In addition, there is evidence from the exceptional group-work activities that I observed (mostly evident in Muhammed, Nihal and Tahani's lessons) that students seemed to be able to share more and to express their opinions on culturally related topics from variable perspectives. Teacher-student interactions, as opposed to student-student, seem to engage mostly extroverted students who are naturally more willing to participate openly with the whole class, whereas the quiet or shy ones remain almost passively silent throughout the lesson. Nonetheless, the observed traditional teacher-led style of teaching does not intend to conclude a form of teaching inadequacy since different conditional factors may intervene into teachers' decisions (as will further be

highlighted in subsequent sections). One notable factor that might have encouraged this form of communication is the students' level of English proficiency, the focus of next theme.

6.2.5 The pivotal role of students' level of English

Another identified pattern across the observations which I have conducted has been the influence of students' level of English on the flow of intercultural teaching practices in the lesson. The way intercultural teaching is approached seems to differ from one level to another. The adopted purposive sampling where I have selected participants from different levels in the GFP has given me the opportunity to observe how intercultural teaching behaviour possibly varies across four different language levels (see Table 6.4 below).

Table 6.4 *The Recruited Participants as per the Levels they Teach*

Level 1 A1/ Pre-elementary	**Level 2** A2/ Elementary	**Level 3** B1/Intermediate	**Level 4** B2/Advanced
Al-Muhalab (M)	Maimoona (F)	Muhammed (M)	Amjad (M)
Tahani (F)	Abrar (F)	Nasir (M)	Nihal (F)
Shujoon (F)	Jalal (M)		

The observational data seem to suggest that the higher the level is, the more intercultural discussions seem to be incorporated or facilitated in the lesson. In the pre-elementary level (usually referred to in the GFP as Level 1), most culturally-related conversations between the teacher and students are short and lack critical discussion. By contrast, classroom dialogues in advanced levels (especially in Level 4) seem to be relatively longer and convey more cultural content.

One key pattern has been the attempt by teachers in higher levels (as in level 3 and more evidently in level 4) to ask students to elaborate during culturally-related discussion (see sample dialogues in Table 6.5 below). In the contrary, in levels 1 and 2, students seem to be linguistically incompetent to elaborate and prolong discussions with the teacher (see sample dialogues in Table 6.6 below). This could partially be due to the nature of pre-elementary students' brief responses which seem to be merely one-word or a short phrase, which therefore makes the endeavour to engage into more critical discussion with the teacher, somewhat, challenging.

Table 6.5 Examples of Teacher-student Culturally-related Dialogues from Level 1

	Al-Muhalab (Level 1/pre-elementary)	**Shujoon** (Level 1/pre-elementary)
Sample episode 1	T: What do you know about Mongolians? Let us say, positive things about them? S1: Interesting. T: Interesting? What is interesting?! S2: Strong. S3: Smart. T: Smart? Is that because they are Asians? Ss: *(silence)* T: Ok. What about the negative things? S: Shy T: Shy? Ok.	T: Do you think traditional celebrations are important? Are they changing? S1: Change T: What exactly changed? S1: The life change. T: Do you want these traditions to change or stay the same? Ss: (collectively) Same. T: You don't want to change your traditions? S3: Keep past. T: Very good.
Sample episode 2	T: What about the Islamic Empire? What countries did they conquer? S1:Andalus (*Andalusia*) T: Spain? Yes. So back to the Mongolian Empire, what countries did they take? Ss: *(silence)*	T: Can you give me some examples of similar traditions here in Oman? Ss: (collectively) *Razha*, *Baraa*, [*names of traditional Omani dances*] T: Very good.

Table 6.6 Examples of Teacher-student Culturally-related Dialogues from Level 4

	Amjad (Level 4/Advanced)	**Nihal** (Level 4/Advanced)
Sample episode	T: Ok since that you all agree to live in a cosmopolitan city. I want you to think about Oman. Would you like Omani cities to be cosmopolitan cities? Think about your hometown. S1: No because they will change our habits and come with other traditions. But I am not against other traditions. T: Can you explain this? S1: I agree with another tradition[s] but I don't mean they come to us. I need to learn before another traditions. T: You mean you respect their traditions, but they don't want them to come to you. Why? Why not? S1: Because will happen a big change. T: A big change? And you don't like change? S1: No, because we have habits. T: Their habits, okay, and customs, and traditions, and we don't want them to change. You think these are good? S1: Yes. T: Okay, and people from other countries might change your traditions. Okay, I see what you mean. Thank you.	*(During a role play, a student imagining she is an Omani immigrant in the UK)* S1: How do people treat you? S2: Some people are helpful but some don't like me because maybe I am a Muslim. T: That's a good point. What do we call people who are scared of Muslims? S3: Cowards. T: Cowards?! Something else. Islamophobic. Some people have a phobia from Muslims but the question, why do you think some people are scared of Muslims? Why do you think people in many countries are scared of Muslims? S4: Because Muslims are controlling the world. T: Muslims are controlling the world? Something else, what do we call it? [The word] starts with *T* S: Terrorism T: Yes

Further, the students' linguistic level seems to have implications on not only the quantity but also the type of culturally related questions teachers tend to ask. There is some evidence from observations in levels 3 and 4 that teachers are more willing to ask *why* questions which usually demand more elaborate answers from students. As illustrated in the examples above, teachers in the advanced level (level 4), seem to ask students to justify their answers and students in return seem to be able to respond. By contrast, teachers in lower levels (levels 1 and 2), do not seem to ask students to elaborate their answers which make some of the culturally-related discussions relatively brief and hence lacking depth. Even in the few rare attempts where teachers in lower levels attempted to ask students to reflect and justify their opinions, most of students' lack the linguistic capacity to respond which seem to negatively impact the depth of discussion (see Table 6.5 sample 1, Ms. Shujoon). A possible explanation to this, according to Fantini (2009), is that language learners with higher proficiency are generally better equipped

to negotiate intercultural differences. From a critical cultural awareness point of view, the above seems to suggest that students in the advanced levels (3 and 4) have a greater opportunity for developing rational and reflective skills on cultural issues whereas students in lower levels (1 and 2) may struggle to engage with dialogues pertinent to developing such skills.

6.2.6 Concluding remarks on findings from Part A

Sections 6.2.1 to 6.2.5 have presented the most salient patterns which characterise the participants' implementation of intercultural teaching in their EFL classroom. In all, the presented findings seem to suggest the following key points:

- In general, the observed lessons seem to evidence a level of interculturally-related dimension in their teaching, although manifested in various forms and degrees across participants. This has been represented by the frequent presence of cultural content in many of the observed lessons as well as the teachers' frequent attempts to engage their students with cultural dialogues and discussions. Although IC is not explicitly instated within the teachers' curricular agenda, some of the featured content or classroom dialogue during the lesson seem to intersect with the mainstream intercultural pedagogies which advocate for broadening students' cultural knowledge through relating foreign culture to students' local culture (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; McKay, 2002). This gives a positive indication of the teachers' and the textbook's mediating roles in incorporating the element of *culture* in the learners' intercultural learning process.

- While commending the above, findings seem to warn that adequate attention was lacking in the way students should engage with the cultural content presented in the classroom. In particular, the cultural input espoused by the teacher seems to supersede the amount of students' cultural input, hence offering students only a limited space for sharing their personal meanings. In addition, many of the provided cultural content in the observed lessons seems to be textbook-centred (i.e., textbook being a principal driver for classroom cultural content) signalling a central role of the textbook in deciding the cultural topics incorporated in the lesson. Although the students' low linguistic level was understandably an inhibiting factor, the highly teacher-led classroom along with the lack of student-student

interaction seem to demonstrate a level of imbalanced distribution of cultural input among classroom constituents (i.e., teacher, students, textbook, curriculum, etc.).

6.3 Part B: Data from Stimulated Recall (SR)

The stimulated recall method, henceforth SR, has been utilised to explore the common underlying attributes behind the teachers' enacted pedagogies during classroom instruction. Following classroom observations, each participant has engaged in at least two stimulated recall sessions (henceforth SR1 and SR2). Before presenting the analysed data, two general reflexive remarks about utilising SR should be documented. First, based on the collected responses, participants seem generally able to remember the prompted episodes during the playback and to recall what they were thinking about during these incidents. However, there were some few exceptions where two participants, Amjad and Nihal, literally stated that they are unable to recall exactly what or why these prompted teaching enactments happened. This to a great extent mirrors the study's prior theoretical assumption (section 3.2.2.1.2) that teachers sometimes hold implicit beliefs which may guide their classroom behaviour without necessarily being advertently explicit about them during the lesson.

Second, some teachers instead of sharing rationales behind enacted practice have shared their reflections on their teaching choices. This has been evident in responses such as *I wish I have done this differently*, or *next time I will make sure not to do that*. Although my study is interested primarily in what happened in the classroom and not in what should have happened, highlighting the teachers' reflexive mindset here is a testament to their attitudinal readiness to critique their own teaching and not to be blindly defensive about their teaching choices. Although this does not give conclusive evidence that teachers did actually make a transformation (on their beliefs or practice) based on their reflections, such a reflexive attitude seems to support the findings in (5.3.3.1) which assert that participants think strongly of their teaching practice as an everlasting *learning* process.

The collected data from SR have been analysed thematically and three main categories of underlying rationales behind some of the observed enactments have been identified, namely, (a) rationales related to the teachers' pedagogical content beliefs, (b) rationales related to teachers'

educational histories and professional experiences, and (c) rationales related to the teaching context.

6.3.1 Rationales related to teachers' pedagogical content beliefs

Pedagogical content beliefs generally refer to the teachers' general premises about how the subject matter is best taught in the lesson and how it should be learned (Peterson et al., 1989; Shulman, 1987). Fitting with this definition, teachers in this study were found to attribute some of the observed classroom decisions to some of their pedagogical content beliefs which, based on their responses, encompass the best strategies towards the successful mastery of EFL learning objectives. While acknowledging a level of variation among the shared responses in the data corpus, the thematic analysis suggests that the teachers' most salient pedagogical content beliefs centre around (1) the significance of putting language into context, (2) raising students' cultural knowledge, (3) promoting students' critical thinking, and (4) negotiating priorities of teaching.

6.3.1.1 "Language should be put in context"

It has been discussed earlier in section (6.2.1) that many of the observed intercultural practices included a recurring tendency by the teacher to relate the textbook's (foreign) cultural content to the students' (Omani) culture. When recalling these incidents during the SR, seven participants seem to indicate that they approached this relating strategy quite intendedly - signalling the significance of connecting the given language input from the textbook to the Omani students' context. A good example is illustrated in Amjad's response:

> *I couldn't possibly ask them what they think about the people of Hong Kong, whether they are hardworking or not. How would they know, yeah? I think they don't have firsthand experience. They haven't lived in Hong Kong, but they know about Oman. They have firsthand experience about Oman and they're Omanis and they know. I think getting them to talk about Oman, to voice their opinions about Oman is the logical thing to do here.* (Amjad, SR1)

Relating the textbook's (target) content to students' own cultural context is regarded as one key facilitative towards the objective of developing students' IC (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Kramsch, 1993; McKay, 2002). However, participants such as Al-Muhalab, Shujoon, and Muhammed seem to attribute other objectives and rationales for contextualising cultural content and they are

not necessarily driven by IC related objectives. Specifically, they think it will make learning easier and students will understand the content faster. To elucidate, in a reading passage on the Mongolian Empire where students have to learn the word *conquer* as a target vocabulary word, Al-Muhalab decided to shift the discussion from the Mongolian Empire to the Islamic Empire. He asked students to think of what the Muslim Empire has conquered (instead of Mongolian Empire which is the prescribed topic of the textbook unit) to connect the given foreign cultural content to something they know and subsequently understand the context of the reading text on the Mongolian Empire (Al-Muhalab, SR2). Shujoon also in one of the teaching episodes replaced a reading text from the given textbook about a Chinese boy who is trying to master Kung Fu by another text which she has prepared about an Omani boy who tries to be a fighting champion. In the SR, she explains her decision to use the local story about the Omani boy instead of the foreign one introduced by the textbook suggesting the following:

> *[The original reading text] was about a boy who's trying to be a master in Kung Fu. … I felt that it was difficult for them. Even the names mentioned in the paragraph were difficult; even they didn't know how to pronounce them. So, I thought that if I gave them that paragraph, they'll not be interested in reading about that man… because I felt that they have nothing to do with them. Why? What's the purpose of reading about a boy whose name is very difficult for them? … So, I thought that it's better to modify it. I used the same vocab which I mentioned in that paragraph but I changed it to something related to Oman.* (Shujoon, SR2)

In the two examples above, both Al-Muhalab and Shujoon seem to put the target language items (which are introduced by the textbook or mandated the curriculum plan) into a local context that can in general facilitate the learning process for learners. In turn, this seems to suggest that teachers' rationales in these observed enactments were mostly driven by their general pedagogical belief of how learning a language should occur and not necessarily on how to deal with IC in the lesson.

6.3.1.2 *"It is good for their critical thinking"*

It has been illustrated earlier that some participants seem to enact some teaching activities which encourage reflection and critical thinking (6.2.5). This has been more prevalent in levels three and four where students appeared to be linguistically more capable to engage with such activities. In relation to this, Amjad, Nihal, and Nasir who teach levels three and four, seem to

believe that it is necessary to frequently pose provocative questions to students especially when it comes to cultural norms and social traditions:

> *Giving the fact that we live in relatively conservative society, I think that is good. Education should break the boundaries. Education is not only about learning grammar, vocabulary, but it's also a way of critical thinking.* (Amjad, SR1)

Similarly, Nihal believes that such critical questions are necessary to challenge students' pre-conceived cultural knowledge - signalling the importance of treating culture as a fluid construct capable of being questioned and critiqued (Holliday, 2011; Risager, 2006):

> *When you ask them something so general like that, they will just answer "I like it" or "it's a good Ms.". And they were just nodding. So, I wanted to elaborate a little bit* (Nihal, SR2)

The importance of promoting criticality is further exemplified in Jalal's recall to an observed teaching incident where he asks his students about the idea of keeping dogs at home or walking them by the beach. The Omani society holds strong reservations about walking dogs in public or even keeping them as pets at home. Jalal, however, seems to value the need for allowing students to imagine what it would be like if Omanis start walking dogs and to critically reflect on such culturally foreign practices:

> *Actually, if you go to beaches, you don't find Omanis walking their dogs. So, I'm trying to get them to imagine the situations where they have seen Omanis with dogs and trying also mainly to get them to think about the changes that are happening in their society because this is kind of a new thing but it might become common. Do people like it? Here, it arouses the feelings of the students. If I see somebody walking a dog, I wouldn't question; I will not have any feelings myself but I know some people who feel like: "these are following other people, Westerns", "the culture is changing", "the society should stick, or be more conservative", "dogs are not clean".* (Jalal, SR2)

The above elicitations seem to give an indication that teachers in some occasions make intended attempts to activate students' critical thinking despite some inhibiting factors such as students' conservative socio-cultural context where dominant cultural beliefs are resistant to change. However, it is worthy to note that the rationale for asking critical thinking questions are sometimes driven by the textbook. Teachers such as Amjad, Maimoona, and Nihal, who were

reported earlier to value of asking critical thinking questions have also shown in some other incidents that they ask these critical thinking questions because it is simply part of the textbook:

> *I wanted to elaborate a little bit because in the book; we have the section where you have to critically think about the video.* (Nihal, SR2)

> *The question is from the book, from the critical thinking section but it was good to make students think.* (Maimoona, SR2)

Therefore, there is not a strong conclusive evidence to suggest that participants' decisions to initiate critical cultural awareness discussions were entirely driven by a pedagogical understanding of its significance and not because of the prescribed textbook. Because the textbook itself includes in every unit an activity entitled *Critical Thinking*, it is hard to assume the extent to which teachers would proactively initiate such discussions if these activities were not incorporated in the text. Although Nasir, for example, suggested that he would ask critically-infused questions even if they were not in the textbook (SR2), this was not feasible to prove given that the textbook was an integral part of every single lesson I have observed (more discussion on the role of textbook will follow).

6.3.1.3 "Knowledge is important"

Some of the pedagogical content beliefs seem to be conjoined with the intention of broadening students' knowledge as part of their EFL learning. It has been illustrated previously in 6.2.2 and 6.2.3 that many of the observed teaching practices seem to embed a form of providing cultural knowledge either espoused by the teacher or introduced by the textbook's content. In recalling these observations, some teachers (Al-Muhalab, Jalal, Abrar, Muhammed, Tahani, and Shujoon) seem to appreciate the significance of cultivating their learners' knowledge about foreign cultural norms that exist outside Omani students' cultural context or sometimes *facts* about countries which they may not be knowledgeable of. Table 6.7 below shows examples of some of the observed incidents where cultural knowledge has been addressed during the lessons and the rationale behind those teaching behaviours as elicited from the SR.

Table 6.7 Examples of Knowledge-related Incidents and Participants' Recall Responses

Teacher	Observed incident/activity	Teacher's recall to the incident in the SR session
Jalal (M)	Teacher asks students about why cheese in France is precious and what food is considered precious in Oman? (Jalal, CO1)	*"The rationale there is trying to get students* ***to know*** *the differences between different cultures in food and the importance of different kinds of foods in different cultures.* (Jalal, SR1)
Muhammed (M)	Teacher asks students to discuss if they would prefer to study in a foreign country and why. (Muhammed, CO2)	*"It's only a matter of teaching them the right things about other cultures. Like what we said in our first interview:* ***knowledge is important*** *in order to communicate well with people from other cultures."* (Muhammed, SR2)
Shujoon (F)	Teaching students about a native American tribe, *Pow-Wows* and their cultural traditions. (Shujoon, CO2)	*"I think it's good* ***to know*** *about other traditions, not to restrict the students to just our traditions that we are having here in Oman.*" (Shujoon, SR2)

Teachers, by frequently referring in their discourse to words such as *knowledge, to know, knowing*, etc., seem to think about *knowledge* as a constitutive element in the students' overall language learning. This perceived position relates to Byram's savoir, *knowledge*, which entails the significance of developing awareness of social groups and their beliefs and practices (discussed in 3.2.1.4). However, there is a concern that some teachers treat cultural knowledge as a static entity. Referring to the table above, Muhammed's quoted words "*teaching students the right things about cultures*" may assume that teachers are capable of presenting a factual and uniform description of other cultures. Subsequently, such a fact-based approach in treating cultural content in the lesson might underestimate the students' constructive role in making discoveries and negotiating meaning about the social world around them (Pennycook, 2017).

6.3.1.4 "You have to know your priorities"

So far, the data suggest that some of the observed IC-related activities can be attributed to different sets of pedagogical content beliefs. The analysed findings seem to suggest that teachers sometimes negotiate these beliefs in a form of prioritisation. That is, they sometimes make instantaneous decisions during the lesson on what should be the priority in the teaching circumstance. A good illustration for this is where Muhammed and Abrar think that ideally they should spend more time on discussing cultural issues but the priority remains in focusing on the main learning objectives set by the curriculum:

> *You have got to deal with many L.O.s [Learning outcomes] or let's say objectives upon which students will be tested. So, you don't have that enough time for everything. You have to know your priorities.* (Muhammed, SR2)

> *It's not really connected to the topic we were discussing in the textbook so it was not a priority in the lesson. I think it is important to focus on covering the objectives of the textbook first to prepare students for their assessment.* (Abrar, SR2)

In addition to adhering to the priorities set by the prescribed syllabus, data seem to suggest that some of teachers' own pedagogical beliefs are given a more prioritised position than others– suggesting an existing form of hierarchy within their belief system (Johnson, 1992; Pajares, 1992). As illustrated in 6.8 below, Shujoon's observed attempt to relate foreign cultural content to the students' Omani cultural context did not seem to be based on a recognition that this practice is necessary to develop learners' intercultural skills but based on her shared principle that students' active engagement during the lesson is a key pedagogical priority in delivering effective language instruction. Similarly, Amjad holds a pedagogical belief that raising students' knowledge is one of his main teaching principles; a belief which seems to resonate with the way he conducts some of his knowledge-based classroom activities.

Table 6.8 *Examples of the Relationships Between Teacher's Teaching Principles and IC Practice*

Participant	**Observed IC-related practice** *(from classroom observation)*	**Participant's rationale behind observed practice** *(from stimulated recall)*	**Participant's beliefs about teaching principles and approaches in general** *(from semi-structured interviews)*
Shujoon (F)	Teacher frequently contextualises the textbook's foreign content (i.e., she relates any culturally foreign content to the local Omani context) (Shujoon, CO1)	"because I noticed from the beginning of the semester or even my experience in teaching, whenever I ask them something related to Oman, they become more involved in the lesson and more excited to talk about it" (Shujoon, SR1)	"Teacher should facilitate activities which engage student's attention. Teacher should facilitate funny learning." (Shujoon, Int1)
Amjad (M)	Teacher occasionally introduces new cultural content (or topics) and initiates culturally related discussions with students (Amjad, CO1)	"I always like to provide students with new cultural knowledge" (Amjad, SR1)	"Teacher should broaden students' knowledge and help them explore new topics" (Amjad, Int1)

Both examples by Shujoon and Amjad above indicate that teachers do not necessarily enact an intercultural teaching practice for a purely intended rationale for optimising students IC. Instead, they have pedagogical beliefs which seem to explain, in part, the origins of some of the observed IC-related practices in the lesson.

6.3.2 Rationales related to the teacher's educational and professional experiences

Besides attributing some of the observed IC practices to certain pedagogical beliefs, teachers seem to draw, although in various degrees and ways, on their learning histories as well as their professional teaching experiences when implementing IC activities.

6.3.2.1 "When I was at school"

In recalling their thinking processes against some of the prompted episodes, at least three participants made specific references to their early schooling experiences. As can be inferred from the three examples below by Nihal, Maimoona, and Al-Muhalab, some schooling

experiences which took place in pre-tertiary education can sometimes revert in teacher's current practice:

Table 6.9 *Examples of Participants Recalls which are Related to their Schooling Experiences*

Teacher	Observed Incident/activity	Teacher's recall to the incident in the SR session
Nihal (F)	Teacher tells students that they can say "Allahu Akbar" instead of clapping. (Nihal, CO1)	*Because in school, like all of us, me, and the students, we had the same experience. Like in Islamic studies class, you can't clap. You have to say Allahu Akbar. So, in the first class I asked them like, is it okay? Do you want to clap or do you want say Allahu Akbar? Some of them were like, no, we want to do Allahu Akbar, we don't want to clap*. (Nihal, SR1)
Maimoona (F)	Teacher gives her students five minutes to think about the Omani traditional food they eat in holidays and special occasions. (Maimoona, CO1)	*I think Omani students in general like to talk about things which are related to them. I remember when I was a student at school, I used to like to talk about Omani culture, Omani food, Omani traditions, and these things*. (Maimoona, SR1)
Al-Muhalab (M)	Teacher facilitates a discussion about the Mongolian Empire and ask students what they know about them. (Al-Muhalab, CO2)	*I really used my own knowledge as a learner because as a learner I knew about the Mongols because I studied something in history. But that was back in, I don't know, I think there's a nine-year gap between me and those students. I'm at least nine years older than them, so there's a gap. I think they changed the books or something. So, I thought they know, once I say a Mongolian Empire, they would know what I mean once I mentioned the name*. (Al-Muhalab, SR2)

Nonetheless, by highlighting that only three participants mentioned their schooling histories during SR does not by any means permit to suggest that the other seven participants' teaching practice is free from the influence of former schooling history. Understandably, the influence of former schooling might sometimes be entrenched, or rooted, in the teachers' act without necessarily being self-conscious about it during instruction (Freeman & Richards, 1996; Johnson, 2009; Mahlios et al., 2010). However, what we can learn from the examples illustrated above is not which participant, amongst the different participants, has brought their schooling experience to their teaching but to illustrate *how* schooling might mediate into teachers' practice. Here, with reference to the table above, it is suggestive that Nihal is referring to a certain

teaching behaviour by a former schoolteacher observed during school. On the other hand, Maimoona and Al-Muhalab are making a specific reference to their own learning experiences during school without making reference to a certain schoolteacher. This seems to show that influence of schooling experiences do not only stem from the way former schoolteachers used to teach but also from the way language learners used to learn.

6.3.2.2 "When I was studying abroad"

In responding to some stimulating prompts, five participants made anecdotal references which seem to be associated with their prior teacher education experiences (Abrar, Al-Muhalab, Amjad, Maimoona, and Muhammed). These expressed references match the findings from the semi-structured interviews (5.3.2), which suggest that teacher education courses have an impacting position on how some of teachers' today teaching practices are implemented (Borg, 2003; Farrell, 2015). However, what seems to be distinct in the SR responses is that teachers refer to the *personal* dimension associated with these teacher education experiences. To elaborate, Maimoona and Amjad both describe the time when they were living abroad during their post-graduate studies. Maimoona, for example, during the SR reflects on the time she was doing her Master's in the US where she accidently found an Omani product (dried lemon) in one of the hypermarkets in Oregon which according to her it was very surprising to see an Omani product in some local shops in the state of Oregon. Based on this personal experience, she asked her students a specific question about the types of foods which are dried in Oman and then tested students' knowledge of whether some of these dried foods could be sold outside Oman. Also, Amjad in one of his lessons asked his students of what cultural hardships could be associated with immigration. In the SR session, Amjad explains:

> *It might not be very common for Omanis to immigrate but it is something common for other people and students should know how people feel about it. I came to know some people who left their countries for good and their life changed forever. When I was studying in the UK, I made some friends who flew away from their home countries to live in the UK and they told me some of the hardships they faced in adjusting to the new life in the UK.* (Amjad, SR1)

The two examples above by Maimoona and Amjad therefore signal to the distinct socio-cultural setting (time and place) where the teacher education course took place. Having had the experience of doing some educational coursework outside of Oman allowed for a distinct

sojourn experience which can ultimately unpack in the lesson. This finding interrelates with findings in 5.3.2 which assert that the authentic intercultural experiences during teacher education coursework might resonate in the way teachers incorporate intercultural teaching in the lesson (He et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2023).

6.3.2.3 "From my experience"

Findings show that some teachers seem to be influenced by their teaching experience when enacting some of their IC-related beliefs. Al-Muhalab and Shujoon, for example, seem to refer to the brief, yet fruitful, teaching experience they have gained so far and how this experience give shape to some of their teaching choices. As in the two responses below, when responding to incidents where they contextualised some of the foreign content in the textbook, they justify:

> *I prefer to do this because I notice from the beginning of the semester or even my experience in teaching, whenever I ask [students] something related to Oman, they become more involved and more excited to talk about it.* (Shujoon, SR1)

> *But from my experience, if I could relate [the textbook content] to them and to Oman they will understand better. It just, for me being or trying my best to find something they could relate to or something that could stick to their heads.* (Al-Muhalab, SR1)

The above two examples seem to illustrate that with continuous experience from the EFL classroom, teachers can better understand the students' preferences and administer their cultural topics/discussions accordingly (Chávez Chávez & Cervantes-Soon, 2018; Gay, 2002). Interestingly, other responses seem to indicate that it is not only the experience gained from inside the classroom but also from the teachers' professional experience with other teaching staff in the professional environment. An example of this is where Maimoona recalls her experience with foreign teachers form the English Language Centre and how these experiences seem to unfold in the classroom. In one of the teaching episodes, Maimoona asked her students of whether foreigners seem to like or dislike Omani traditional food such as the Omani *Halwa*:

> *What foods from your culture might seem strange to other people? Some people eat insects. What is your reaction when you see or hear about it? Do you think that people from all around the world are going to like your food?* (Maimoona, CO2)

When prompted with the above episode during the SR, Maimoona recalls an anecdote where one of her officemates, who is an expat, told her how some of the traditional Omani food look very strange and unhealthy, particularly the Omani *Halwa*.

> *[I was] trying to change the concepts that they think that Omani food is all good and all people like Omani food. I told them this, think out of the box. Your food is not always good. Yes, and I had to share that again, my experience. Sometimes because of experience you learn this. There is a teacher here, like there is no way for her to eat our Omani Halwa. She always says, how do you guys eat that food?* (Maimoona, SR2)

Based on this experience, Maimoona asked her students about how foreigners might think about Omani food. By asking her students these questions, it might indicate that the teachers' professional engagement with culturally diverse teaching environments might act as a learning resource for their intercultural understanding and this understanding could ultimately reverberate into the type of cultural content or discussions that can be incorporated in the lesson.

6.3.3 Rationales related to the teaching context

Further to the pedagogical content beliefs and the teachers' learning and professional experiences, different participants report some contextual conditions which according to them acted as an underlying reason for some of their decision-making in the class. Although a variety of contextual factors were reported, there were seemingly three recurrently flagged factors, as suggested by the codified data, which have resonance across the majority of participants, namely (1) the learners' level of English, (2) the demanding role of the textbook and (2) the duration of the lesson.

6.3.3.1 "Because of their level of English"

During the SR, at least seven participants made direct references to students' linguistic capacity as an underlying reason for some of their cultural teaching choices. This includes teachers from lower levels such as Shujoon (pre-elementary) and Jalal (elementary) as well as teachers who teach higher levels such as Nasir (intermediate) and Amjad (Advanced). When Amjad, for example, was reflecting on the way he taught a topic on immigration in Europe, he indicated that he could have talked more about political, cultural, and religious aspects of immigration

and maybe brought more examples of how different people behave in different cultural contexts if students had higher English competency:

> *I consider the level of my students and I think the level of our students is not very high. They are level four but they can talk, but you must have heard their answers. They give me words. I couldn't go far with words. That was a factor.* (Amjad, SR2)

Amjad's concern about students' linguistic incompetency being a reason for not prolonging discussions on cultural topics seems to echo the opinion of other participants such as Shujoon, Nihal, Muhammed, and Nasir. Interestingly, however, participants such as Tahani and Jalal, think that because of students' low level of English they choose not to go "deeper" (as quoted in their own discourse). Depth, according to Jalal, does not necessarily mean talking more but it means responding to some difficult or sophisticated questions. For this, Jalal thinks that he sometimes does not ask questions which may require deeper discussions (i.e., questions such as why and how) since students' linguistic ability decides the type of questions he asks (SR2). Jalal's case, along with previous presented examples, seem to give further evidence of the mediating role of the students' English proficiency level on participants' intercultural teaching choices in the classroom (see 6.2.5). This seems to echo Byram & Feng's (2004) argument that teachers who teach students with limited language proficiency usually face difficulties in incorporating intercultural perspectives into their intercultural teaching.

6.3.3.2 "I was following the textbook"

Similar to findings from the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations which assert the dominant role of the textbook in teacher's intercultural pedagogies (5.4.2.2), data from SR seem to affirm these findings and show that teachers rely on their textbook "as their mainstay" (Byram, & Wagner, 2018, p. 142). During the SR, more than half of the participants made direct references to the textbook being an underlying reason behind some of their teaching choices, particularly, on deciding the general cultural themes and topics to be introduced in the lesson (Amjad, Maimoona, Muhammed, Nasir, Shujoon, and Jalal). Because participants are mandated to cover the pre-set units from the textbook, they feel, therefore, obligated to adhere to the general themes and topics within these units, as illustrated in Nasir's words below:

> *I tend to stick to the syllabus besides the textbook. I rarely deviate from it, ... I try to meet the deadlines of the learning outcomes in the syllabus.* (Nasir, SR2)

> *I can bring my own cultural content but the problem is that the exam gives attention to the content of the textbook. This is why I try to stick to the book.* (Muhammed, SR2)

The above examples, therefore, give further indication that the reason why some of the observed lessons contained cultural content more than other lessons (as illustrated in 6.2.2) seems to largely be driven by the textbook and not intrinsically motivated by the teacher. This is further illustrated by Muhammed below:

> *I'm not going to say I disagree with, but I'm not on the same line with [the content of the textbook] because there are a lot of contexts in the book focusing on let's say different cultures. For example, in this class I had to do this exercise in order just to move on in the unit. It was about Japan, in particular. Our students, they almost know nothing about Japan, and it would be hard little bit, it would be challenging for them to, to get maybe, I'll say the information mentioned.* (Muhammed, SR2)

However, there were teaching incidents were participants valued the need "to be picky" (as stated by Maimoona, SR1) by skipping some pages from the textbook during instruction especially when there is no enough time (as will further be highlighted in section 6.3.3.3 below) or when there is a need to put some of the given content in context (as previously highlighted in section 6.3.1.1). This, in turn, gives an insight of the dynamic interrelationships of the different underlying contextual factors (e.g., textbook, lesson time, learning objectives, etc.) which impact the decision-making process during the lesson (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Johnson, 2009; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002).

6.3.3.3 "There was not enough time"

Although time was not emphasised by participants during the semi-structured interviews as an influencing factor, it has been frequently reported during the SR as one of the reasons why some of the culturally-related teaching behaviours looked the way they did. The majority of participants, based on the collected responses from the SR, seem to be wary of the curricular demands of achieving the targeted learning outcomes within a given timeframe which makes the presence of cultural teaching quite inhibited as illustrated in Muhammed's quote below

Time was a reason. Because we are having, let's say, let's talk about our context, ELC [English Language Centre], we are having three semesters. You have got to deal with many L.O.s (Learning outcomes). Let's say objectives, writing, so you don't have that enough time. (Muhammed, SR2)

My prior expectation was that the time factor would be more problematic in the lower levels (levels 1 and 2) where teachers usually spend more time focusing on raising students' linguistic capacity (i.e., grammar, vocabulary, etc.) and where they have limited time to feature extralinguistic (e.g., cultural) content in the lesson. However, responses show that even at advanced levels (3 & 4) participants seem to struggle to incorporate cultural and intercultural teaching given the relatively limited timeframe.

Interestingly, although time pressure was reported to a common constraint by many participants, the way this constraint impacts the flow of some of the intercultural behaviours varied. In some incidents, teachers for example left some the introduced cultural discussions abrupted. As illustrated in the two examples below by Abrar and Amjad, the teacher tends to initiate a culturally contested topic and, all of a sudden, shifts to another topic or activity without allowing students to reflect or give their opinion:

Table 6.10 *Examples of Participants Recalls which are Related to Instruction Time*

Teacher	Observed Incident/activity	Teacher's response to the incident in the SR session
Abrar (F)	*T: "What is the difference between you and the one who is not from Oman? The traditions might be different? the cultures might be different? Even in business, do you deal with people from one country? You deal with people from different countries."* (Teacher then moves to a different teaching episode). (Abrar, CO2)	*"I wouldn't want to pursue it further because as you know, we're restricted when it comes to time"* (Abrar, SR2)
Amjad (M)	*T: "One reason why people started to migrate say, from Europe to America, is because of their religion, yeah? They have different religion, and they stayed in that country they were not allowed, or they were not free to practice their religion, yeah? Religious persecution."* (Teacher then moves to another teaching episode). (Amjad, CO1)	*"I felt it was a time issue because I felt it would have required more time, for me to explain the meaning of religious persecution and stuff like that.* (Amjad, SR1)

In other incidents, time seems to influence teachers' choices on the form of classroom interaction between the teacher and students. Nasir, for example, who has been observed to rely on teacher-student interactions and less of student-student interaction, justifies his teacher-centred approach by suggesting that group work usually "wastes time" although he is simultaneously aware how in principle group work is good for students to *"express their thoughts"* and *"to have something new from each other"* (Nasir, SR2). Drawing on these influences together, it is suggestive that teachers' concerns about the short duration of the lesson when enacting culturally related practices seems to draw implications on the quantity as well as quality of intercultural teaching activities in the lesson. Also, teachers' negotiation of teaching choices against the time factor seems to resonate with the findings in 6.3.1.4 which suggests that teachers hold pedagogical priorities and invest the lesson time accordingly.

6.3.4 Concluding remarks on Part B

The following conclusions can be drawn from sections 6.3.1 to 6.3.3.

- Teachers seem to hold a multiplicity of pedagogical content beliefs which, in part, mediate their IC teaching practice. These beliefs, as suggested by the analysed findings, are mostly related to putting language into context, developing students' critical thinking, raising their cultural knowledge, and managing priorities of teaching. The data from SR have allowed to conclude that many of the observed IC-related practices in the majority of occasions are allied to the teachers' pedagogical content beliefs and not necessarily enacted towards a recognised goal of raising students IC.

- Mirroring findings from the semi-structured interviews, teachers seem to draw on their educational and teaching experiences in relation to some of their classroom decision-making. This is an important remark in terms of triangulating the findings of this study since the SR questions did not prompt the influence of teachers' prior education and experience (i.e., the SR questions were general in nature). Participants by making attributes to their schooling, teacher education, and professional teaching experiences in connection with current teaching practice demonstrate the impacting position of these experiences in the way IC ultimately manifests in the lesson.

- One key finding from the SR sessions is that teacher's decisions seem to be interactive with the teaching setting; in that, they respond to the dynamic reality of the classroom where a multiplicity of competing factors intersect (Borg 2006; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Johnson, 2009; Pajares, 1992; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002). Participants do not go to the classroom and simply enact their perceived *ideal* pedagogy about how language teaching should unfold in the lesson. Instead, they respond to the situational demands of students' linguistic needs as well as the institutional demands of covering the content of the instilled textbook within the pre-set timeframe. All of these contextual realities are processed by the teacher in situ and negotiated in light of the teachers' pedagogical content beliefs in order to make appropriate instructional amendments in response to emerging demands of the classroom.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the generated themes from the conducted classroom observations and SR sessions which were set to understand the way intercultural teaching is actualised within the participants' everyday flow of the lesson. The first part of the chapter has presented the findings from the conducted classroom observations and identified five main instructional patterns which seem to frequently prevail in connection with participants' intercultural pedagogies. The five patterns were (a) relating foreign cultural content to students' local context, (b) the focal position of the prescribed textbook during the lesson, (c) the teacher as a notable source of cultural knowledge, (d) the lack of student-student communication, and (e) the pivotal role of students' proficiency level. The second major section of the chapter has presented findings from SR which aimed to unpack the underlying rationalities and thinking processes of the observed intercultural pedagogies. The findings have shown that participants, when enacting culturally-related instruction, seem draw on three different, yet interrelated, attributes which are the teacher's pedagogical content beliefs, the educational and teaching experiences, and the contextual factors which surround the lesson delivery. The findings from both the classroom observation and SR have offered valuable insights which can build on the findings from the semi-structured interviews and vignettes illustrated in in previous chapter. The next (final) chapter seeks to offer a holistic discussion of the presented findings in light of the theoretical underpinnings adopted in this study in order to answer the research questions and to demonstrate how the overall research is contributing to knowledge.

7 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

While the previous two chapters have presented in detail the thematic analysis of the collected findings, this chapter takes a bird's-eye view to synthesise and discuss the study's key findings in relation to the proposed theoretical framework as well as to the extant literature. By doing so, the chapter seeks to answer the research questions to arrive at condensed conclusions on how the study findings can collectively expand our theoretical understanding of teachers' IC beliefs and their classroom implementation within the specific, yet underexplored, Omani EFL context and potentially in the wider context of developing IC in EFL teaching. The concluded discussions culminate in a proposed situated version of Borg's original model of language teacher cognition. The chapter also aims to provide key stakeholders (i.e., educational policymakers, teacher trainers, professional development planners and curriculum developers) some tailored pathways which could potentially advance the position of intercultural teaching in Omani HEIs and possibly in similar educational contexts.

In terms of structure, the chapter starts by answering the three research questions which have guided the inquiry of this thesis. **Section 7.2** seeks to answer RQ1 which concerns the way participants perceive and implement IC in their teaching. Next, **Section 7.3** answers RQ2 which focuses on teachers' educational and teaching experiences with IC whereas **Section 7.4** answers RQ3 regarding the contextual factors which influence participants' IC teaching. After answering the research questions, **Section 7.5** proposes a situated version of Borg's original model followed by a recap of the theoretical and practical contributions of this thesis in **Section 7.6.** Following this, **Section 7.7** outlines the key recommendations for relevant stakeholders. Afterwards, **Section 7.8** identifies the key limitations of this study and the potential directions for future research before **Section 7.9** brings this thesis to a close with a personal reflection by the researcher on the whole PhD research journey.

7.2 Research Question 1: How do Omani EFL teachers perceive and implement Intercultural Competence (IC) in relation to their EFL teaching practice?

The intent of the first research question was to probe into the IC-related beliefs among a selected group of Omani EFL teachers and the way they implement IC in practice. A teacher belief has been defined earlier in this study as a proposition accepted as true by the teacher which is context-dependent, held either explicitly or implicitly, and is capable of informing teaching behaviour. In this vein, the previous findings chapters sought to disclose the IC-related beliefs as well as the teaching patterns figuring prominently among the selected participants within the Omani EFL classroom. By drawing on these identified patterns, this section seeks to draw conclusions on how IC is generally positioned within the pedagogies of selected teachers which, in turn, will help interpret the Omani EFL teachers' current role in implementing the state's desired intercultural education objectives. The key findings are now revisited and synthesised into the following three sub-arguments which together answer the first research question.

7.2.1 A peripheral position: reprioritising IC in the EFL classroom

The findings show that although developing IC is perceived favourably by participants as a desirable learning objective, it seems to receive a less recognised position in their EFL teaching practice. Many elicitations from the semi-structured interviews seem to depict the development of IC as a significant and necessary element of the EFL lesson (5.4.1) whereas the lesson observations and SR show that the enactment of intercultural teaching remains overshadowed by other competing priorities either held by the teacher or mandated by the institution. Such a peripheral, or subsidiary, position of intercultural teaching against other EFL teaching dimensions seem to mirror the findings of several studies such as (Chau & Truong, 2019; Hoa & Vien, 2019; Oranje & Smith, 2018; Safa & Tofighi, 2022; Sercu, 2006) where teachers were found to hardly conduct intercultural activities purposefully or intentionally. Instead, as elaborated in the triangulated illustration in (6.3.1), the intensions behind some observed IC practices seem to be defined by other sets of pedagogical beliefs and are not necessarily motivated by a pure intention towards raising the learners' IC. This suggests that the IC-related beliefs cannot be uncoupled from the influence of other sets of beliefs within the teacher's complex belief system.

Notably, the literature shows that due to the complexity of teacher beliefs, divergences between what teachers say and what they do in class might prevail (Phipps & Borg, 2009; Zheng, 2013). Particularly in studies which utilise the combination of elicitation methods (e.g., questionnaires or interviews) alongside observational methods (e.g., lesson observation), areas of inconsistency between what is elicited and what is observed in the classroom might occur (Oranje & Smith, 2018; Shawer, 2017). The findings of this study suggest no exception. Although the degree and specific areas of discrepancy between what the participants say and what they do in class have not been a central enquiry in the current thesis (cf. Agostinetto & Bugno, 2020), some cases of incoherence emerged as an eye-opener towards understanding why study participants approach IC the way they do. For example, Muhammed and Abrar (5.4.2.2) both maintained during the interview that modifying the textbook's content in a way that accords with students' preferences is a desirable intercultural teaching practice; meanwhile, their observed lessons seem to indicate a propensity for a notable adherence to the textbook's content, sequence, topics, and activities (hence a case of inconsistency). Both Muhammed and Abrar, explained later in the SR (6.3.1.4) that for the purpose of preparing students to the institutionally standardised assessment, they believe that following the textbook in such a condition is more rational. Muhammed and Abrar's case seems to indicate that discordances (between elicited belief and realised practice) do not necessarily demonstrate a case of a single belief that failed to be enacted in the classroom but shows how teachers hold multiple layers of beliefs and distinctly informed rationales. In other words, teachers do not necessarily *contradict* their own beliefs but represent an enactment of different sets of beliefs as necessitated by the teaching situation.

An insight from the above discussion, therefore, suggests that inconsistencies should not be interpreted in a negative sense. Foregrounding terms such as *tensions* (as in Baleghizadeh, & Moghadam, 2013; Phipps & Borg, 2009)*, contradictions,* (as in Risko et al., 2002), *conflicts* (as in Toll et al., 2004), or *constraints* (as in O'Brien & Norton, 1991) when explaining non-correspondence between a professed belief and an actual teaching practice might misleadingly suggest a flawed relationship that needs to be mended by the teacher. Such divergences, as drawn from the analysed data, may showcase a positive dimension of teacher's flexible decision-making processes. While acknowledging that the enactment of teachers' beliefs is not entirely constraint-free, it is significant to accentuate a perspective that teachers with their professional capacity can interact with the demands of their teaching situation in practical and

sensible manners (Leatham, 2006). This perspective consolidates the description of teachers as active decision-makers (Borg, 2003; Sullivan & Mousley, 2001) and more importantly accents their ability to co-adapt and self-organise their complex belief systems in different teaching situations towards achieving dynamic stability (Zheng, 2015).

Simultaneously though, such a positive discourse does not intend to foreclose a need for accommodating a more prioritised (or central) position of IC within Omani teachers' current practice (Gay, 2013; Oranje & Smith, 2018); a practice which parallels its assumed significance in the elicited beliefs. Instead, the above discussion exhibits scope for further illuminating how IC can formally be appreciated in EFL practice without compromising other dominant priorities mandated by the teaching context (e.g., policy, curriculum, assessment, textbook, etc.). Such an enterprise, I argue, requires an explicit recognition, primarily by curriculum developers, to standardise intercultural teaching as a pronounced co-constituent within the overall agenda of EFL practice. While it is understandable that foregrounding the classical set of the four ELT skills (i.e., writing, speaking, listening, and reading) remains central, prioritising IC does not intend to allocate an add-on standalone "fifth skill" in the language classroom, as warned by Kramsch (1993, p. 1), but to intermesh it in the background alongside other skills. Failing to do so, the desirable key position of intercultural development, as aspired by the country's overarching principles of education, might be considered as a luxury which is utilised only when there is enough time in the lesson.

7.2.2 Classroom power imbalance: from teacher's leading construction towards classroom co-construction

In general, the way teachers approach IC in the classroom seems to be characterised by a teacher-centred style of instruction accompanied by a notable adherence to the content of the prescribed textbook. Although exceptions were noted, the majority of incorporated culturally-related discussions and activities appear to be teacher-fronted in a way that backgrounds the Omani learners' cultural input. Drawing on the conclusions from section 6.2, the study asserts a level of discrepancy between the large amount of cultural content introduced in the lesson and the limited venues offered for students to maximise their engagement with that content. In such fashion, the student's constructive learning process becomes remarkably controlled by the

teacher. In my view, such a construction process should better elevate towards *co-construction* which means the joint creation of culturally-related meaning in the reality of the classroom (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995). My research departs from a constructivist premise suggesting that learning is not imparted into students but instead constructed by the student through experience. However, the teachers' culturally-relevant input in the classroom (i.e., espoused stereotypes, shared cultural experiences, told stories, etc.) along with the notable adherence to the cultural content of the textbook prevail, in the majority of observed lessons, as dominant sources of cultural knowledge which, I argue, can conceal the learners' *co*-constructive role as a contributing source of classroom knowledge (Richmond & McCroskey, 1992; Walker & Shore, 2015).

It has been discussed in the theoretical underpinnings (3.2.1.2) that the meaning of *competence*, in the context of IC, embodies a perpetually constructed ability that responds to the ever-changing social reality (Liu & Zhang, 2014). This constructive view contrasts with product-oriented interpretations of IC which treat the concept as an attainment of pre-identified and fixed cultural objectives and behavioural traits. Intercultural pedagogies that follow from the constructivist understanding advocate that language learners should be given opportunities where they can actively interact, negotiate, and interrogate the cultural content presented in the classroom; hence, engage within a *process* where they continuously cultivate their IC (Kurtes et al., 2017; Liu & Zhang, 2014; Piatkowska, 2014). In the case of this study, however, there seems to be lack of such co-constructive opportunities offered for learners which according to Jacoby and Ochs (1995) should be inclusive of collaboration, cooperation, and coordination.

A case in point is that the identified discrepancy of cultural input among the different classroom actors can represent an imbalanced distribution of power in the way intercultural content is presented in the language classroom. Power, as it relates to teaching, is usually conjoined with any form of influence over students' behaviour and knowledge beyond the students' own regulation and control (Hurt et al., 1987). In other words, it indicates the existence of a mono-directional form of instructional delivery instead of facilitating an interactive blend where all classroom actors are included. This phenomenon, to a large extent, mirrors the teacher-led activities observed in this study (see 6.2.3 and 6.2.4) where teachers seem to control and direct the provision of cultural content almost independently from the learners' optimised engagement.

The current study seems to show that the identified unequal power distribution can be attributed to two main sets of teacher beliefs, namely beliefs about the meaning of IC and beliefs about the perceived role of teacher's authority. First, the way intercultural teaching is defined by many participants primarily as a way of offering students' access to cultural *knowledge* of different social groups might correspondingly resound with the way cultural content is operationalised in the lesson. Because culture was not conceptualised in many of teachers' beliefs as a process of construction but dominantly as a form of knowledge acquisition (5.5.2.1), many intercultural dialogues observed in the classroom seem to have been framed within that understanding. This way, treating culture merely as a content to be imparted to students might disarticulate the significance of giving students enough access to confront that content. This conclusion has been asserted in studies such as Larzen-Ostermark (2008) and Oranje and Smith (2018). Such an inadequacy, as to speak, goes against advocations to view cultural knowledge as an exploration between teachers and students alike rather than transposing preordained content (Forsman, 2012; Oranje & Smith, 2018).

Alongside the content-transmission phenomenon discussed above, an emergent finding has been that some participants such as Nassir, Shujoon, and Maimoona (5.4.1) seem to perceive a sense of moral obligation to maintain a level of authority over the way intercultural content is selected and operationalised in the Omani EFL classrooms. This perception is found to impact them to refrain from discussing taboos (i.e., culturally disapproved topics) or to remove prescribed content which might conflict with the perceived conservative background of Omani students. Added to this, Muhammed, Nihal, and Shujoon believe that not only teachers but even the academic institution should wield a degree of authority over staff by monitoring the range of cultural topics discussed in the classroom. By doing so, the above participants endorse a level of authority by the institution to stop teachers from imposing *inappropriate* ideas over students and, therefore, maintain the conservative mindset of Omani students.

Nonetheless, the above discussion does not intend to reject a level of teacher authority in the interculturality-oriented classroom. Teacher authority, in its positive sense, is regarded as an "indispensable facet of learning" (Kitchen, 2014, p. 53) as it underscores the teachers' well-informed regulation of their classroom dynamics. Acting on their role as responsible professionals, teachers are expected to monitor and administer the flow of the intercultural

learning process of their students. As such, participants, such as Nasir and Abrar, understood that teachers' interventions to discourage learners from expressing stereotypical and prejudiced pretensions about other social groups is part of this role and, therefore, they dismiss the idea of *anything goes* in the classroom. However, authority in this sense should arguably be distinguished from coercive power (Pace & Hemmings, 2006, p. 1) as the former is a legitimate form of social construction in the classroom whereas the latter promotes distance between the teacher and the student which can distort such construction. Assuming that any language teaching is eventually a constructive phenomenon, the analysed data seem to be advocating for going beyond the teacher's sole construction of classroom cultural knowledge and promote a co-constructive equilibrium where Omani students form a constituting part of that knowledge. This, in practical terms, necessitates a minimisation of the "instructivist" pedagogy that stresses "direct, programmed instruction and knowledge transmission" (Yin et al., 2020, p. 583) and embraces a co-constructivist one where any intercultural understanding is "constructed actively, cooperatively and jointly" (Dooley, 2009, p. 499).

7.2.3 The skills of discovery and interaction: a missing savoir

Byram's five *savoirs* provided, in part, a theoretical basis for operating the notion of IC in this study (discussed in 3.2.1.4). An overarching remark from the study findings is that these five savoirs manifest among participants' classrooms in a disproportionate manner indicating a lack of systematic framework that translates the different components of IC in a more comprehensive and consistent manner. At a closer look, *knowledge* and *skills of interpreting and relating* are seemingly the most celebrated components within participants' understanding and implementation of IC. Attention to developing learners' *attitudes* and *critical cultural awareness*, was on some occasions documented but remains by and large infrequent. Although participants express a strong opinion about the value of critical thinking in teaching EFL in general (section 5.5.3.3), teachers are seemingly circumspect about cascading such criticality and openness with respect to students' pre-determined cultural beliefs, as pointed out in 5.4.1. This, I believe, may inhibit the development of students' intercultural attitudes and critical cultural awareness since both of these savoirs seek to cultivate the learners' openness to evaluate and suspend disbelief not only about other cultures but also about their own (Byram, 1997). My argument can be supported by Rissanen et al.'s (2016) findings which have illustrated that by

learning to critically question own's cultural views, individuals can develop attitudinal empathy towards differing cultural worldviews.

What is more, the findings show that the feasibility of developing the *skills of discovery and interaction* within the selected setting of this study is a contextually formidable endeavour. These skills (as explained in 3.2.1.4) necessitate a culturally diverse setting where learners can operate the acquired cultural knowledge and skills in a real-time cultural encounter. For this to occur, EFL learners are required to function within the constraints of an authentically diverse cultural interchange which was seemingly lacking at the (relatively) culturally homogenous classrooms in this study. Although it would be unrealistic to neglect the existence of sub-national variation within the Omani EFL classroom, a more culturally diverse context seems to largely be missing since both Omani teachers and students in this study share (at least nationally) similar cultural backgrounds. In a way, the identified inapplicability of the *skills of discovery and interaction* in the perceived homogenous classrooms might be considered as a limitation of Byram's model and may invoke criticisms of its exclusive feasibility to Western contexts where cultural heterogeneity in HEIs is more noticeable. However, a case can be made that such infeasibility remains much of a contextual predicament (in the case of selected context) that needs to be mitigated and not necessarily a conceptual limitation that needs to be refined in the model. The pivotal role of *skills of discovery and interaction* which pertain to the ability to perform real-time interaction with those who share dissimilar cultural backgrounds should not be compromised as it remains a key constitutive objective of developing learners' IC. Afterall, the overarching objective behind intercultural skills and knowledge for learners is arguably not to merely internalise them but to *apply* them with outgroup interlocutors.

Worth noting, the state-run colleges in Oman currently enrol only Omani students whereas international students and foreigners can only study in private colleges; a higher education reality which might not generally mirror the case of many Western contexts. Language classrooms where teachers and students share homogeneous cultural backgrounds are arguably those who need access to authentic intercultural experiences the most. Without such a demographic affordance, venues to real-time communication will remain intangible. Some practical recommendations on how to address this issue will be laid out in section 7.8.

7.2.4 Conclusion on answering RQ1

In a nutshell, the development of IC is found to exhibit a peripheral position within the manifested pedagogies of the selected participants in spite of its perceived theoretical significance. Because of this, incorporating IC has been found to be obscured by other competing priorities either held by the teacher or mandated by the institution. Such an attenuated position has been often accompanied with a teacher-centred approach portraying a disparate distribution of cultural knowledge among classroom actors. The findings also suggest that although several elements of IC have been approached in the observed lessons, there was seemingly a lack of a unifying framework that translates the different components of IC in a systematic and consistent manner. A case in point, therefore, is that IC should be revitalised as an organic co-component of the whole EFL practice in a way that ensures its desirable positioning, as laid out by the country's principles of education, and optimises the learners' co-constructive intercultural learning experience. Against this understanding, it is wise to caution that an inferior status of IC within the clustered hierarchy of teachers' pedagogical principles along with the lack of a culturally diverse classroom can inhibit the Omani students' competence to be full-fledged intercultural speakers. An awareness of this concluded remark will be carried out throughout the subsequent sections when elucidating the role of the educational and teaching experiences as well as the surrounding context in the formation of teachers' beliefs of IC.

7.3 Research Question 2: How do Omani EFL teachers' educational and teaching experiences inform their beliefs and practices which are related to IC?

The second research question sought to find out how participants' educational and teaching experiences with IC could potentially inform the way these experiences unfold in their teaching today. It has been discussed in the literature that due to lack of IC-related research on such experiences, our knowledge of how to tailor conducive intercultural teacher training agenda that attend to the teacher's unique educational histories and professional profiles is still limited. Therefore, answering the second research question aims to increase our understanding in this regard particularly in relation to the selected Omani context in this study. The analysed findings suggest that teachers' current beliefs of IC primarily derive, although in various ways and in varying degrees, from their (a) schooling experiences, (b) pre-service teacher education

programme, and (c) on-going teaching experience. The key findings from each of these experiences, which together answer the above research question, will now be discussed.

7.3.1 Schooling: a re-constructed apprenticeship of observation

The findings indicate a linkage, although to some extent, between participants' elicited schooling history and the way they view and operate some of their intercultural teaching practices today. As elicited from the semi-structured interviews (5.3.1), many participants hold that their recollections of early schooling experiences may have an impacting position on some of their IC-related decision-making. Findings from the SR (6.3.2.1) affirmed the interviews' findings and showed that some observed IC practices are attributable, at least partially, to specific episodic observations from former school. At a closer look, the analysis indicates that the past schooling experiences can resurface during today's classroom instruction in either a form of modelling an early observed interculturally-related teaching practice by a former schoolteacher or can be associated with the participant's own experiences as a language learner. The former is exemplary of the assumption that teachers sometimes teach the way they were *taught* (Johnson, 1994; Lortie, 1975) whereas the latter represents a case of teaching the way they *learned* (Dávila & Jarquín, 2020; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). Both cases, nonetheless, give leverage to Borg's concept of *schooling* where teachers' early experiences of classrooms are believed to contribute to the formulation of future beliefs.

The notion of *schooling* is inherent in Lortie's concept of apprenticeship of observation (1975) which suggests that teachers during their school days take the role of observers and start to generate insights of what teaching looks like. Based on these observations, teachers will likely form a "model of action" (Johnson, 1994, p. 450) through which they will mediate their later pedagogical beliefs. This position has been documented abundantly in teacher cognition research (Cancino et al., 2020; Davin et al., 2018; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Johnson, 1994; Moodie, 2016; Nishino, 2012). In intercultural teaching research, however, there is lack of attention to the position of schooling on the formation of intercultural beliefs. A notable exception is Maijala (2020)'s study (although conducted in the context of pre-service teacher training) which confirms that participants usually adopt teaching practices which are familiar to them from the former FL classroom. The current study adds to that research by demonstrating how the

demographic structure of the school can also influence teachers' later perspectives of intercultural teaching. Participants such as Al-Muhalab and Nasir, for example, perceive what they self-describe as a *monocultural* school environment (i.e., dominated by a majority of native Omani teachers and students) as a constraint to their intercultural development. Based on such recalled experience, they now seem to appreciate that intercultural teaching in HEIs necessitates a diverse cultural environment in order for learners to develop their intercultural skills; an environment which combines Omani and international students in the same institution. This finding, therefore, asserts that not only the teaching behaviour of former schoolteachers inside the EFL classroom (i.e., apprenticeship of observation) but the social infrastructure of the whole schooling environment may contribute to the way intercultural teaching can be perceived by future teachers.

In addition, a notable finding in relation to the role of schooling has been the way teachers constantly negotiate the meanings associated with their past schooling experiences in response to their current educational and teaching experience. Participants, such as Nasir and Maimoona, indicate that the way they used to perceive past schooling events differ greatly from the way they perceive them today. They indicate that accumulative teaching experience, in particular, has facilitated an afterthought of what they used to remember about former schooling experiences, demonstrating a constructive characteristic of their schooling recollections. Such a characteristic, I venture, leads to what is sometimes referred to as constructive memory (Clancey, 1997) which posits that memory recall is not simply an act of event retrieval but a reconstructive process. In that, individuals tend to reinterpret their past experiences in tandem with their current beliefs. In Nespor's (1987) words, memory

> *"entails more than the simple abstraction and storage of unaltered and unedited memory traces. Instead, the representations of events in memory are partial constructions of events based on an incomplete sampling of the available information."* (p. 324)

Against this understanding, the findings in this study seem to afford an insight towards the potential of viewing the notion of apprenticeship of observation under the psychological lens of *re-constructive memory* which suggests that our memory is not merely retrieved but reproduced during the attempt to recall in consistency with present experiences. In other words, memories of apprenticeship of observation are not stored in an everlastingly preservative state. Instead, it

is capable of being constantly interrogated by the teacher and re-defined in light of new teaching circumstances (Davin et al., 2018). This perspective contributes to Borg's original model by emphasising a bi-directional relationship between teacher's current cognition and past schooling experiences (originally illustrated by a mono-directional arrow in the Borg's model; Borg, 2006, p. 283). This proposal, of course, does not claim that teachers can go back to the past and alter the already experienced schooling events, but to suggest, as drawn from the findings, that they tend to engage within a constructive process where they reinterpret former schooling events differently from the way they were first experienced.

7.3.2 Professional coursework: the impact of implicit intercultural teacher training

The elicitations from the interviews indicate that the Omani ELT teacher education programmes, which the study participants went through, involve a considerable lack of attention to intercultural teaching (see 5.3.2.1). Almost all participants report that these programmes did not include a dedicated training module which specifically addresses the position of culture in ELT, let alone a module on intercultural teaching. According to many participants, the absence of such culturally-focused training has consequently portrayed an unnoticeable position of *interculturality* throughout the broad canvas of ELT teacher education components such as ELT methodology, applied linguistics, pedagogy and even English literature which all seem largely inattentive to the element of culture. Regrettably, such a reported teacher training inadequacy seems to resonate in many national contexts where interculturality is yet to be embraced within teacher education programmes around the world (Cushner & Mahon, 2009; Guilherme et al., 2007).

Simultaneously though, the majority of study participants are of the mindset that these teacher education programmes were not entirely devoid of intercultural teacher training experience. They seem to hold positive views with regard to the sociocultural experiences and cultural encounters they have engaged with during these programmes, particularly with foreign language teachers; a culturally diverse experience which they have not had in their K-12 *homogenous* schooling environments. Based on these flagged tertiary experiences, participants believe that there was at least an implicit form of intercultural training wherein they have perceived an experientially-derived sense of intercultural understanding which eventually enhanced some of

their intercultural approaches today. Such an implicit form of training seems to have counterbalanced the absence of explicit intercultural training content within the overall structure of teacher education curriculum.

In terms of the impacting role of explicit, or formal, pre-service teacher training on teachers' intercultural practice, the literature is replete in this regard (Civitillo et al., 2018; Hismanoglu, 2011; Maijala, 2020; Wilhelm et al., 1996). The findings in this study, however, have grown to propose a broader conceptual understanding of the term *professional coursework* (as in Borg's model); one which does not confine solely to the formal mastering of the course content but to encompass the sociocultural fabric of the whole teacher training programme. As drawn from the data, participants such as Muhammed and Shujoon started to perceive the value of intercultural understanding as an integral part of their teaching pedagogy only after engaging with authentic intercultural experiences with foreign lecturers and teacher trainers (mostly from UK, Australia, US, Philippines, or India) either in their bachelor's or master's courses. Through formal and informal interactions with foreign tutors during teacher training course (including extra-curricular events), participants seem to be able to expand their vision of interculturality beyond academic material (Taylor et al., 2016).

Still, the value of culturally diverse teacher training environment does not suggest that the incorporation of an explicitly considered content about intercultural teaching in Omani teacher education agenda is unnecessary. The data seem to show that despite the perceived impact of authentic intercultural experiences during teacher education programmes, this experiential knowledge manifests intermittently and sometimes randomly in their teaching approaches. As explained earlier in 7.2, the peripheral position of *culture* in participants' teaching seems to fluctuate in an inconsistent manner responding to the emerging multiplicity of day-to-day demands of the textbook content, students' cultural needs, institutional mandates, etc. Hence, without constructing a conceptually well-informed understanding of the constituting position of IC within ELT practice, such improvised and distorted treatments of interculturality are likely to perpetuate (Luciak & Khan-Svik, 2008).

It should be acknowledged, nonetheless, that the impact of teacher training is oftentimes discredited for being incapable of transforming firmly entrenched beliefs which were

constructed from former schooling experiences and personal histories of teachers (Castro, 2014). However, the acknowledgement of the powerful role of apprenticeship of observation (as discussed in an earlier section) should not misleadingly close avenue for teachers' conceptual change or underestimate the influence of pre-service teacher training. It follows from related literature that teacher training courses can help, at least partially, to transform teachers' intercultural pedagogies (Civitillo et al., 2018; Hismanoglu, 2011; Maijala, 2020; Wilhelm et al., 1996). Maijala (2020)'s study is particularly relevant since its findings show that through the EFL teacher training programme teachers can shift from adopting a static view of culture (which is also the case of many participants in this study) to a more processual conceptualisation (i.e., treating culture as constantly evolving social construct) in relation to their cultural pedagogy. Needless to say, intercultural communication is becoming increasingly recognised as compulsory component of TESOL training programmes around the world (Hoang, 2020).

7.3.3 Teaching experience: towards more guided reflection-on-action

During the semi-structured interviews, several participants perceived strongly the impact of accumulative teaching experience on the way they make their IC choices in the classroom (5.3.1.3 and 5.3.3). The role of teaching experience has again been a recurring topic running through SR sessions, (6.3.2.3), where participants literally attributed the rationale behind some of the observed episodes to the experience they continuously gain from everyday teaching. Such an experience, the findings indicate, seem to help teachers understand students' cultural preferences and the way instructional practices can be tailored accordingly. In these ways, the study asserts the accumulative teaching experience gained from everyday classroom practice, as drawn from the data, as another mediating experience which informs the decision-making of teachers' practices of IC.

In the case of this study, the findings resound somehow with Matsumoto's study (2018) where teachers are found to draw on the experiential knowledge they continuously gain from classroom practice in managing cultural issues with their students more appropriately and effectively (see 5.3.3 and 6.3.2.3). In these ways, teachers believe that through experience they can better translate the pre-held theoretical knowledge they gained from teacher education programmes into classroom practice. However, although participants tend to associate accumulative

experience with *good* intercultural teaching, the study remains incapable of concluding, at least in the case of observed classrooms, that more years of experience is necessarily equivalent to a more substantial interculturally-informed classroom practice (Safa & Tofighi, 2022). Participants' understanding of the positive impact of experience seems to be associated with executing a better management and planning of the classroom activities in a way that makes students more engaged in the lesson. While this practical knowledge remains understandably advantageous in formulating a better interpretation of students' cultural preferences, it does not allow the conclusion that experienced teachers (as opposed to relative novice teachers) are necessarily disposed towards facilitating a more interculturally comprehensive approach; one which, for example, incorporates as many elements of IC as possible.

Against such finding, I argue that while teaching experience alone can sometimes be helpful for professional growth (Shannon et al., 1998), it can breed an even more well-informed and optimised intercultural teaching if supplemented with guided reflective practice. As this study indicates, participants are capable of engaging with what Schon (1987) calls reflection-on-action, which refers here to exercising reflection on performed teacher behaviour. Given the nature of SR where participants are presented with episodes from their classroom and prompted to recall their instructional decision-making, findings show that teachers can potentially negotiate their beliefs when giving them the opportunity to explicitly articulate their thoughts on their own intercultural teaching. This assertion, however, does not intend to claim that participants in this study have *actually* changed some of their beliefs of IC since this warrants a deeper and more prolonged empirical investigation but to signify that participants have consciously engaged in a seemingly reflective process where they have actively and explicitly confronted, and sometimes questioned, their own teaching episodes.

Although some few studies report limited impact of in-service training on teachers' intercultural pedagogies (Lee et al., 2007), there is growing evidence that with reflective training that takes into account teachers' unique profiles and histories as nested in their context, teachers can positively transform their perceptions towards IC (Alvarez, 2020; Biasutti et al., 2019; DeJaeghere & Cao, 2009; Fanous et al., 2020; Hajisoteriou et al., 2019; Sales et al., 2011). For this, it is possible to propose that through reflection-on-action, guided by research-based IC knowledge, Omani EFL teachers might undergo a continual diagnosis of their instructional

deficits and strengths. In the context of study participants who are unfortunately afforded limited opportunities to obtain feedback about their teaching (5.3.3.2), the need to incorporate more reflective opportunities within the universitys' professional development agenda in Oman becomes necessary.

7.3.4 Conclusion on answering RQ2

On the whole, the study proposes that the Omani teachers' schooling, pre-service teacher education programmes, and teaching experience together influence, although in various forms, the way IC is perceived and practiced. In terms of schooling, it is suggested that participants constantly interrogate their apprenticeship of observation and potentially reconstruct the beliefs attached with former schooling experiences in light of newly acquired teaching experiences. With respect to the role of pre-service teacher education, findings conclude that culturally diverse teacher training programmes can tacitly inform teachers' beliefs on the importance of IC while the findings simultaneously warn that a more explicit position of intercultural pedagogy within current teacher education programmes in Omani HEIs cannot be ignored. The accumulative teaching experience also plays a role in informing teachers about tailoring teaching practice according to students' cultural preferences and in better interpreting the pre-held theoretical beliefs they gained from teacher education programmes. However, such an accumulative teaching experience has been associated with a notable lack of in-service professional training on teaching in general and on intercultural teaching in particular; through which teachers can constructively reflect on their intercultural teaching and ultimately reformulate their perceptions of how to better operate IC in practice.

7.4 Research Question 3: How do identified contextual factors influence Omani teachers' beliefs and practice of IC?

This research question was proposed, in part, based on the premise that studying teacher beliefs "in isolation of the contexts in which they occur will inevitably provide partial, if not flawed, characterisations of teachers and teaching" (Borg, 2006, p. 275). Indeed, and unlike some exceptionally few studies which give little weight to context on the enactment of teachers' beliefs (Jamalzadeh & Shahsavar, 2015; Varghese et al., 2005), the current study asserts that the

selected context is a powerful mediator of Omani EFL teachers' intercultural teaching. The term *context* has been broadly defined as the interrelated conditions in which teaching occurs; and was further taxonomized, after Borg (2006), as the psychological, socio-cultural, and environmental realities of the classroom and institution. With a slight alteration to this taxonomy, as this study suggests, I posit three contextual dimensions which catalogue the salient nuances found within the perspectives of teachers; these are socio-cultural, institutional, and classroom-based dimensions.

7.4.1 The sociocultural factor: the intervening role of the Omani national identity

As evidenced in the study, factors at the wider socio-cultural scale infiltrate considerably into the teachers' IC-related practice. The study, for example, has highlighted how participants' awareness of the surrounding sensitive cultural issues in the Omani culture has accordingly instigated a conservative choice of cultural topics in the classroom (5.4.1.1). In addition, participants such as Nasir, Jalal, Muhammed, and Al-Muhalab believe that the unique social norms which characterise the collective Omani society should always be respected (5.4.1.2). This respect, as participants believe, necessitates a form of adherence (in terms of the cultural content discussed in the lesson) with the common values found in the Omani society. Such an identified conformity by the teacher with the social environment shows strong parallels with the majority of studies on teacher cognition which consensually assert the important role of the macro social context over teaching practice (Burns et al., 2015; Li, 2019).

At a closer look, studies from different educational contexts report variable social factors on EFL teachers' beliefs. For example, findings by Ran (2001) and Chao (2016) emphasise the intervening role of students' parents on teachers' choices; Van den Beemt and Diepstraten (2016) indicate the influence of teacher's immediate family on the development of their beliefs; Shah et al., (2013) and Naidu (2020) signify the role of religion. In this study, all of the these were articulated by different participants, at least incidentally or briefly, as influential factors to teaching IC. However, religion, in particular, emerged as a commonly salient factor across almost all participants which according to them is inseparable from their understanding of culture and intercultural teaching in their current teaching context (section 5.4.1.3).

The emergent role of religion as a dominant factor when enacting IC beliefs recalls the fundamental position which Islam plays in Omani people's day-to-day life and its institutionalised position in the nation's policies and scripts (section 2.3.3). Islamic identity is considered one key element of the Omani national identity as a whole (as per the Omani national educational policy). The identified role of religion on teacher's practice, therefore, cannot be uncoupled from another identified subtheme in this study which is participants' self-identity of being members of the Omani nation. As shown in section 5.4.1.1, many participants self-identify themselves as being members of what looks like a collective *Omani culture*. The role of teacher identity, in its entirety, has been documented abundantly in the literature as an impacting factor in teaching (Pavlenko, 2003; Schutz et al., 2018). The yielded findings in this study, however, make a specific case for the impacting role of teacher's *national* identity which generally refers to "a collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and of sharing most of the attributes that make it distinct from other nations" (Guibernau, 2007, p. 11). This definition reflects, to a great extent, the participants' elicited sense of belonging to a perceived cohesive Omani identity where they align themselves as members of a distinctive Omani national community.

It is arguable that such a national belonging represents a legitimate form of cultural membership that can yield "a sense of security, a feeling of national pride, and the felt attachment to the nation" (Yuen & Byram, 2007, p. 27). However, such a nationally-based membership, can also uphold the binary concepts of ingroups (i.e., groups one belongs to) and outgroups (i.e., groups one does not belong to) leading to the polarised image of *us versus them*. This image might ignite concerns, particularly in light of increased mobility and globalisation, on the risk of encouraging a pre-standardised configuration of national cultures which, in turn, challenges the desired objectives of intercultural education and global citizenship. As cautioned by Pavlovskaya (2021), heightened and unguided sense of national identity in educational contexts may lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings and "stereotypisation" (p. 26). This claim is supported by findings from (Gong et al., 2021; Mekheimer & Aldosari, 2011; Menard-Warwick, 2008) where the sense of identity appears to impact teachers into an overemphasis on presenting a mono-cultural content that resonates with the commonly perceived national identity while disapproving or discarding those which belong to differing social groups. For this, the current study urges for a further and deeper exploration of how the two conflicting, yet

interrelated, positions (i.e., teacher's self-affiliation to the Omani national identity and their global citizenship outlook) can converge in a way that breeds an effective intercultural pedagogy.

7.4.2 The institutional factor: towards a more institutionalised recognition of intercultural objectives in EFL teaching

In line with many related studies (Gu, 2016; Luciak & Khan-Svik, 2008; Luk, 2012; Zamanian & Saeidi, 2017), this study asserts the influence of some institution-related factors on the way EFL teachers perceive and implement IC. In the case of the selected HEI in this study, these factors centre around the college's domestic policies and regulations (see 5.4.2.1) and, most notably, the curricular mandates which mediate teachers' intercultural approaches (5.4.2.2 & 6.3.3.2). In terms of the university policies, for example, some participants express a perceived awareness that current guidelines, either explicitly stated or through implicit institutional culture, require teachers to strictly attune their classroom discourse and topics to the accepted Omani cultural norms which, according to them, may inhibit the enactment of their intercultural teaching preferences. Although teachers do not entirely oppose a level of institutional authority (as illustrated in 5.4.2.1), they believe that a level of flexibility should concomitantly be offered to teachers in terms of introducing and regulating cultural issues and content in the classroom.

In terms of the curriculum, the study shows that the institutional demand of adhering to the content and sequence of the ready-designed textbook may restrict teachers' autonomy in designing tailored cultural content that considers the distinct needs of their students (Cheng, 2012; Sercu, 2006). Despite the teachers' positive reflections of how the current textbook with its internationalised outlook can be a catalyst for acquiring cultural knowledge for students, they are concerned that following its content rigidly delivers sometimes a meaningless intercultural experience to learners where the main instructional target becomes merely the completion of the textbook activities. Such an identified institutional condition can arguably be attributable to the "culturalist ideology" (Al-Issa, 2019), discussed in (2.5.2) where ELT teachers in Oman are thought to be enjoined to "teach the mandated textbook in the same way and following the same routines, regardless of the way they were educated and trained as humanistic professionals" (p. 266).

However, there is evidence that in spite of what is seen as an entrenched ideology upon the wider Omani educational context in general, some HEIs, according to participants still exhibit an internal capacity to treat macro cultural issues differently. Abrar, Al-Muhalab, Jalal, and Amjad who had the experience to formerly work in different HEIs in Oman reflect how some of their preferred cultural choices might be welcome in one institution and not in other institutions. These choices include for example, discussing with students "global political issues" (as in Abrar), or mixing male and female students in doing group assignments (Abrar, Al-Muhalab, Jalal, and Amjad). Such preferences were reported to be a normal practice in the participants' previous sites of practice but disapproved in their current institution. An insight from this is that HEIs in Oman with their intra-structures, strategic plans, working environment, and curricular mandates can still challenge the wider structures in which they reside. In addition, this shows that the teachers' self-direction of their preferred choices can be optimised if the affordances by the institution are proportionate for this to occur. In all, this highlights the pivotal role which the institutions can play (against unfavourable macro social conditions) in mediating and inhibiting teachers' choices when dealing with cultural issues in the classroom.

The foregoing discussion recalls Oman's educational policy (discussed in 2.4.2) which authorises educational institutions in Oman to give attention to issues related to global citizenship and intercultural understanding. However, the study indicates that the policy which aims to strike a balance between reinforcing the belongingness to the state's Omani Arabic and Islamic identity, on the one hand, and promoting cultural openness and awareness on issues of global mutual understanding, on the other hand, seems to lack resonance within the participants' teaching agenda. Similar to findings from Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2013), teachers in this study seem to be favourably disposed towards reinforcing the former (i.e., belongingness to local or national identity) while giving inadequate attention to the latter (i.e., promoting attitudinal openness towards global cultural issues).

The above mismatch can arguably be attributed to two key factors. First, teachers seem to be driven strongly by their interpretation of the dominant socio-cultural patterns in Oman (such as religion, family expectations, or collectivism) which influence them to focus on foregrounding these contextual imperatives in translating their teaching pedagogies. In that, being under such a highly religiously conservative climate seems to impact the teacher to be correspondingly

more religiously conservative in their intercultural approach and refrain from discussing interreligious differences in the classroom. Another explanation can be associated with the strategic gap in translating the state's educational policies at the institutional level. Filling such a gap can arguably help teachers in operationalising the general political strategies of intercultural understanding in the everyday classroom teaching in a way that does not compromise the collective national identity of Omani learners. A step in the right direction, therefore, is to delineate a clearer articulation by policymakers along with other stakeholders, of how strategic educational policies can practically be operated within language teaching programmes. Such clarity, as argued by Fantini (2000) leads to more explicit understanding of IC, ensures the development of such competence through teaching programmes and activities, and what is more, helps monitor its development.

7.4.3 The classroom profile: students' English proficiency and intercultural teaching

Besides the wider social and institutional factors, there is also evidence that some attributes within the immediate proximity of the classroom context may contribute to the formation of participants' beliefs and practices of IC. The classroom context is usually defined as "the immediate space in which teaching and learning takes place" (Du Plessis et al., 2019, p. 218). In this light, and as illustrated in sections (5.4.3 and 6.3.4.1) participants indicate that different classroom profiles might induce different approaches with respect to the element of culture in teaching. The EFL teacher cognition literature is riddled with dispersed findings regarding the type of classroom-related factors such as the number of students (Azizinezhad et al., 2013), availability of technology in the classroom (Teo et al., 2018), or even the physical environment of the classroom (Peng, 2016). However, these factors do not seem to have a bearing on participants' intercultural approaches in this study. Instead, participants draw on the impacting roles of student motivation, nationality, age (i.e., psychological development), and level of English proficiency (5.4.3). The latter has emerged, as drawn from both the lesson observations (6.2.5) and SR (6.2.5 & 6.3.3.1), as a key recurring issue to almost all participants which according to them may intervene heavily in the decision-making with respect to the nature of intercultural teaching in the classroom.

Relatedly, it has been highlighted in Chapter Two (2.4.5), that one of the biggest challenges facing HEIs in Oman is the low level of the English language of school graduates (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). Omani students, after receiving all of their pre-college education in Arabic language, become suddenly confronted by the challenging reality of a higher education system that uses English as the sole medium of instruction. Indeed, freshmen students in this study, especially those placed in the lower levels, seem linguistically incapable of performing sophisticated and prolonged communicative dialogues during classroom instruction which can mediate their adulthood thinking level (see 6.2.5). This mirrors the findings of a study conducted by Al Hosni (2014) in one of the HEIs in Oman which assert that Omani EFL learners' reluctance to speak in the lesson is largely due to their linguistic incompetence. In her study, participating students report that they actually want to speak but do not possess the English competence through which they can communicate their innate thoughts. Similarly, the findings in section (6.2.5) show that only classroom profiles with a higher English proficiency seem to be able to accommodate much elaborated and deeper culturally-related dialogues.

In a way, the learner's inability to engage in such deeper communication can be explained in Byram's contention that intercultural speakers (i.e., EFL learners) sometimes sense the constraints of their insufficient skill in linguistic competence to meet the basic requirements of the interaction and subsequently refrain from communication (Byram, 1997). However, teachers' perceptions of students' low English proficiency as a contextual *constraint* that precludes intercultural communication can sometimes be disputed. Arguably, having a high linguistic competence should not be a pre-condition for an optimised enactment of intercultural teaching. It is understandable that learners who study EFL come to the classroom, in the first place, because they are linguistically incompetent (in relative terms) and, therefore, such a condition is normal expectation in the foreign language classroom.

To account for such a condition, scholarly advocations stress the need for authorising some interventional strategies which can bridge students' mental repertoire with the classroom communication. One key strategy that can sit well in the study context (where the teacher and students opportunely share the same native language) is the wise use of mother tongue (L1). Although sometimes dismissed in some TESOL contexts as the forbidden fruit (Fortune, 2012), the judicious use of L1 is widely proved to support L2 learning in avoiding stereotypical ideas

about the culture associated with a target language (Rabbidge, 2019) or in helping students to develop skills in their weaker language (Baker, 2011). In the specific context of IC, Fois (2020) extends beyond the use of L1 and suggests that even translation could be at the teacher and learners' disposal to scaffold intercultural communication and understanding. Through translation, learners will have the confidence maximise their social engagement in the classroom and eventually achieve well-rounded intercultural development. A total prohibition of students' L1 from the ELT classroom might separate the adult learners' mental compartment and conceal their rich stories from culturally-rated discussions.

7.4.4 Conclusion on answering RQ3

Answering the third research question, the study concludes that the identified contextual factors intervene substantially in the enactment of teachers' IC beliefs. These factors have been categorised, as per the analysed findings, into socio-cultural, institutional, and classroom-specific. In terms of the sociocultural dimension, the study asserts that the perceived national identity among Omani language teachers instigates an intercultural teaching behaviour which accords with the common cultural norms that permeate the Omani cultural landscape. Institution-wise, the study identifies a potential divergence between the country's desired intercultural objectives (as instated in the nation's Philosophy of Education) and the way IC is treated within the university's domestic regulations and mandated curriculum. At the classroom level, it is suggested that different classroom profiles, especially in terms of English language proficiency, might impact the teacher into approaching and regulating intercultural dialogues differently. Acting on the multi-dimensionality of these factors, it is worth to establish that a joint and synchronised intervention from all concerned stakeholders from all contextual layers is sorely needed to successfully mediate the macro nationwide intercultural objectives into the micro Omani EFL classroom.

7.5 The language teacher beliefs of IC in the Omani EFL context: a situated model

By subjecting the discussed findings above to Borg's original model, the following situated version could be proposed (see Figure 7.1). By and large, my version of the model complies with Borg's original model in asserting the roles of schooling, professional coursework, and

contextual factors on mediating the language teacher beliefs of IC. It affirms that Omani EFL teachers' beliefs of IC are attributable to early schooling experiences as well as to the professional experiences they gained from the teacher education programmes. It also asserts the crucial mediating position of context in the enactment of beliefs into classroom instruction. However, having situated this model in the area of developing IC in EFL teaching in Oman, which has rarely been the case, the following nuanced expansions to the model can collectively give us a new insightful understanding about the specificity of language teacher beliefs of IC in light of Borg's broad model.

- In terms of schooling, it is not only the language learning experiences from the language classroom that shape the teachers' beliefs of IC but the cultural composition of the whole school (i.e., the cultural diversity among teaching staff and students) can also scaffold the teachers' initial conceptions of intercultural teaching (see 7.3.1). The same applies to the professional coursework where the socio-cultural environment surrounding the teacher education programme is found to play a significant role in shaping teachers' suppositions of how to handle culturally-related issues in the classroom (see 7.3.2). As such, the degree of authentic exposure to cultural diversity from both (pre-tertiary school and teacher education programme) become catalyst in informing the teachers' perceived value of IC as a constitutive part of EFL teaching.

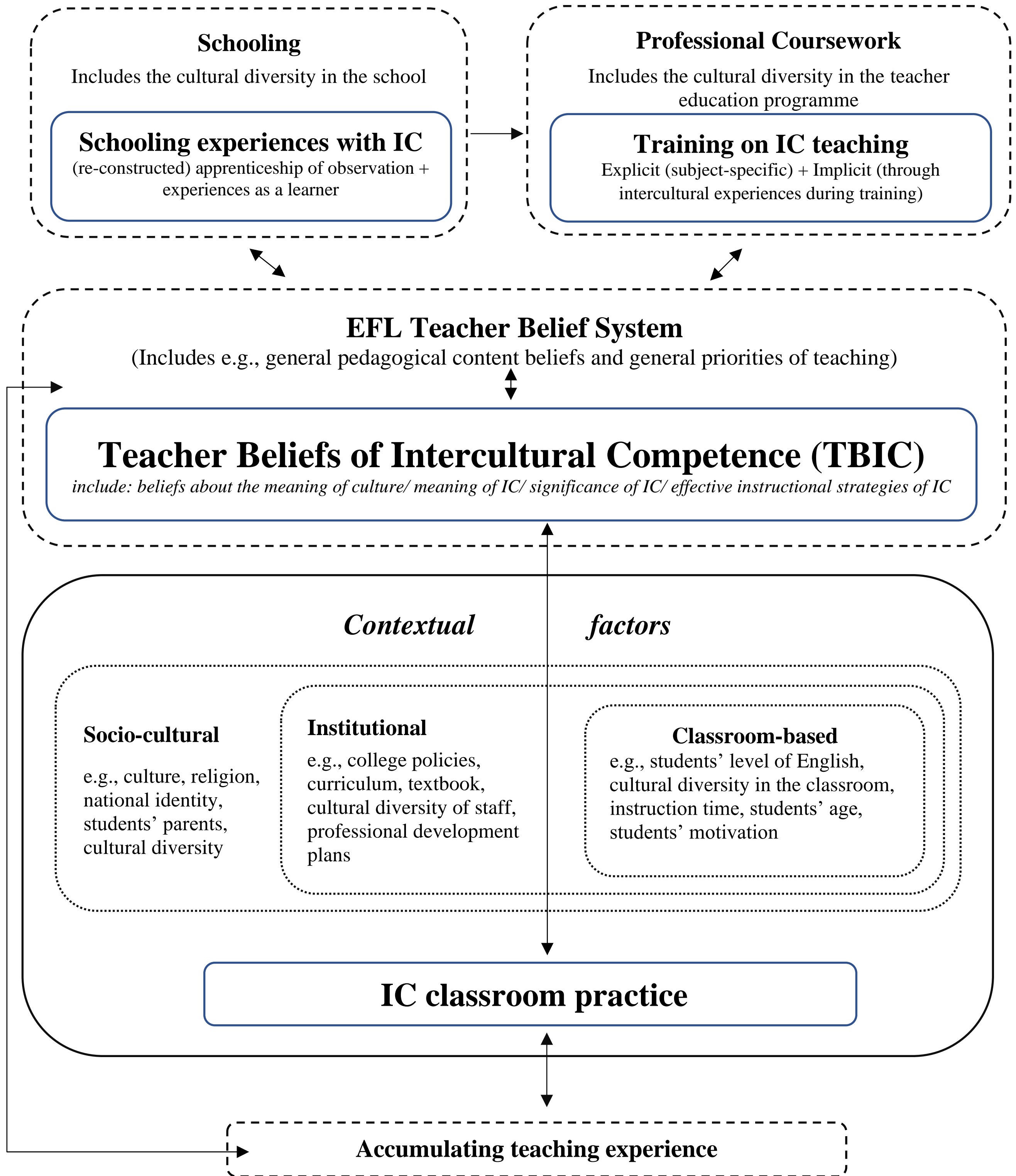
- The expanded model situates the particular construct of language teacher beliefs of IC, the study focus, within the broader scope of teacher belief system. Acting on the findings in 7.2.1, the model lends itself to the assertion that teachers hold their beliefs in interrelated clusters within a hierarchal belief system. On this premise, the enactment of IC-related beliefs would not depict a purely linear process. Instead, teachers negotiate their IC-specific beliefs with other sets of beliefs in a complex and interactive manner responding to the teaching circumstances in which they find themselves. Although the non-linearity of teacher belief systems is already asserted in the broad landscape of teacher cognition research, accentuating it within the particular dimension of intercultural teaching can inform the intercultural education scholarship that studying the specificity of IC beliefs should not be uncoupled from the study of other sets of teacher beliefs. In other words, any intercultural education research

which focuses on studying IC-related beliefs should also integrate and take into consideration the teacher's prioritised principles and general pedagogical beliefs in EFL teaching.

- Responding to discussed findings in 7.4, the expanded model portrays the key contextual layers which mediate the enactments of Omani teachers' beliefs of IC into the EFL classroom (including highlights of the most salient influential factors). Worth noting, the suggested lines between these identified contextual layers do not intend to suggest a sharp split. Instead, they propose a simplified stratification that seeks to facilitate an accessible understanding of the interconnected nature of the most salient factors which can enable or challenge Omani teachers' IC act. Being pointedly aware of such interconnectedness will have a bearing on what aspects should ultimately be pursued in Omani teacher education programmes and in-service professional development schemes. Failing to harness these facets together when attending to the professional needs of Omani EFL teachers (and possibly EFL teachers in general) can yield a partial and potentially flawed teacher training enterprise.

- The proposed model accentuates an insightful perspective that the apprenticeship of observation linked with IC can be re-constructed. By highlighting a two-direction arrow between schooling and teacher beliefs, the model demonstrates that former schooling experiences do not resemble a sealed repository that resides in a static manner in the teacher's memory. Instead, they are capable of being reshaped through the teacher's formative experiences that follow. The findings from this study (7.3.1) suggest that the accumulative teaching experience, in particular, is catalyst in reformulating teacher's beliefs which can, in turn, bring about a re-interpreted image of the teacher's apprenticeship of observation experienced in the past.

Figure 7.1 *The Language Teacher Beliefs of IC among a Group of Omani EFL Teachers in a Higher Education Institution in Oman* (expanded from Borg, 2006, p. 283)



7.6 Contribution to knowledge

In terms of theoretical contribution, the current study contributes to the research fields of language teacher cognition and intercultural education simultaneously. By situating Borg's model of language teacher cognition within the curricular area of intercultural teaching, this study sought to derive a contextualised model that describes the beliefs and corresponding classroom practices which are related to developing EFL learners' IC. As has been highlighted in the literature review, Borg's original model has been utilised as a primal lens by several studies to investigate English language teacher's beliefs about different ELT domains such as vocabulary (Chung, 2018; Rahimi, 2014), grammar (Phipps & Borg, 2009), speaking (Tleuov, 2017; Yunus et al., 2016), writing (Uddin, 2014), CLT (Nishino, 2012), ICT (Al-Waaili, 2018; Kartchava & Chung, 2015), and assessment (Chappell et al., 2015; Narathakoon et al., 2020). The current study contributes to this line of literature by drawing on the components of Borg's model to explore EFL teacher beliefs and practices pertaining to what is usually considered a discrete or embedded curricular dimension in EFL teaching; that is the development of learner's IC.

The concluded findings underscore that situating Borg's broad model within different EFL curricular domains eventually result in accentuating distinct contextual factors that can influence teaching beliefs and behaviour. For example, the existing teacher cognition literature shows that religion is not usually a recurring point of discussion within Borg's framework in terms of the surrounding contextual factors even in studies which were conducted in the Omani context. For example, Al-Waaili (2018) who utilised Borg's framework to investigate the cognition of ELT Omani teachers on the use of technology, reported no impact, neither directly nor indirectly, of religion in his study. Situating Borg's model in this study within the IC domain has led to the emergence of religion as a pivotal mediating factor in the enactment of EFL teachers' intercultural pedagogies. Such an identified factor asserts Borg's affirmation that more scholarship is always needed to study teachers' beliefs of specific curricular areas (domain-specific) instead of studying the teachers' "generic" beliefs (Borg, 2006, p. 274). In such fashion, the investigation of different curricular domains might potentially yield nuanced and distinct articulation of the specific mediating factors involved.

Further, although the different components of Borg's model have been drawn upon frequently in intercultural teaching research, the current study is among the very few studies which combine these components in its enquiry. As identified in the teacher education literature, different studies draw on different facets in relation to teachers' beliefs of IC, such as the influence of early schooling (Maijala, 2020), pre-service teacher education (Cushner & Mahon, 2009; Wilhelm et al., 1996), in-service professional development (Othman & Ruslan, 2020), teaching experience (Matsumoto, 2018), or the role of contextual factors (Ghavamnia, 2020; Valdiviezo, 2009). The current thesis with its proposed model (see section 7.5) contributes to knowledge by bringing these fragmented components into a coherent account to expand on what is currently known in the intercultural education literature in terms of the combined roles of teacher's former educational experiences, professional teaching practice, and the unique teaching context they interact with when operating IC in the lesson.

Also, utilising Byram's framework in this study has contributed to our present knowledge by illuminating two distinct challenges associated with the applicability of this model. First, my findings have increased our awareness of the inevitable complexity and interconnectedness of Byram's five savoirs. Although Byram's model in its first published version (Byram, 1997) has offered a thorough configuration of each savoir to allow for granularity and approachability, it has implicitly suggested that each of these five components can be decoupled from each other in practice belittling the overlapping functions between them. In this, the model seems to assume a "linear and a progressive" (Wahyudi, 2016, p. 147) approach suggesting that the totality of the model can easily be fragmented during the lesson. The presented findings in this study, however, have drawn an insight that a teacher cannot simply, for example, address *Knowledge* during the lesson without simultaneously addressing *critical cultural awareness* since the acquisition of knowledge should be critically-examined. Another example is that a student cannot practically engage with the *skills of interpreting and relating* without synchronously activating a foundational *knowledge* of their own culture and the culture of their interlocutors to be able to interpret and relate between the two cultural sets. Previous research which has used Byram's five savoirs has often bypassed or inadequately highlighted this complexity issue. My study, therefore, joins the growing calls to further navigate practical pathways on how teachers can adopt an implementable holistic approach when addressing all the components of the model to appreciate the organic interrelation between them.

In addition, by extending the framework's application into the underexamined Omani higher education context, our knowledge of the feasibility of this model in various educational contexts has increased. It has been discussed in the literature (section 3.2.1.4) that despite the model's widespread use, there is little known about the practical utility of this model in contexts where classroom actors share (relatively) homogenous cultural backgrounds. The majority of studies which applied Byram's model are conducted in internationalised contexts where teachers and students come from distinct cultural contexts. By applying Byram's model in a government-owned university which does not admit international students into their programmes, our understanding of how diversity (or lack thereof) can play a key role in operationalising this model has been enriched. In particular, as discussed in 7.1.1, it is found that developing *the skills of discovery and interaction* in the selected context can encounter a contextual challenge that needs to be mitigated. These skills, in principle, call for a diverse cultural environment where language learners can apply the acquired cultural knowledge and skills in a real-time cultural encounter. As such, they necessitate exposure and active engagement with diverse cultural encounters in order for learners to be able to apply the obtained cultural knowledge. Illuminating this contextual challenge helps evolve the discussion of how to approach this model in contexts of relative cultural homogeneity, rendering this thesis a significant contributor to the line of research that engages with Byram's savoirs.

In terms of practical contributions, the expanded version of Borg's model along with the discussed findings in this study can act as an exploratory tool for stakeholders in Oman in both disciplines, teacher education and intercultural teaching in EFL, to further understand and subsequently advance the status quo of intercultural teaching in Omani HEIs. Given the paucity of literature of related studies in the Omani EFL context, the findings of this study can have a particular attraction for teacher trainers on how to prepare a more situated and well-informed teacher training programme which can enhance Omani teachers' professional capacity in approaching interculturality in the EFL classroom (further recommendations for stakeholders will follow in a subsequent section). To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study that seeks to understand the IC-related teacher beliefs and practices in the Omani EFL higher education context - exceptions are Al Washahi (2020) and Al-Mahrooqi (2015) but both are conceptual publications with no empirical investigation involved. Therefore, the nuances unveiled in this research-informed project contribute towards a better articulation of the

underexplored teacher experiences and contextual conditions which mediate the enactment of IC beliefs in Omani higher education EFL context, laying the groundwork for further investigations in the future.

7.7 Recommendations for stakeholders

The discussed findings bring about the following practical implications and corresponding recommendations which can possibly enhance Omani EFL teachers' practice and encourage a more assured status of IC development in the selected HEI and other similar teaching contexts:

1. **For policymakers:** One practical implication from this study is that the culturally homogenous classrooms (as in the case of this study where native Omani teachers teach native Omani students) offer a limited opportunity for students to apply their cultural knowledge and skills into the constraints of real-time intercultural communication (discussed in 7.2.3). For this, it is recommended that policy makers in Omani HEIs revisit their current student admission regulations and examine the feasibility of admitting international students to its academic programmes. Currently, the student enrolment to the majority of government-based HEIs in Oman is restricted to Omani nationals and therefore admitting students from other nationalities can potentially co-augment the intercultural abilities of Omani EFL learners. Since Omani higher education graduates will eventually join a job market characterised by a culturally diverse working force (as pointed out in 2.3), a pre-engagement with such diversity in their tertiary education becomes rationally desirable. Such an engagement will provide an immersive intercultural learning environment (Sawir, 2013) that will potentially safeguard the students' future readiness to deal with expatriates in an effective, appropriate, and efficient manner.

2. **For teacher trainers:** Another practical implication is that teacher education programmes should incorporate a more visible position of interculturality in its ELT teacher training agenda to help teachers operationalise their IC-related practice within a well-informed and systematic framework. Any teacher education programme devoid of issues related to culture and interculturality might risk discrediting the immensely multicultural reality of today's globalised world where constant interactions between differing cultural

perspectives and diversity become the norm. Therefore, it is recommended that pre-service teacher training programmes in Oman should not only provide a course that trains teachers on intercultural pedagogy but to integrate the principles of IC organically within the teacher education programme as a whole. This can be achieved, at least in part, by mapping the intercultural education objectives (as highlighted in the international literature) with the learning outcomes of different courses in the teacher education programme. This way, the intercultural teacher training will not exclusively respond to a particular IC modality in the curriculum but will be "transversally integrated" (Figueredo-Canosa et al., 2020, p. 2) in the various subjects of the training programme.

Also, the discussed findings have evidenced a somewhat narrow and simplified understanding of culture and IC among the elicited and enacted perceptions of study participants. Based on this, it is recommended that teacher trainers within the country's existing teacher education programmes focus on helping prospective Omani teachers in articulating their own working definition of culture and IC to help them be self-aware of their own deep-seated views, how these views potentially shape their IC teaching methodologies, and explore ways on how to make the necessary and meaningful transformation that can make the outlook of their intercultural teaching more expansive. Through the aid of different self-reflection activities such as reflective journaling, cultural auto-biography, self-assessment, case studies, etc., prospective teachers can uncover the cultural biases they bring into a cross-cultural exchange - leading to a deeper appreciation of the vastly broad, dynamic, and complex nature of culture.

3. **For in-service professional development planners:** An implication from the study suggests that besides the axiomatic need for ensuring conducive continuous professional development (CPD) in place, the content of CPD programmes should tie to the distinct needs of the Omani teachers' teaching profiles. While the students' unique needs remain central when designing in-service training programmes, parallel attention should be given to teacher's unique educational biographies and teaching experiences in setting professional development plans. Towards that goal, the study substantiates that institutionalising a guided and reflective-based training will have the potential to reinvigorate teachers' thinking in issues related to intercultural understanding. This can be achieved through a

teacher evaluation programme that does not seek to exclusively assess teachers' progress but one which promotes a teaching portfolio where teachers document critical reflections on what they see as evidence for professional growth.

4. **For teachers:** The findings seem to imply a level of tension between the Omani teachers' keenness to instil national pride upon their students and their simultaneous desire to foster learners' IC (discussed in 5.4.1). To help teachers mitigate such tension, teachers can facilitate communication dialogues (e.g., through role plays, picture narrating, brainstorming, etc.,) which can help students navigate their personal experiences that are rooted in their perceived national identity and how these experiences intersect with other cultural identities. This should aim towards facilitating a multilevel cultural identification that bypasses territorial perceptions of culture to involve multiple legitimate memberships to global communities.

   In addition, the study findings seem to document the teacher's recurring utilisation of a comparison and contrast methodology when operating IC in their lesson (discussed in sections 5.5.3.2 and 6.2.1). This should not be surprising since making comparisons by teachers between the cultures of the learners and the target cultures is sometimes considered "inevitable" (Starkey, 2003, p. 69). However, it should be warned that many of the observed compare-and-contrast episodes in this study have been the occasion for stereotypes and for instilling conflicting views of self against the other. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers extend their culturally-related discussion to cause students to think of possible reasons for the origins of different behaviours in different cultures. Navigating the origins of cultural differences can raise students' awareness that differentiated social behaviours are not essentially in-born traits but the result of continual social experiences. This can eventually lead to a more tolerated view towards existing cultural differences.

5. **For curriculum developers:** Another implication from this study is that the construct of IC can remain slotted within a peripheral position if it does not exhibit an explicitly recognised status within the institution's curricular agenda. It is recommended that the curriculum developers within the GFPs in Omani HEIs seek for more visibility, granularity, and detail on the position of IC within their internal plans (e.g., college mission, learning

objectives, assessment tasks, textbooks, lesson plans, etc.). In practical terms, this necessitates establishing a direct link between the domestic institutional objectives and the intercultural objectives stipulated in the nation's Philosophy of Education. Also, it requires a recognition of the teacher and the textbook's roles as *facilitators* in the co-creation of cultural knowledge instead of imparting knowledge to learners (Dunne, 2011). Additionally, extracurricular spaces within the institution should be facilitated such as field trips (Wang, 2020) and cultural exchange programmes (DeLong et al., 2011) whereby learners can apply their obtained cultural knowledge in real contexts beyond their academic study. In these ways, the curriculum will strive to accord viably with the policies stipulated by the Oman's Philosophy of Education where objectives of intercultural tolerance and global understanding are key strategic aims.

Also, the discussed findings provided an implication that the Omani teacher and the prescribed textbook act as dominating sources of cultural knowledge in the classroom (see 7.2.2 and 7.4.2). However, relying heavily on these two sources can offer students a narrow perspective of cultural knowledge leading to a perpetuation of cultural biases and misinterpretations. To help broaden the students' exposure to real-world cultural knowledge, it is recommended that curriculum developers incorporate more authentic language content/materials into their current curriculum resources. Using authentic materials (e.g., music, literature, movies, real-world advertisements, video commercials, podcasts, etc.,) can supplement the teacher and the designated textbook in conveying a wider range of cultural knowledge and in offering first-hand encounters with the target (and local) cultures. What is more, authentic materials can overcome the idealised image of target cultures by offering learners concrete cultural references, expressions, and colloquial language that ready-designed language textbooks usually do not cover.

7.8 Limitations of the study and directions for future research

Although the current study has featured a mixture of some powerful data collection tools in investigating the intricacies and complexities of language teacher beliefs and practices of IC, there are some key limitations which can be addressed by future research to extend the contribution of this study. First, the design of this study entails a more cross-sectional approach

than a longitudinal one. Although the data collection transpired over a four-to-five-month period, a more longitudinal tracking would potentially be more powerful in understanding the developmental nature of teachers' beliefs in response to the fluid teaching context they engage with. As evidenced in some longitudinal studies in teacher cognition research (Fletcher & Luft, 2011; Lidstone & Hollingsworth, 1992), teachers undergo developmental alterations through the sequence of their teaching career, starting from their very first year of recruitment towards the end of their professional tenure. Such a prolonged investigation, however, was not possible in this study because of the demanding nature of the PhD study which requires commitment to conventional progression in a relatively short timeframe.

Also, in exploring the teachers' experiences in this study (as part of addressing RQ2), the scope was limited to the *educational* and *teaching* dimensions (i.e., schooling, pre-service teacher training, and in-service professional development). It should be considered by future research that other experiential and personal dimensions can also cluster around the complexity of teachers' beliefs. These may include, for example, the teachers' personal biographies outside the realms of school and work, their religious orientations, their motivation, their self-efficacy, or even their intercultural sensitivity; all of which can contribute to the formation of teachers' beliefs of IC. Incorporating these dimensions in the study, although would go beyond the intended scope required for answering the suggested research question, would have empowered the interpretation of the findings.

In addition, it is worth iterating that the investigation in the current study has been restricted to a purposefully selected sample of ten Omani EFL teachers in one selected government-based institution in Oman. Although this small sample has yielded a detailed and comprehensive understanding of participants' IC beliefs that serves the articulated purpose of this project, it might denote a potential under-representation in terms of generalisability. Whilst insightful, the concluded findings remain tentative and should be taken by interested stakeholders with precaution as they are not readily transferrable to other populations. I acknowledge that although the study aim was not to reach a broadly generalised account but a deeply nuanced understanding of how a group of Omani teachers think and behave, drawing on a larger sample by prospective studies in the Omani context might be rewarding particularly for supporting and informing the development of nationwide policies in Oman.

Further, the recruited teachers in this study were all Omani nationals who had their schooling experiences in Omani schools, obtained their initial teacher education degrees from Omani colleges, and lived the majority of their lifespans in Oman. However, it should be noted that there is an existing large number of non-Omani teachers who teach EFL in different Omani HEIs. Our knowledge of how the visiting non-Omani teachers think of and implement IC in the Omani context remains unexamined. It is recommended, therefore, that a future version of the expanded model attempt to investigate the IC-related beliefs among expatriate teachers working as EFL teachers in Omani HEIs to compare or examine the way IC is understood and implemented by different nationality groups in the Omani socio-educational context.

Moreover, the findings in 7.4.2 suggest that participants tend to negotiate their IC beliefs in response to the distinct institutional characteristics which situate their professional practice. A possible implication from this is that different HEI environments can influence teachers to manifest different IC teaching practice. The presented model is based on findings collected from a non-credited GFP in one government-owned university in Oman; yet it is recommended that researchers extend this model with explorations in different institutional environments to further validate its utility. In spite of potential commonalities, educational institutions usually exhibit a broad spectrum of variables in terms of, for example, the level of professional development provided, student demographics (i.e., national or international), internal policies, curriculum (i.e., textbook-based versus non-textbook-based), among other institution-based variables. By illuminating the potential influences of these different variables, our theoretical knowledge of how EFL teachers' beliefs of IC could manifest in different institutional environments will be enhanced.

Finally, Byram's model was used in this study as a tool through which teachers' IC-related practices can be interpreted and understood. The findings suggest that Omani teachers were able to incorporate a large portion of the model; yet, there is still much to learn about how such a multi-scale and highly demanding model can further be implemented within the limited and hectic timeframe of the EFL lesson. It is well evidenced in this study that it is sometimes beyond the language teachers' capacity to fully and comprehensively incorporate the IC objectives in their EFL teaching alongside their mandated duties of covering the delivery plans set by their institution. The implementation challenges associated with Byram's model in the context of

language teaching have been reported frequently; however, what remains largely unexamined is how this model can be implemented by tutors of other academic subjects concurrently and in a coordinated manner with English language tutors. The vast majority of existing studies focus on the foreign language teacher as the sole unit of analysis without paying attention to how teachers from other departments who teach the same batch of students can collaborate to achieve the institution's desired IC objectives. It is suggested therefore that cross-disciplinary research can navigate how different academic departments can obtain a more holistic understanding of how IC (as represented in Byram's framework) can feasibly be implemented at the wider GFP level and beyond the boundaries of the EFL lesson.

7.9 A Closing reflection

Now the thesis has come to an end, I seek to wrap up with a personal reflection on the whole PhD journey. I have argued at the outset of this thesis that teachers around the world are *at the very heart* of the educational process which makes them a key player in promoting a better intercultural classroom discourse. Well, I still believe so; yet now after I have analysed and discussed my findings, I seem to interpret this assumption differently. The teacher, although considered as being at the "first line of fire" in the educational premises (Parra & Rodríguez, 2009, p. 65), should never be viewed as the *only* key player in the field. The conclusion I am increasingly drawn to is that giving exclusive focus on teacher education programmes as a means of transforming teaching beliefs and practices without synergising concurrent transformation of surrounding political, institutional, and schooling structures would make any teacher training process an incomplete endeavour. Relatedly, I have come to a sympathetic understanding of why some of the participants' observed teaching choices may sometimes deviate from the standard intercultural benchmark. This understanding, however, does not intend to downplay the primacy of striving to train the teacher to become a better professional, but to be consciously aware that what might appear in the classroom as a *teaching* inefficacy is not necessarily a *teacher* inefficacy because any classroom co-locates a co-enactment of multiple competing factors.

Second, it is worthy to document the fact that a big part of this thesis has been written during the troubling time of COVID-19. While the PhD experience is challenging on its own right, the

pandemic has further burdened me with a totally unanticipated type of challenge. With the multiple lockdowns, the undesired social distancing, and other disruptive restrictions, I had to recalibrate my ways of thinking, networking, reading, writing, and living which all have continuously confronted my adaptation skills. Although it was a redeeming opportunity for me as a researcher to improve my management and problem-solving skills, adaptation in some circumstances was not easily achievable given the overwhelming obstacles incurred, such as failure to fly to the UK or Oman with the imposed travel restrictions, the amount of time I have spent home-schooling my children during multiple school closures, and the inaccessibility of campus facilities for a long time, to name a few. Interestingly though, such an unfortunate impact on me as a researcher has started to give me provocative insights on the way teachers in general deal with disrupting contextual circumstances during the execution of their teaching duties and how researchers should strive to capture such intruding conditions. Ultimately, this has given me even more conviction on the significance of highlighting the here-and-now socio-historical context of research enquiry during the collection of participants' stories since context may help to a great extent in interpreting why the collected data look the way they do.

References

Adey, P. (2004). *The professional development of teachers: Practice and theory*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Agostinetto, L., & Bugno, L. (2020). Towards congruence between teachers' intentions and practice in intercultural education. *Intercultural Education,* 31(1), 54–67.

Aisa, M. (2017). Omani Men's National Dress: Displaying Personal Taste, Asserting National Identity. *Ars Orientalis,* 47(2017), 303–332.

Akkari, A., & Radhouane, M. (2022). *Intercultural Approaches to Education: From Theory to Practice*. Springer Nature.

Al Asmi, K. R., & Caldwell, C. (2018). A Muslim Perspective of Leadership–Insights from Oman. *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*, 11(2), 101-111.04.

Al Hosni, S. (2014). Speaking difficulties encountered by young EFL learners. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 2(6), 22-30.

Al Sadi, F. H., & Basit, T. N. (2013). Religious tolerance in Oman: addressing religious prejudice through educational intervention. *British Educational Research Journal*, 39(3), 447-472.

Al Washahi, Q. S. (2020). Developing competency for intercultural language teaching in EFL classrooms. In Sergio Saleem Scatolini and Milton A. George (Eds.), *Education and society in the Middle East and North Africa: English, citizenship and peace education* (pp. 59-78). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Al-Ismaili, A. (2018). Ethnic, Linguistic, and Religious Pluralism in Oman: The Link with Political Stability. *AlMuntaqa*, 1(3), 58-73.

Al-Issa, A. (2006). The cultural and economic politics of English language teaching in Sultanate of Oman. *Asian EFL journal*, 8(1), 194-218.

Al-Issa, A. (2019). Beyond Textbook Instruction: Stories from ELT Teachers in Oman. *Changing English*, 26(3), 263-281.

Al-Issa, A., & Al-Bulushi, A. (2012). English language teaching reform in Sultanate of Oman: The case of theory and practice disparity. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 11(2), 141-176.

Al-Issa, A., & Al-Mahrooqi, R. (2017). Students' Perceptions of the Foundation Program English Language at an Arab University: Implications for Bridging the Policy-Practice Gap. *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods*, 7(11), 42-61.

Al-Jahwari, Y., & Al-Humaidi, S. (2015). Prior knowledge in EFL reading comprehension: Omani teachers' perspectives & classroom strategies. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 4(1), 169-181.

Al-Jardani, K. (2012). English language curriculum evaluation in Oman. International *Journal of English Linguistics*, 2(5), 40-44.

Allemann-Ghionda, C. (2009). From intercultural education to the inclusion of diversity: Theories and policies in Europe. In J. A. Banks, (Ed.), *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education* (pp. 134-45). Routledge.

Al-Maamari, S. (2016). Education for connecting Omani students with other cultures in the world: The role of social studies. *International Review of Education*, 62(4), 439–457.

Al-Mahrooqi, R. (2015). Intercultural Communication and the Negotiation of Local and Foreign Cultures in the EFL. In R. Al-Mahrooqi & C. Denman (Eds). *Bridging the gap between education and employment: English language instruction in EFL contexts*. Peter Lang AG.

Al-Mahrooqi, R., & Denman, C. (2018). Introduction. In R. Al-Mahrooqi & C. Denman (Eds.), *English education in Oman: Current scenarios and future trajectories*. Springer.

Al-Mahrooqi, R., & Tuzlukova, V. (2014). English communication skills and employability in the Arabian Gulf: The case of Oman. *Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 22(2), 473-488.

Al-Mashikhi, E., Al-Mahrooqi, R., & Denman, C. (2014). Investigating college of science student attitudes towards using English as a medium of instruction. *The 2014 WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings New Orleans*, pp. 99-113, Orleans, USA.

Alvarez, L. F. (2020). Intercultural communicative competence: in-service EFL teachers building understanding through study groups. *Profile Issues in Teachers Professional Development*, 22(1), 75-92.

Al-Waaili, M. (2018). *The relationship between five Omani teachers' technology use, and their teacher cognition and instructional practices: a case study at Sultan Qaboos University.* (Unpublished PhD thesis). University of Leeds, Leeds, UK.

Amerian, M., & Tajabadi, A. (2020). The role of culture in foreign language teaching textbooks: an evaluation of New Headway series from an intercultural perspective. *Intercultural Education*, 31(6), 623-644.

Andrews, S., & Smith, P. (2010). *Teaching and learning English grammar: Research findings and future directions*. Routledge.

Angelovska, T., & Schaipp, K. (2020). Heterogeneity in TEFL: A Focus on Teachers' Competencies for and in the Multilingual Classroom. In J. I. Liontas (Ed.), *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*, Wiley-Blackwell.

Arasaratnam, L. A. (2016). Intercultural competence. In J. Nussbaum (Ed.), *Oxford research encyclopedia of communication* (pp. 1–23). Oxford University Press.

Arnon, S., & Reichel, N. (2007). Who is the ideal teacher? Am i? Similarity and difference in perception of students of education regarding qualities of a good teacher and of their own qualities as teachers. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 13(5), 441-464.

Arksey, H., & Knight, P. (1999). *Interviewing for social scientists*. SAGE Publications.

Atkins, L., & Wallace, S. (2012). Interviewing in educational research. In L. Atkins & S. Wallace (Eds.), *Research Methods in Education: Qualitative research in education* (pp. 85-106). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Azizinezhad, M., Hashemi, M., & Darvishi, S. (2013). Relationship between EFL teachers' attitudes, teaching techniques and classroom (Large and Small). *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 93, 134–137.

Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Mc Naughton & Gunn Ltd.

Baldwin, J. R., Faulkner, S. L., Hecht, M. L., & Lindsley, S. L. (Eds.) (2006). *Redefining culture: Perspectives across the disciplines*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Baleghizadeh, S., & Moghadam, M. S. (2013). An investigation of tensions between EFL teachersbeliefs and practices about teaching culture. Gist: *Education and Learning Research Journal*, 7(2013), 35-53.

Baleghizadeh, S., & Amiri Shayesteh, L. (2020). A content analysis of the cultural representations of three ESL grammar textbooks. *Cogent Education*, 7(1), 1844849.

Barley, R. (2011). Why familiarise?. *Social Research Update*, 62(2011) 1–4.

Barter, C., & Renold, E. (1999). The use of vignettes in qualitative research. *Social research update*, 25(9), 1-6.

Basturkmen, H. (2012). Review of research into the correspondence between language teachers' stated beliefs and practices. *System*, 40(2), 282-295.

Bennett, M. (1993). Toward ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 21–71). Intercultural Press.

Bennett, M. J. (Ed.). (1998). *Basic concepts of intercultural communication: A reader*. Intercultural Press.

Bennett, J. M. (Ed.). (2015). *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Intercultural Competence*. Sage Publications.

Berliner, D. C. (1987). In pursuit of the expert pedagogue. *Educational Researcher*, 15(7), 5-13.

Bernhardt, P. (2018). Teacher decision-making: Using hypothetical vignettes to examine the course recommendation process. *The Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 8(1), pp. 72-86.

Biasutti, M., Concina, E., & Frate, S. (2019). Social sustainability and professional development: Assessing a training course on intercultural education for in-service teachers. *Sustainability*, *11*(5), 1238.

Bieber, F. (2018). Is Nationalism on the Rise? Assessing Global Trends. *Ethnopolitics*, 17(5), 519–540.

Bleszynska, K. M. (2008). Constructing intercultural education. *Intercultural Education.* 19(6), 537–545.

Bloom, B. (1953). Thought processes in lectures and discussions. *Journal of General Education*, 7(3), 160-169.

Borg, M. (2001). Teacher's beliefs. *ELT Journal*, 55(2), 186-187

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81-109

Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. Continuum.

Borg, S. (2015). *Contemporary Perspectives on Continuing Professional Development*. British Council.

Borghetti, C. (2019). Interculturality as Collaborative Identity Management in Language Education. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 2(1), 20-38.

Borghetti, C., & Qin, X. (2022). Resources for intercultural learning in a non-essentialist perspective: an investigation of student and teacher perceptions in Chinese universities. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 22(5), 599-614.

Bourke, B. (2014). Positionality: Reflecting on the Research Process. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(33), 1-9.

Bourn, D. (2016). Teachers as agents of social change. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 7(3), 63-77.

Bouzenita, A. I., & Al-Salimi, M. N. (2020). The Islamic Education Curriculum in the Sultanate of Oman: Integrating diversity. *DAYAH: Journal of Islamic Education* 3, 121. https://doi.org/10.22373/jie.v3i2.7502.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.

Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: on being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *17*(5), 475–482.

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2018). *Doing Interviews* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Pearson.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.

Buehl, M. M., & Beck, J. S. (2015). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and teachers' practices. In H. Fives & M. Gregorie Gill (Eds.), *International handbook of research on teachers' beliefs* (pp. 66-84). Routledge.

Burns, A. (1996). Starting all over again: From teaching adults to teaching beginners. In D. Freeman & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *Teacher learning in language teaching* (pp. 154–177). Cambridge University Press.

Burns, A., Freeman, D., & Edwards, E. (2015). Theorizing and Studying the Language-Teaching Mind: Mapping Research on Language Teacher Cognition. *The Modern Language Journal,* 99(3), 585–601.

Byram, M. (1989). *Cultural Studies in Foreign Language Education*. Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (1997). Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence. Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2008). *Intercultural citizenship and foreign language education*. Proceedings of the International Congress "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue". Retrieved from http://www.frl.auth.gr/sites/congres/Interventions/FR/byram.pdf

Byram, M. (2009). Intercultural competence in foreign languages. The intercultural speaker and the pedagogy of foreign language education. In D. Deardorff (Ed.), The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence (pp. 321–332), SAGE.

Byram, M., & Feng, A. (2004). Culture and language learning in higher education. *Language Learning Journal*, 30(1), 20-31.

Byram, M., & Guilherme, M. (2000). Human rights culture and language teaching. In A. Osler (Eds.) *Citizenship and democracy in schools: Diversity, identity, equalit*y (pp. 63-78). Trentham Books.

Byram, M., & Parmenter, L. (Eds.). (2012). *The Common European Framework of Reference: The globalisation of language education policy* (Vol. 23). Multilingual matters.

Byram, M., & Wagner, M. (2018). Making a difference: Language teaching for intercultural and international dialogue. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51(1), 140-151.

Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Starkey, H. (2002). *Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching: A practical introduction for teachers*. Council of Europe.

Byram, M. (2008). *From Language Education for Intercultural Citizenship. Essays and Reflections*. Multilingual Matters.

Calderhead, J., & Robson, M. (1991). Images of teaching: Student teachers' early conceptions of classroom practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 7(1), 1–8.

Cambridge ESOL (2020). *CELTA syllabus and assessment guidelines* (5th ed.). University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations.

Cancino, M., Durán, M., & Solorza, C. (2020). What learning can do to teaching: Assessing the impact of apprenticeship of observation on pre-service teachers' beliefs. *English Teaching & Learning*, 44(3), 297-312.

Carroll, M., Razvi, S., Goodliffe, T., & Al-Habsi, F. (2009). Progress in Developing a National Quality Management System for Higher Education in Oman, *Quality in Higher Education*, 15(1), 17-27.

Castro, A. J. (2014). The role of teacher education in preparing teachers for critical multicultural citizenship. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, *38*(4), 189-203.

Castro, P., Sercu, L., & Méndez García, M. (2004). Integrating language-and-culture teaching: an investigation of Spanish teachers' perceptions of the objectives of foreign language education. *Intercultural Education* 15(1), 91–104.

Causey, V. E., Thomas, C. D., & Armento, B. J. (2000). Cultural diversity is basically a foreign term to me: The challenges of diversity for preservice teacher education. *Teaching and teacher education*, 16(1), 33-45.

Central Intelligence Agency. (2018). Oman. In *The world factbook*. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/static/5aaa180a1edd128fbaba2b8eed9ee394/MU-summary (July 2018).

Chamberlin-Quinlisk, C. R. (2005). Across continents or across the street: using local resources to cultivate intercultural awareness. *Intercultural Education*, 16(5), 469-479.

Chao, T. C. (2011). The hidden curriculum of cultural content in internationally published ELT textbooks: A closer look at new American inside out. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 8(2).

Chao, T. C. (2016). A preliminary study of Taiwanese NNETs' self-assessment of intercultural communicative competence in English language teaching. *Taiwan Journal of TESOL*, 13(1), 71-103.

Chappell, P., Bodis, A., & Jackson, H. (2015). The impact of teacher cognition and classroom practices on IELTS test preparation courses in the Australian ELICOS sector. *IELTS research reports online series*, (6), 1-61.

Chase, B. T., & Johannsen, K. L. (2012). *Pathways 3: Listening, speaking and critical thinking. Independence*. Heinle Cengage.

Chau, T. H. H., & Truong, V. (2019). The Integration of Intercultural Education into Teaching English: What Vietnamese Teachers Do and Say. *International Journal of Instruction*, *12*(1), 441-456.

Chávez Chávez, R. E., & Cervantes-Soon, C. G. (2018). Teacher cultural competence: A review of empirical research. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, (73), 240-257.

Cheng, C. M. (2012). The Influence of College EFL Teachers' Understandings of Intercultural Competence on Their Self-Reported Pedagogical Practices in Taiwan. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 11(1), 164-182.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. MIT Press.

Chu, M. P. (2009). Chinese cultural taboos that affect their language & behavior choices. *Asian Culture and History*.

Chung, E. (2018). Revisiting Second Language Vocabulary Teaching: Insights from Hong Kong In-Service Teachers. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 27(6), 499–508.

Civitillo, S., Juang, L. P., & Schachner, M. K. (2018). Challenging beliefs about cultural diversity in education: A synthesis and critical review of trainings with pre-service teachers. *Educational Research Review*, *24*, 67-83.

Clancey, W. J. (1997). *Situated Cognition*. Cambridge University Press.

Clark, J. B., & Dervin, F. (2014). *Reflexivity in Language and Intercultural Education: Rethinking Multilingualism and Interculturality*. Routledge.

Clarke, V., Braun, V., & Hayfield, N. (2015). Thematic analysis. In J. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*, (pp. 222–48). Sage.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge.

Cole, D., & Meadows, B. (2013). Avoiding the essentialist trap in intercultural education. *Linguistics for intercultural education*, 30-47.

Common, R. (2008). Administrative change in the Gulf: modernization in Bahrain and Oman. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 74(2), 177–193.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as Curriculum Planners. Narratives of Experience*. Teachers College Press.

Cook, V. (1999). “Going Beyond the Native Speaker in Language Teaching.” *TESOL Quarterly* 33(2), 185-209.

Corbett, J. B. (2003). An intercultural approach to English language teaching. Series: Languages for intercultural communication and education. Multilingual Matters.

Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1999). Cultural mirrors: Materials and methods in the EFL classroom. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 196-219). Cambridge University Press.

Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational Research Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). MA Pearson.

Creswell, J., & Creswell, J. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (5th ed). Sage Publications.

Crotty, M. J. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage.

Crouch, M., & McKenzie, H. (2006). The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research. *Social Science Information, 45*(4), 483-499.

Cushner, K. (2007). The role of experience in the making of internationally-minded teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(1), 27-39.

Cushner, K., & Mahon, J. (2009). Intercultural competence in teacher education - Developing the intercultural competence of educators and their students: Creating the blueprints. In D. K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence*. SAGE.

Das, K. C., & Gokhale N., (2010). *Omanization Policy and International Migration in Oman*. Middle East Institute.

Dávila, A., & Jarquín, E. (2020). Becoming an EFL Teacher Educator in Nicaragua: A Phenomenological Study. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(4), 1491-1512.

Davin, K. J., Chavoshan, I., & Donato, R. (2018). Images of past teachers: Present when you teach. *System*, 72, 139-150.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal Studies in International Education*, 10(3), p.241-266.

Deardorff, D. K. (Ed.) (2009). *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence*. Sage Publications.

Deardorff, D., & Jones, E. (2012). Intercultural competence. In D. Deardorff, H. de Wit, J. Heyl, & T. Adams (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education*. Sage.

de Hei, M., Tabacaru, C., Sjoer, E., Rippe, R., & Walenkamp, J. (2020). Developing intercultural competence through collaborative learning in international higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 24(2), 190-211.

DeJaeghere, J. G., & Cao, Y. (2009). Developing US teachers' intercultural competence: Does professional development matter? *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *33*(5), 437-447.

DeLong, M., Geum, K., Gage, K., McKinney, E., Medvedev, K., & Park, J. (2011). Cultural exchange: Evaluating an alternative model in higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 15(1), 41-56.

Denman, C., & Al-Mahrooqi, R. (2019). English Medium Instruction, Arabic and Identity in Oman's Higher Education Institutions: Teacher and Student Attitudes. *English Teaching & Learning*. 43(3), 317–335.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). Sage.

Dervin, F. (2010). Assessing intercultural competence in language learning and teaching: A critical review of current efforts. *New approaches to assessment in higher education*, 5, 155-172.

Deveney, B. (2007). How well-prepared do international school teachers believe themselves to be for teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. *Journal of Research in International Education,* 6(3), 309-332.

Dirkx, J. M., & Spurgin, M. E. (1992). Implicit Theories of Adult Basic Education Teachers: How Their Beliefs about Students Shape Classroom Practice. *Adult basic education*, *2*(1), 20-41.

Donaghue, H. (2003). An instrument to elicit teachers' beliefs and assumptions. *ELT journal,* 57(4), 344-351.

Dooley, K. (2009). Intercultural conversation: Building understanding together. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *52*(6), 497-506.

Du Plessis, A. E., Hobbs, L., Luft, J. A., & Vale, C. (2019). The out-of-field teacher in context: The impact of the school context and environment. In L. Hobbs & G. Torner (Eds), *Examining the phenomenon of "Teaching Out-of-field"* (pp. 217–242). Springer.

Dunne, C. (2011). Developing an intercultural curriculum within the context of the internationalisation of higher education: terminology, typologies and power. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 30(5), 609–622.

Earley, P. C., & Ang, S. (2003). *Cultural intelligence: Individual interactions across cultures*. Stanford University Press.

Eisenhardt, S., Besnoy, K., & Steele, E. (2012). Creating Dissonance in Pre-Service Teachers' Field Experiences. *Srate Journal*, 21(1), 1-10.

Elbaz, F. (1981). The teacher's "practical knowledge": Report of a case study. *Curriculum inquiry*, 11(1), 43-71.

Ericsson, K., & Simon, H. (1980). Verbal reports as data. *Psychol. Rev.*, 87(3), 215-251

Esen, M. (2021). Critical Thinking and Intercultural Competence: Review, Use, and Classification of the 21st Century Skills in Intercultural EFL Education. International *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 8(1), 23-32.

Esposito, J. (2002). *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*. Oxford University Press.

Fang, Z. (1996). A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices. *Educational Research,* 38(1), 47–65.

Fanous, S. M., Wiersma-Mosley, J. D., Herold, L., Timby, D., McNally, S., & Flack, B. (2020). Intercultural competence among early childhood educators. *Discovery, The Student Journal of Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences*, 21(1), 38-42.

Fantini, A. (2009). Assessing Intercultural Competence: Issues and Tools. In D. K. Deardorff (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence*. Sage.

Fantini, A. E. (2000). A central concern: Developing intercultural competence. *SIT Occasional Paper Series*, *1*, 25-42.

Farrell, T. S. C. (2015). *Promoting teacher reflection in second language education: A framework for TESOL professionals*. Routledge.

Fenstermacher, G. D. (1994). The knower and the known: The nature of knowledge in research on teaching. *Review of Research in Education*, 20(1), 3-57.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 5(1), 80-92.

Figueredo-Canosa, V., Ortiz Jiménez, L., Sánchez Romero, C., & López Berlanga, M. C. (2020). Teacher training in intercultural education: Teacher perceptions. *Education Sciences*, *10*(3), 81.

Finch, J. (1987). The Vignette Technique in Survey Research, *Sociology* 21(1), 115–14.

Fives, H., & Buehl, M. M. (2012). Spring cleaning for the “messy” construct of teachers' beliefs: What are they? Which have been examined? What can they tell us? In K. R. Harris, S. Graham, & T. Urdan (Eds.), *APA educational psychology handbook: Individual differences and cultural and contextual factors*, (pp. 471-495). American Psychological Association.

Fletcher, S. S., & Luft, J. A. (2011). Early career secondary science teachers: A longitudinal study of beliefs in relation to field experiences. *Science Education*, *95*(6), 1124-1146.

Flores, B. B., & Smith, H. L. (2009). Teachers’ Characteristics and Attitudinal Beliefs About Linguistic and Cultural Diversity. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 31(1-2), 323–358.

Fois, E. (2020). ELT and the role of translation in developing intercultural competence. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *20*(6), 561-571.

Forsey, M. (2012). “Interviewing Individuals.” In S. Delamont (Ed.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*, (pp. 364–376). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Forsman, L. (2012). Investigating the cultural dimension in foreign language education – from transmission of facts to dialogical uptake. *Educational Action Research* 20(4), 483–496.

Fortune, J. (2012). The forbidden fruit: using the mother tongue in a Bogota university EFL program. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 14(2), 70-87.

Fox-Turnbull, W. (2009). Stimulated Recall Using Autophotography - A Method for Investigating Technology Education. Paper presented at *Centre for Science and Technology Education Research (CSTER) Graduate Conference*, University of Waikato.

Freeman, D., & Richards, J. C. (1996). *Teacher learning in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Fullan, M. (2014). *Teacher development and educational change*. Routledge.

Furumura, Y., Lebedko, M., & Tsai, Y. (Eds.). (2014). *Critical cultural awareness: Managing stereotypes through intercultural (language) education*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (2017). *Stimulated recall methodology in applied linguistics and L2 research* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106-116.

Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum inquiry*, 43(1), 48-70.

Gay, G. (2014). "Teachers’ Beliefs about Cultural Diversity", in H. Fives and M. G. Gill (Eds.), *International Handbook of Research on Teachers’ Beliefs*. Routledge.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In C. Geertz (Ed.), *The interpretation of culture* (pp. 3-30). Basic Books.

Genç, G. (2018). Are Turkish EFL pre-service teachers ready to manage intercultural challenges?. *Intercultural Education*, 29(2), 185-202.

Ghavamnia, M. (2020). Iranian EFL teachers’ beliefs and perspectives on incorporating culture in EFL classes. *Intercultural Education*, 31(3), 314-329.

Gillespie, A., Howarth, C. S., & Cornish, F. (2012). Four problems for researchers using social categories. *Culture & Psychology*, 18(3), 391-402.

Given, L. M. (2008). Vignettes. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopaedia of qualitative research methods* (Vols. 1-0). SAGE Publications.

Golafshani, N. (2003). “Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research”, *The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597-607.

Gonçalves, S., & Carpenter, M. A. (Eds.). (2012). *Intercultural policies and education*. Peter Lang.

Gong, Y. F., Lai, C., & Gao, X. A. (2021). Language teachers’ identity in teaching intercultural communicative competence. *Language, Culture and Curriculum,* 35(2), 134-150.

GOV.UK (n.d.). *Foreign Travel Advice: Oman.* Retrieved 02/03/2019 from https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/oman/local-laws-and-customs.

Gu, Q., & Johnson, S. (2014). Professional learning as a way to improve teacher preparation. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 40(4), 405-417.

Gu, X. (2016). Assessment of intercultural communicative competence in FL education: A survey on EFL teachers' perception and practice in China. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 16(2), 254-273.

Guba, E. G. (Ed.). (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Sage.

Guerra, P. L., & Wubbena, Z. C. (2017). Teacher Beliefs and Classroom Practices Cognitive Dissonance in High Stakes Test-Influenced Environments. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 26(1), 35-51.

Guibernau, M. (2007). *The Identity of Nation*. Polity Press.

Guilherme, M. (2012). Critical Language and Intercultural Communication Pedagogy. In: J. Jackson, (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*, (pp. 357–371), Routledge.

Guilherme, M., & Sawyer, M. (2021). How critical has intercultural learning and teaching become? A diachronic and synchronic view of 'critical cultural awareness' in language education. In López-Jiménez, M.D., & J. Sánchez-Torres (Eds.), *Intercultural competence past, present and future. Intercultural communication and language education* (pp. 185–208). Springer.

Guilherme, M., Pureza, J. M., Osler, A., Starkey, H., Meyer, B., & Haas, C. Interact Project Final Report (2007). *Intercultural Active Citizenship Education*. Online. Available: https://www.ces.uc.pt/interact/documents/final_activity_report.pdf.

Gundara, J. (2003). *Intercultural education: world on the* brink?. University of London.

Guo, Y., Arthur, N., & Lund, D. (2009). Intercultural inquiry with pre-service teachers. *Intercultural Education,* 20(6), 565–577.

Hajilari, A. (2013). Does Cultural Knowledge Matter? Investigating the Effect of Cultural Knowledge on Reading Comprehension of Iranian EFL Learners. *Language in India*, (13)9 87-100

Hajisoteriou, C., & Angelides, P. (2013). The politics of intercultural education in Cyprus, *Education Inquiry*, 4(1), 103-123.

Hajisoteriou, C., Maniatis, P., & Angelides, P. (2019). Teacher professional development for improving the intercultural school: an example of a participatory course on stereotypes. *Education Inquiry*, 10(2), 166-188.

Hammer, M. R., Bennett, M. J., & Wiseman, R. (2003). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The intercultural development inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(4), 421-443.

Hativa, N. (2000). Teacher Thinking, Beliefs, and Approaches to Teaching. In N. Hativa (Ed.), *Teaching for Effective Learning in Higher Education* (pp. 37-50). Springer.

He, Y., Lundgren, K., & Pynes, P. (2017). Impact of short-term study abroad program: Inservice teachers' development of intercultural competence and pedagogical beliefs. *Teaching and teacher education*, (66), 147-157.

Held, D., & Ulrichsen, K. (2012). *The Transformation of the Gulf*. Routledge.

Hill, H. C., Beisiegel, M., & Jacob, R. (2013). Professional development research: Consensus, crossroads, and challenges. *Educational Researcher*, 42(9), 476-487.

Hismanoglu, M. (2011). An investigation of ELT students' intercultural communicative competence in relation to linguistic proficiency, overseas experience and formal instruction. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(6), 805-817.

Hoa, C. T. H., & Vien, T. (2019). Integrating culture into EFL teaching behind classroom doors: A case study of upper secondary teachers in Vietnam. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, *35*(1).

Hoang, T. H. (2020). Navigating the intercultural classroom. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 36(1), 180-184.

Hoff, H. E. (2014). A critical discussion of Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence in the light of Bildung theories. *Intercultural Education*, 25(6), 508–517.

Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. McGraw Hill.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Holliday, A. (2011). *Intercultural communication and ideology*. Sage.

Holt-Reynolds, D. (1992). Personal History-Based Beliefs as Relevant Prior Knowledge in Course Work. *American Educational Research Journal* 29(2), 325–349.

Hsiao, H. C., & Yang, S. L. (2010). The Study of Teaching Beliefs Reflected on Teaching Behavior: Focusing on Elementary School Teachers. *International Journal of Learning*, 17(9).

Huang, Q., Cheung, A. C., & Xuan, Q. (2023). The impact of study abroad on pre-service and in-service teachers' intercultural competence: A meta-analysis. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, (127)104091.

Hughes, R., & Huby, M. (2004). The construction and interpretation of vignettes in social research. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, 11(1), 36-51.

Hurt, H. T., Scott, M. D., & McCroskey, J. C. (1987). *Communication in the classroom*. Addison-Wesley.

Hymes, D. H. (1972). On Communicative Competence. In J. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics*, 269-293. Penguin Education, Penguin Books Ltd.

Ivanyna, M., & Shah, A. (2012). 'How Close Is Your Government to Its People? Worldwide Indicators on Localization and Decentralization. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, (6138).

Jackson, K., & Bazeley, P. (2019). *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo* (Third ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Jacoby, S., & Ochs, E. (1995). Co-construction: An introduction. *Research on language and social interaction,* 28(3), 171-183.

Jedynak, M. (2011). The attitudes of English teachers towards developing intercultural communicative competence. *Aspects of culture in second language acquisition and foreign language learning*, 63-73.

Jamalzadeh, M., & Shahsavar, Z. (2015). The effects of contextual factors on teacher's beliefs and practices. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 192, 166-171.

Jeffries, C., & Maeder, D. (2004). Using vignettes to build and assess teacher understanding of instructional strategies. *The Professional Educator*, 26(1&2), 17-28.

Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a lingua franca: Attitude and identity.* Oxford University Press.

Johnson, K. E. (1992). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices during literacy instruction for non-native speakers of English. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 24(1), 83–108.

Johnson, K. E. (1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of preservice English as a second language teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 10(4) 439–52.

Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective*. Routledge.

Johnson, R., & Christensen, L. (2019). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches.* SAGE Publications.

Jones, J., & Ridout, N. (2015). *A History of Modern Oman*. Cambridge University Press.

Kagan, D. M. (1992). Implication of Research on Teacher Belief. *Educational Psychologist*. 27(1), 65-90.

Kartchava, E., & Chung, S. (2015). Pre-Service and In-Service English as a Second Language Teachers' Beliefs about the Use of Digital Technology in the Classroom. *Studies in English Language Teaching* 3(4), 355-383.

Kechichian, J. A. (1995). *Oman and the World: The Emergence of an Independent Foreign Policy*. Rand.

Kelly, P. (2006). What is teacher learning? A socio-cultural perspective. *Oxford Review of Education*, 32(4), 505-519.

Kitchen, W. H. (2014). *Authority and the Teacher*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and Culture*. Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2009). *The multilingual subject*. Oxford University Press.

Kuhn, T. (1970). The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. University of Chicago Press.

Kumar, J. (2016). Majlis al-Shura Elections in Oman, 2015. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, *3*(4), 455–462.

Kurtes, S., Larina, T., & Ozyumenko, V. (2017). Constructivist approach to intercultural communication teaching and learning. In *EDULEARN17 Proceedings* (pp. 591-597). IATED.

Lai, H.-Y. T. (2013). Learning English as an international language: EFL learners' perceptions of cultural knowledge acquisition in the English classroom. *Asian Social Science*, 10(1), 1-11.

Larkin, S., & de Nobile, J. (2007). Culturally diverse teacher education: The impact of a mentoring program on pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 35(3), 259-276.

Larzen-Ostermark, E. (2008). The intercultural dimension in EFL-teaching: A study of conceptions among Finland-Swedish comprehensive school teachers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *52*(5), 527-547.

Leatham, K. R. (2006). Viewing mathematics teachers' beliefs as sensible systems. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*, *9*(1), 91-102.

Lee, I. (2009). Ten mismatches between teachers' beliefs and written feedback practice. *ELT Journal*, 63(1), 13–22.

Lee, O., Luykx, A., Buxton, C., & Shaver, A. (2007). The challenge of altering elementary school teachers' beliefs and practices regarding linguistic and cultural diversity in science instruction. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 44(9), 1269-1291.

Lee, T. M. (2005). Intercultural teaching in higher education. *Intercultural Education*, 16(3), 201–215.

Lefebvre, J. A. (2010). Oman's Foreign Policy in The Twenty-First Century. *Middle East Policy*, 17(1), 99-114.

Leganger-Krogstad, H. (2011). *The religious dimension of intercultural education: Contributions to a contextual understanding*. LIT Verlag.

Leonard, D. R. (2015). Intra-Islamic and Inter-Religious Coexistence and Dialogue in Oman. *Muslim World*, 105(2), 266-279.

Lerman, S. (2001). Cultural, discursive psychology: A sociocultural approach to studying the teaching and learning of mathematics. *Educational studies in mathematics*, 46(1), 87-113.

Levin, B. B. (2014). "The Development of Teachers' Beliefs" , in H. Fives and M. Gill (Eds.) *International Handbook of Research on Teachers' Beliefs*. Routledge.

Levin, B., & He, Y. (2008). Investigating the Content and Sources of Teacher Candidates' Personal Practical Theories (PPTs). *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(1), 55-68.

Li, L. (2019). *Language Teacher cognition: A sociocultural perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Liddicoat, A. J., & Scarino, A. (2013). *Intercultural language teaching and learning*. John Wiley & Sons.

Lidstone, M. L., & Hollingsworth, S. (1992). A longitudinal study of cognitive change in beginning teachers: Two patterns of learning to teach. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 19, 39–57.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Little, S., & Al Wahaibi, S. (2017). 'We are not as they think about us': exploring Omani EFL learners' 'selves' in digital social spaces, *Multicultural Education Review*, 9(3), 175-187

Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Liu, L., & Zhang, Y. (2014). The Application of Constructivism to the Teaching of Intercultural Communication. *English Language Teaching*, 7(5), 136-141.

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher A Sociological Study*. University of Chicago Press.

Luciak, M., & Khan-Svik, G. (2008). Intercultural education and intercultural learning in Austria–critical reflections on theory and practice. *Intercultural Education*, *19*(6), 493-504.

Luk, J. (2012). Teachers' ambivalence in integrating culture with EFL teaching in Hong Kong. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 25(3), 249-264.

Lyle, J. (2003). Stimulated Recall: A Report on Its Use in Naturalistic Research. *British Educational Research Journal, 29*(6), 861-878.

Mahlios, M., Massengill-Shaw, D., & Barry, A. (2010). Making sense of teaching through metaphors: a review across three studies. *Teachers and Teaching*, 16(1), 49–71.

Maijala, M. (2020). Culture teaching methods in foreign language education: pre-service teachers' reported beliefs and practices. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 14(2), 133-149.

Majid, M. A., Othman, M., Mohamad, S. F., Halim, S. A., & Yusof, A. (2017). Piloting for Interviews in Qualitative Research: Operationalization and Lessons Learnt. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. 7(4), 1073-1080.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2016). *Designing Qualitative Research*. (6th ed.). Sage Publications Inc.

Matsumoto, Y. (2018). Teachers' Identities as 'Non-native' Speakers: Do They Matter in *English as a Lingua Franca* Interactions? In B. Yazan & N. Rudolph (Eds) *Criticality, Teacher Identity, and (In)equity in English Language Teaching*. (pp. 57–79). Springer

Mauthner, N. S., & Doucet, A. (2003). 'Reflexive Accounts and Accounts of Reflexivity in Qualitative Data Analysis', *Sociology* 37(3): 413–31.

Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative Research Design: an interactive approach*. (3rd ed.) Sage Publications Inc.

McConachy, T., & Liddicoat, A. J. (Eds.), (2021). *Teaching and learning second language pragmatics for intercultural understanding*. Routledge.

McKay, S. L. (2002). *Teaching English as an international language: Rethinking goals and approaches*. Oxford University Press.

Medina-López-Portillo, A. (2004). Intercultural learning assessment: The link between program duration and the development of intercultural sensitivity. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 10(1), 179-199.

Mehta, R. S., & Heble, A. (2015). Perceptions of Indians in Oman: Exploring aspects of intercultural communication. In R., Raddawi (Ed.), *Intercultural communication with Arabs* (pp. 27-39). Springer.

Meijer, P. C., Verloop, N., & Beijaard, D. (1999). Exploring language teachers' practical knowledge about teaching reading comprehension. *Teaching and teacher education*, *15*(1), 59-84.

Mekheimer, M. A. A., & Aldosari, H. S. (2011). Impediments to cultural teaching in EFL programmes at a Saudi University. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 26(3), 1-6.

Menard-Warwick, J. U. (2008). The cultural and intercultural identities of transnational English teachers: Two case studies from the Americas. *TESOL quarterly*, 42(4), 617-640.

Menter, I., Elliot, D., Hulme, M., Lewin, J., & Lowden, K. (2011). *A guide to practitioner research in education*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Meyer, M. (1991). 'Developing transcultural competence: Case studies of advanced foreign language learners', in D. Buttjes and M. Byram (Eds.), *Mediating Languages and Cultures: Towards an Intercultural Theory of Foreign Language Education*, (pp. 136-158). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Miles, D. A. (2017). A taxonomy of research gaps: Identifying and defining the seven research gaps. In *Doctoral Student Workshop: Finding Research Gaps-Research Methods and Strategies*, (1–15) Dallas, Texas. Available online: https://www.academia.edu/35505149/ARTICLE_RESEARCH_A_Taxonomy_of_Research_Gaps_Identifying_ and_Defining_the_Seven_Research_Gaps.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). Drawing valid meaning from qualitative data: Toward a shared craft. *Educational researcher*, 13(5), 20-30.

Miles, M., Huberman, M., & Saldana, J. (2019). *Qualitative Data Analysis. A Methods Sourcebook*, Sage Publications Inc.

Ministry of Education (2011). *History of Educational Development in Oman*. Retrieved 01/03/2019 from http://home.moe.gov.om/arabic/module.php?module=pages-showpage&CatID=6&ID=12.

Ministry of Education (2016). *Educational Indicators*. Retrieved 25/01/2020 from http://opendata.moe.gov.om/images/library/file/Book13845.pdf.

Ministry of Education (2008). *Basic Education, English Language Curriculum Framework. Curriculum Development*. Government Printing Office.

Ministry of Information (2018). *Oman 2018*. Ministry of Information.

Moodie, I. (2016). The anti-apprenticeship of observation: How negative prior language learning experience influences English language teachers' beliefs and practices. *System*, 60, 29-41.

Muijs, D. (2010). *Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS*. (2nd Ed.), Sage Publications Inc.

Murphy, E. (1988). The cultural dimension in foreign language teaching: Four models. *Language, culture and curriculum*, 1(2), 147-163.

Murphy, K. P., & Mason, L. (2006). Changing knowledge and beliefs. In P. A. Alexander & P. H. Winne (eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology (2nd ed)*, (pp. 305–326). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Naidu, K. (2020). Attending to 'culture'in intercultural language learning: a study of Indonesian language teachers in Australia. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 41(4), 653-665.

Narathakoon, A., Sapsirin, S., & Subphadoongchone, P. (2020). Beliefs and Classroom Assessment Practices of English Teachers in Primary Schools in Thailand. *International Journal of Instruction*, *13*(3), 137-156.

National Geographic Learning. (n.d.). *Pathways: Listening, Speaking, and Critical Thinking*. Retrieved July, 20, 2020 from https://eltngl.com/sites/pathways/about/LS.

NCSI (2018). *Higher Education Statistics 2018*. National Centre for Statistics and Information.

NCSI (2021). *Statistical Year Book 2021.*National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of curriculum studies*, 19(4), 317-328.

Nguyen, L., Harvey, S., & Grant, L. (2016). What teachers say about addressing culture in their EFL teaching practices: the Vietnamese context. *Intercultural Education*, 27(2), 165-178.

Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2018). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. Pearson.

Nishino, T. (2012). Modeling Teacher Beliefs and Practices in Context: A Multimethods Approach. *The Modern Language Journal*, 96(3), 380-399.

Norberg, K. (2000). Intercultural education and teacher education in Sweden. *Teaching and teacher education*, 16(4), 511-519.

O'Brien, K., & Norton, R. (1991). Beliefs, practices, and constraints: Influences on teacher decision-making processes. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 18(1), 29-38.

Olafson, L., Grandy, C., & Owens, M. (2014). Qualitative Approaches to Studying Teachers' Beliefs", in H. Fives and M. G. Gill (Eds.), *International Handbook of Research on Teachers' Beliefs*. Routledge.

Oman: The Basic Statute of the State (2002). *Arab Law Quarterly, 17*(1), 56-72. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/3382164.

Onwuegbuzie, A., & Leech, N. L. (2007). Sampling designs in qualitative research: Making the sampling process more public. *The Qualitative Report*, 12(2), 238- 254.

Oranje, J., & Smith, L. F. (2018). Language teacher cognitions and intercultural language teaching: The New Zealand perspective. *Language Teaching Research*, 22, 310–329.

Ormston, R., Spencer, L., Barnard, M., & Snape, D. (2014). The Foundations of Qualitative Research. In: J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, C. McNaughton Nicholls, R., Ormston R (Eds). *Qualitative research practice. A guide for social science students and researchers*, SAGE.

Othman, A., & Ruslan, N. (2020). Intercultural communication experiences among students and teachers: implication to in-service teacher professional development. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 14(3–4), 223– 238.

Oxford Reference. (n.d.). *Culture*. Retrieved April 15, 2020, from https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110901080526139

Pace J. L., & Hemmings, A. (2006). *Classroom authority: Theory, research and practice*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' Beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning Up a Messy Construct. *Review of Educational Research*. 62(3), 307–332.

Parmenter, L. (2010). Becoming intercultural: A comparative analysis of national education policies. In Y. Tsai & S. Houghton (Eds.), *Being intercultural: Inside and outside the classroom* (pp. 66-88). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Parra, M. E. G., & Rodríguez, A. R. (2009). The intercultural training of foreign language teachers. The Spanish case. *El G uiniguada*, *18(2009)*, 53-66.

Partick, N. (2012). Nationalism in the Gulf states. In D. Held, & K. Ulrichsen (Eds.), *The Transformation of the Gulf*. Routledge.

Patton, M. (2015). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. (4th Edition), Sage Publications.

Pavlenko, A. (2003). “I never knew I was a bilingual”: Reimaging teacher identities in TESOL. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 2 (4), 251–268.

Pavlovskaya, A. V. (2021). National identity in international education: Revisiting problems of intercultural communication in the global world. *Training, Language and Culture*, 5(1), 20-36.

Peiser, G., & Jones, M. (2014). The influence of teachers’ interests, personalities and life experiences in intercultural languages teaching. *Teachers and Teaching* 20(3), 375–390.

Peng, H. (2016). Learner Perceptions of Chinese EFL College Classroom Environments. *English Language Teaching*, 9(1), 22-32.

Pennycook, A. (2017). *Translingual language pedagogy: Learning and teaching in an age of globalization*. London: Routledge

Peterson, J. E. (2004). Oman's Diverse Society: Northern Oman. *The Middle East Journal*, 58(1), 32-51.

Peterson, P. L., Fennema, E., Carpenter, T. P., & Loef, M. (1989). Teacher's pedagogical content beliefs in mathematics. *Cognition and instruction*, 6(1), 1-40.

Philipp, R. (2007). Mathematics teachers’ beliefs and affect. In F. K. Lester (Ed.), *Second handbook of research on mathematics teaching and learning* (pp. 257–315). Information Age Publishing.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.

Phipps, S., & Borg, S. (2009). Exploring tensions between teachers’ grammar teaching beliefs and practices. *System*, 37(3), 380-390.

Phipps, A. (2012). Series editor’s preface. In M. Byram & L. Parmenter (Eds.), *The Common European Framework of Reference, The globalisation of language education policy* (pp. ix–x). Multilingual Matters.

Piatkowska, K. (2014). Fostering Foreign Language Teachers' ability To Teach Intercultural Communicate Competence: A Social Constructivist Perspective. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, *7*(6), 39.

Pinto, S. (2018). Intercultural competence in higher education: academics’ perspectives. *On the Horizon*. 26(2), 137–147.

Porto, M. (2013). Language and intercultural education: an interview with Michael Byram. *Pedagogies: An International Journal,* 8(2), 143–162.

Poulson, L., Avramidis, E., Fox, R., Medwell, J., & Wray, D. (2001). The theoretical beliefs of effective teachers of literacy in primary schools: An exploratory study of orientations to reading and writing. *Research papers in Education*, 16(3), 271-292.

Priestley, M., Edwards, R., Priestley, A., & Miller, K. (2012). Teacher agency in curriculum making: Agents of change and spaces for manoeuvre. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 42(2), 191–214.

Pritchard, A., & Woollard, J. (2013*). Psychology for the classroom: Constructivism and social learning*. Routledge.

Rabbidge, M. (2019). *Translanguaging in EFL contexts: A call for change*. Routledge.

Rahimi, S. (2014). Teacher cognition vis-à-vis vocabulary teaching. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 4(3), 652-60.

Ran, A. (2001). Travelling on parallel tracks: Chinese parents and English teachers. *Educational Research* 43, 311–328.

Raţa, G., & Samfira, E. M. (2017). Teaching Cultural Taboos and Taboo Language for Intercultural Awareness and Understanding. *Methods*, 1(2), 180-87.

Ravitch, S. M., & Riggan, J. M. (2016). *Reason and Rigor: How Conceptual Frameworks Guide Research*. Sage.

Richards, J. C., & Lockhart, C. (1996). Interaction in the second language classroom. *Readings in Methodology*, 12, 66-70.

Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (Eds.). (1992). *Power in the classroom: Communication, control, and concern*. Psychology Press.

Riitaoja, A. L., & Dervin, F. (2014). Interreligious dialogue in schools: beyond asymmetry and categorisation?. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14(1), 76-90.

Risager, K. (2006). *Language and culture pedagogy: From a national to a transnational paradigm*. Multilingual Matters.

Risko, V. J., Vukelich, C., Roskos, K., & Carpenter, M. (2002). Preparing teachers for reflective practice: Intentions, contradictions, and possibilities. *Language Arts*, *80*(2), 134.

Rissanen, I., Kuusisto, E., & Kuusisto, A. (2016). Developing teachers' intercultural sensitivity: Case study on a pilot course in Finnish teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 59(2016), 446–456.

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2013). Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers. Sage.

Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2010). *Globalizing education policy*. Routledge.

Roche, T., Roche, E., & Al Saidi, A. (2014). The Dialogic Fashioning of Women's Dress in the Sultanate of Oman. *Journal of Arabian Studies* 4(1), 38–51.

Rubin, H., & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing (2nd ed.) The art of hearing data*. SAGE Publications.

Sadeghi, K., & Sepahi, Z. (2018). Cultural content of three EFL textbooks: teachers' and learners' cultural preferences and cultural themes of textbooks. *Pedagogies: An international Journal*, *13*(3), 222-245.

Safa, M. A., & Tofighi, S. (2022). Intercultural communicative competence beliefs and practices of Iranian pre-service and in-service EFL teachers. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* 16(2), 164–175.

Saldana, J. (2014). *Thinking qualitatively: Methods of mind*. SAGE publications.

Saldana, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Sales, A., Traver, J. A., & Garcia, R. (2011). Action research as a school-based strategy in intercultural professional development for teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(5), 911–919.

Salih, A. A., & Omar, L. I. (2021). Globalized English and users' intercultural awareness: Implications for internationalization of higher education. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, 20(3), 181-196.

Sanchez, H., & Grimshaw, T. (2019). Stimulated recall. In H. Rose, & J. McKinley (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics.* Routledge.

Sarwari, A. Q., & Abdul Wahab, M. N. (2017). Study of the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication competence among international postgraduate students: A case study at University Malaysia Pahang. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 3(1), 1310479.

Savvidou, C., & Economidou-Kogetsidis, M. (2019). Teaching Pragmatics: Nonnative-Speaker Teachers' Knowledge, Beliefs and Reported Practices. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 2(1), 39-58.

Sawir, E. (2013). International students and internationalisation of higher education. *Journal of International Students*, 3(1), iii-iii.

Schartner, A. (2016). The effect of study abroad on intercultural competence: a longitudinal case study of international postgraduate students at a British university. *Journal of multilingual and multicultural development*, 37(4), 402-418.

Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. Jossey-Bass.

Schulz, R. A. (2001). Cultural differences in student and teacher perceptions concerning the role of grammar instruction and corrective feedback: USA–Colombia. *Modern Language Journal*, 85(2), 244–258.

Schutz, P. A., Hong, J., & Francis, D. C. (Eds.). (2018). *Research on teacher identity: Mapping challenges and innovations*. Springer.

Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*. Sage.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). Teachers College Press.

Sercu, L. (2006). The foreign language and intercultural competence teacher: the acquisition of a new professional identity. *Intercultural Education*, 17(1), 55–72.

Sercu, L., García, M. D., & Prieto, P. C. (2004). Culture teaching in foreign language education: EFL teachers in Spain as cultural mediators. *Porta Linguarum: Revista internacional de didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras*, (1), 85-102.

Sergon, V. (2011). "Playing the Blame Game: English Education in Omani Government Schools". *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. Paper 1132.

Shah, I. A. (2017). Teaching-learning challenges of higher education in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(1), 1-18.

Shah, S. R., Hussain, M. A., & Nasseef, O. A. (2013). Factors Impacting EFL Teaching: An Exploratory Study in the Saudi Arabian Context. *Arab World English Journal*, 4(3), 104-123.

Shannon, D. M., Twale, D. J., & Moore, M. S. (1998). TA teaching effectiveness: The impact of training and teaching experience. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 69(4), 440-466.

Shawer, S. F. (2017). Teacher-driven curriculum development at the classroom level: Implications for curriculum, pedagogy and teacher training. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *63(2)*, 296-313.

Shebani, Z. (2018). Cultural Values and their Effect on Learner Autonomy in an Omani EFL Context (2018). *The European Conference on Language Learning*, Official Conference Proceedings.

Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.

Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard educational review*, 57(1), 1-23.

Shura (2019). *About Majlis A'Shura*. (Muscat, Majlis A'Shura), Retrieved 10/03/2019 https://www.shura.om/About-Us/About-the-Majlis.

Skott, J. (2009). Contextualising the notion of 'belief enactment'. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*. 12(1), 27–46.

Soboleva, A. V., & Lomakina, A. J. (2018). Critical thinking as a premise for the intercultural competence development. *Language and culture*, (11), 104-111.

Sougari, A. M. and Sifakis, N. C. (2007). 'Intercultural education through the EFL lens — what do teachers think?' In F. Boers, J. Darquennes, and R. Temmerman (eds.). *Multilingualism and Applied Comparative Linguistics*, (pp. 193–211). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Spitzberg, B. H., & Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing intercultural competence. In D. K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (pp. 2-52). Sage.

Staver, J. R. (1995). Scientific research and oncoming vehicles: Can radical constructivist embrace one and dodge the other? *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 32(10), 1125-1128.

Stecher, B., Le, V.-N., Hamilton, L., Ryan, G., Robyn, A., & Lockwood, J. R. (2006). Using Structured Classroom Vignettes to Measure Instructional Practices in Mathematics. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 28(2), 101–130.

Steele, R. (1996). Developing intercultural competence through foreign language instruction. In J.E. Alatis, C.A. Straehle, M. Ronkin, & B. Gallenberger (Eds.), *Linguistics, language acquisition, and language variation: Current trends and future prospects*, (pp. 70-83). Georgetown University Press.

Stevenson, A., & Waite, M. (2011). *Concise Oxford English dictionary*. Oxford University Press.

Street, B. (1991). Culture is a verb: Anthropological aspects of language and cultural process. In D. Graddol, L. Thompson & M. Byram (Eds.), *Language and Culture* (pp. 2342). Multilingual Matters.

Sugianto, A., & Wirza, Y. (2021, April). Cultural Contents of an EFL Textbook. In *Thirteenth Conference on Applied Linguistics* (CONAPLIN 2020) (pp. 1-6). Atlantis Press.

Sullivan, P., & Mousley, J. (2001). Thinking Teaching: Seeing Mathematics Teachers as Active Decision Makers. In F. L. Lin & T. J. Cooney (Eds.), *Making Sense of Mathematics Teacher Education*. Springer.

Svensson, A. (2017). The Challenge of Teaching English in a Heterogeneous Classroom. *Educare - vetenskapliga skrifter*, 17(2), 56–80.

Taylor, R., Kumi-Yeboah, A., & Ringlaben, R. P. (2016). Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions towards Multicultural Education & Teaching of Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Learners. *Multicultural Education*, 23(3), 42-48.

Teo, T., Huang, F., & Hoi, C. K. (2018). Explicating the influences that explain intention to use technology among English teachers in China. *Interactive Learning Environments*. 26(4), 460–475.

The Education Council (2016a). *About the Council.* Retrieved on 10/03/2019 from https://www.educouncil.gov.om/en/page.php?scrollto=start&id=28.

The Education Council (2016b). *Technical and Vocational Education in the Sultanate of Oman*. Retrieved on 25/01/2020 from https://www.educouncil.gov.om/en/page.php?scrollto=start&id=41.

The Education Council (2017). *Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman*. Muscat: Oman.

Thompson, A. G. (1984). The relationship of teachers' conceptions of mathematics and mathematics teaching to instructional practice. *Educational studies in mathematics*, 15(2), 105-127.

Thompson, A. G. (1992). Teachers’ Beliefs and Conceptions: A Synthesis of the Research. In D. A. Grouws (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Mathematics Teaching and Learning*, (pp. 127-146). Macmillan Publishing Company.

Tleuov, A. (2017). *The teaching of speaking: an investigation into the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices in Kazakhstani state secondary school EFL classrooms*. (Unpublished PhD thesis). University of Bath, Bath, UK.

Toll, C. A., Nierstheimer, S. L., Lenski, S. D., & Kolloff, P. B. (2004). Washing our students clean: Internal conflicts in response to preservice teachers’ beliefs and practices. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *55*(2), 164-176.

Tomalin, B., & Stempleski, S. (1993). *Cultural awareness*. Oxford University Press.

Tomlinson, B. (2013). *Developing materials for language teaching* (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury.
Toom, A., Pyhältö, K., & Rust, F. (2015). Teachers' professional agency in contradictory times, *Teachers and Teaching*, 21(6), 615-623.
Triandis, H. C. (1995). Individualism and collectivism. Westview Press.
Tsui, A. (2003). Characteristics of Expert and Novice Teachers. In M. H. Long and J.C. Richards (Eds.), *Understanding expertise in teaching* (pp. 22-41). University of Cambridge.
Tuzlukova, V., Inguva, M., & Sancheti, P. (2019). Oman's General Foundation Programs: Focus on General Education Principles and Standards. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 9(4), p. 480-486.
Uddin, M. (2014). Teachers' pedagogical belief and its reflection on the practice in teaching writing in EFL tertiary context in Bangladesh. *European Journal of Educational Sciences*, 1(3), 58-80.
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2013). *Oman: Location Map*. Retrieved 01/03/2018 from https://reliefweb.int/map/oman/oman-location-map-2013
UNESCO. (2006). *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education*. UNESCO.
Valdiviezo, L. (2009). Bilingual intercultural education in indigenous schools: an ethnography of teacher interpretations of government policy. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 12(1), 61-79.
Valeri, M. (2019). *Oman: Politics and Society in the Qaboos State*. C. Hurst & Co.
Van de Vijver, F. J., & Leung, K. (2009). Methodological issues in researching intercultural competence. In D. K. Deardorff (Ed.), *Handbook of intercultural competence*: 403-418. Sage.
Van den Beemt, A., & Diepstraten, I. (2016). Teacher perspectives on ICT: A learning ecology approach. *Computers & Education*, *92*, 161-170.
Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. A. (2005). Theorising language teacher identities: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, 4(1), 21–44.
Verloop, N., Van Driel, J., & Meijer, P. (2001). Teacher knowledge and the knowledge base of teaching. *International journal of educational research*, 35(5), 441-461.
Verma, G., & Mallick, K. (1999). *Researching education: Perspectives and techniques*. Open University Press.
Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
Wahyudi, R. (2016). Intercultural competence: Multi-dynamic, intersubjective, critical and interdisciplinary approaches. In F. Dervin & Z. Gross (Eds.), *Intercultural competence in education: Alternative approaches for different times* (pp. 143–166). Palgrave Macmillan.
Walker, C. L., & Shore, B. M. (2015). Understanding classroom roles in inquiry education: Linking role theory and social constructivism to the concept of role diversification. *Sage Open*, *5*(4), 1-13.
Walsh, R., & Wyatt, M. (2014). Contextual factors, methodological principles and teacher cognition. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 4(4), 693.
Wang, H.-C. (2020). Facilitating English L2 learners' intercultural competence and learning of English in a Taiwanese university. *Language Teaching Research*. 00(0), 1-17.
Watt, D. (2007). On becoming a qualitative researcher: the value of reflexivity. *Qualitative Report*, 12(1), 82-101.
Weade, G., & Evertson, C. (1991). On what can be learned by observation teaching. *Theory into Practice*, 30(1), 37–45.

Westrick, J. M., & Miske, S. J. (2009). "Leadership for innovative Omani schools in the 21st century: Transforming principal identity through culturally contextualized training". In A. W. Wiseman (Ed.) *Educational Leadership: Global Contexts and International Comparisons,* (pp. 1-47). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Wilhelm, R. W., Cowart, M. F., Hume, L. M., & Rademacher, J. A. (1996). The effects of a professional development institute on preservice teachers' perceptions of their intercultural knowledge and sensitivity. *The Teacher Educator*, *32*(1), 48-61.

Williams, T. R. (2005). Exploring the impact of study abroad on students' intercultural communication skills: Adaptability and sensitivity. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 9(4), 356-371.

Winch, J. (2015). Cultural Influences in a multicultural academic workplace. *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, 3(3), 85-94.

Winckler, O. (2000). The demographic dilemma of the Arab world: The employment aspect. *Journal of contemporary history,* 37(4), 617-36.

Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Woods, P., & Jeffrey, B. (2002). The reconstruction of primary teachers' identities. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23(1), 89–106.

Worrall, J. (2020). Power and Process: Decentralisation in Oman. *Program on Governance and Local Development Working Paper*, (32). University of Gothenburg.

Wragg, E. (2012). *Introduction to classroom observation*. Routledge.

Yang, P. (2018). Developing TESOL teacher intercultural identity: An intercultural communication competence approach. *TESOL journal*, 9(3), 525-541.

Yin, Q., Yang, W., & Li, H. (2020). Blending constructivism and instructivism: A study of classroom dialogue in Singapore kindergartens. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *34*(4), 583-600.

Young, T. J., & Sachdev, I. (2011). Intercultural communicative competence: Exploring English language teachers' beliefs and practices. *Language awareness*, *20*(2), 81-98.

Young, T. J., Sercombe, P. G., Sachdev, I., Naeb, R., & Schartner, A. (2013). Success factors for international postgraduate students' adjustment: exploring the roles of intercultural competence, language proficiency, social contact and social support. *European Journal of Higher Education* 3, 151–171.

Yuen, T., & Byram, M. (2007). National identity, patriotism and studying politics in schools: a case study in Hong Kong. Compare: *A Journal of Comparative and International Education,* 37(1), 23–36.

Yunus, M. M., Salehi, H., & Amini, M. (2016). EFL Teachers' Cognition of Teaching English Pronunciation Techniques: A Mixed-Method Approach. *English Language Teaching*, 9(2), 20-42.

Zaharna, R. S. (2009). An associative approach to intercultural communication competence in the Arab World. In D. K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 179-195). Sage Publications.

Zamanian, J., & Saeidi, M. (2017). Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions, Practices and Problems Regarding Raising Students' Intercultural Awareness. *International Journal of English Linguistics,* 7(4), p257.

Zeichner, K. M., & Hoeft, M. (1996). Teacher socialization for cultural diversity: Insights for multicultural teacher education. In J. Sikula, T. J. Buttery, & E. Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 525-547). Macmillan.

Zeichner, K. M., & Liston, D. P. (1996). *Reflective teaching: An introduction*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Zheng, H. (2013). Teachers' beliefs and practices: a dynamic and complex relationship. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 41(3), 331–343.

Zheng, H. (2015). *Teacher beliefs as a complex system: English language teachers in China*. Springer International Publishing.

Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman

Principle Fifteen (The Education Council, 2017, p. 27)

Fifteenth: Education for Peace and Mutual Understanding

Education for peace and mutual understanding is achieved through reinforcing the values of tolerance, understanding, acceptance of other people, dialogue, rapprochement and mutual respect. This is achieved through the following objectives:

1. Develop respect for differences in opinion and cultural diversity.
2. Promote understanding and solidarity among different groups in society.
3. Promote positive patterns of behaviour to reinforce the values of peace and co-existence.
4. Support positive dialogue and rapprochement between different cultures.
5. Develop a culture of respecting the opinions of others.
6. Promote awareness on issues of international mutual understanding, respect and cooperation.

27

Principle Two (The Education Council, 2017, pp. 20-21)

Second: Identity and Citizenship

Citizenship involves a feeling of belongingness to the country and to its Arabic and Islamic identity as well as to its resulting rights, duties and common societal responsibilities. Omani citizenship and identity are developed according to the following objectives:

1. Provide a sound background in Islamic ideology and in the middle approach to Islam "Wasatiyyah[1]" among students.
2. Help students master the Arabic language and to feel pride in it.
3. Encourage students to feel proud of their Omani identity and history.
4. Reinforce a sense of belongingness to Islamic and Arab nations.
5. Maintain and develop Oman's civilization heritage.
6. Reinforce citizenship values.

[1] Moderation and balance

7. Develop self-responsibility and the values of social participation.
8. Ensure a balance between tradition and modernity in the social development process.
9. Support the family as the core component of society.
10. Consolidate rights and duties towards the country and society.

7.2 Appendix B: Interview schedule

General themes	(Main) Interview questions
Building rapport + Teacher background + General questions about EFL teaching + Vignette	1. Can you please introduce yourself? • *where you studied (school and college)* • *years of teaching experience* 2. What part do you enjoy the most about teaching EFL? 3. What are your main principles in teaching EFL? *Administer Vignette*
Educational experiences with intercultural teaching and IC	4. How do you think your past schooling experiences influence your teaching today; particularly on the way you address cultural and intercultural issues? Can you give examples of these experiences? 5. How do you think your (pre-service) teacher education influences your teaching today; particularly on the way you address cultural and intercultural issues? Can you give examples of these experiences? 6. Was there any focus during your pre-service education on cultural/intercultural teaching?
Beliefs and practices related to intercultural teaching and IC	7. What is your understanding of "intercultural competence" in relation to EFL teaching? 8. In your opinion, in what practical ways can the teacher raise the learner's intercultural competence? 9. Do you have certain preferences in terms of the cultural content you use in your teaching materials in the class? 10. Are there any cultural topics that you tend to avoid in class? Why?
Professional experience with intercultural teaching and IC	11. How do you think your teaching experience influences your intercultural teaching? 12. How do you think the professional development plans in your institution impact the way you address cultural and intercultural issues in the class?
Contextual factors which influence IC teaching in the classroom	13. In your opinion, what are some contextual factors that would facilitate or hinder the implementation of intercultural teaching? 14. How do you think the Omani society, if at all, influences your intercultural teaching? 15. How do you think the university impacts the way you teach in general and the way you address cultural and intercultural issues in the class in particular? 16. How do you think the different types of students impact your intercultural teaching?
Closing	17. Is there anything you would like to add at the end of the interview?

7.3 Appendix C: Vignettes

Vignette No.: 01

Please read the teaching scenario below and answer the question that follows. Please take your time to think before you respond. If you have any questions, you may ask the interviewer to clarify.

Scenario:

Ali is an Omani English language teacher at a higher education institution in Oman and teaches Omani students. In one of his lessons, he was showing his students a short documentary to improve the students' listening skills. Suddenly and while the documentary was playing, Ali noticed that one of his students leaves the classroom. The next day, he asked the student of why he left and the student said he could not watch the documentary because it had music. The student also said that he does not listen to music based on religious grounds. The teacher decided that he will be more careful next time and select listening materials which do not play music.

Question:

Could you describe your thoughts after reading the above scenario?

Vignette No.: 02

Please read the teaching scenario below and answer the question that follows. Please take your time to think before you respond. If you have any questions, you may ask the interviewer to clarify.

Scenario:

Ahmed is an Omani English language teacher at a higher education institution in Oman and teaches Omani students. As part of the teaching syllabus, he has to use an international textbook selected by his institution. In one of the teaching units in that textbook, Ahmed has to teach a reading passage on "The Wine and Beer Industry in Germany". Ahmed decided that the text is culturally inappropriate and replaced it with another text entitled "The Halwa Industry in Oman". He made sure that the new text maintains the same learning outcomes of the replaced text (key vocabulary, level of difficulty, structure, etc.).

Question:

Could you describe your thoughts after reading the above scenario?

Scenario No.: 03

Please read the teaching scenario below and answer the question that follows. Please take your time to think before you respond. If you have any questions, you may ask the interviewer to clarify.

Scenario:

Samya is an Omani English language teacher at a higher education institution in Oman and teaches Omani students. In a writing lesson on "comparison and contrast", she used the projector to show two pictures of common female dress patterns found in Oman and the West. The first picture showed the common Omani women dress (*Hijab* and *Abaya*) whereas the second picture showed a female Western dress (T-shirt and Jeans). The teacher asked her students to look at the two pictures and practice using the "compare and contrast" language they have learned. One of the female students raised her hand and commented by saying: "*the Omani women dress (hijab and abaya) is more modest whereas the Western dress lacks self-respect of women*". The teacher said "*well, thank you but let us focus on using the vocabulary words and not talk about which one is more modest".*

Question:

Could you describe your thoughts after reading the above scenario?

7.4 Appendix D: Classroom observation schedule with sample notes

Name of Teacher	*****	**Date**	
Level/ skill	1 - Reading/Writing	**Time**	
Unit/Lesson	Unit 1	**Room**	
No. of students	25 (Male 12 + Female 13)	**Length of observation**	
Role of observer	Non-participant	**Observation Code**	A-AA01-2209

Main objective(s) of the lesson	*Lesson1: Unit 1 (Our World), target vocabulary words (common, habits), predicting, identifying meaning from the context*

	Interculturally and culturally related incidents/ statements/ activities/ actions	**Time during the lesson**	**Remarks/ form of interaction/ materials used**
1	Page 4, the sentence reads: *The most common male name in Japan is Ren.* T asks ss: What is the most common name in Oman? S1: Muhammed S2: Abdullah T: Yeah, I think Muhammed is more common. Why are these common in Oman? S3: Muslim. T: Yes, Muslim names. Let us go to the next one.	00:42:00	T-Ss textbook Teacher elicits answers collectively from the whole class.
2	Page 4, one sentence reads: *Thai food is different from British food.* T asks ss: Has anyone tried Thai food? Ss: No. T: What about Indian food? S: Yes. T: Can you describe Indian food? S1: Very good. T: Ok. So usually Thai food is similar to Indian food; a little bit spicy. What about British food? Ss: *(No response)* T: British food now is a mix of everything. I don't know; that's my assumption.	00:48:00	T-Ss textbook Teacher elicits answers collectively from the whole class.
3			

General notes
• The students seemed to be quiet and sometimes reluctant to participate with the teacher especially for the first 40 minutes. (I later asked the teacher if this has anything to do with the presence of the researcher and he advised that students' behavior seemed normal). • Students' elicited answers are mostly brief and short. • The teacher follows the content and the activities of the textbook throughout the lesson. However, the teacher sometimes makes connections between the culturally related content of the book and the students' Omani context.

7.5 Appendix E: Participant information sheet for teachers

College of Social Sciences

Participant Information Sheet (For Teachers)

Title of Project: Investigating Omani EFL Teacher Beliefs and Practices of Intercultural Competence (IC) in a Higher Education Institution in Oman

Name of Researcher: **Idris Al Adawi**
Supervisors: **Dr Dely Elliot** and **Dr Sally Zacharias**

Invitation:

You are being invited to take part in a PhD study conducted by the above-named researcher from the School of Education at the University of Glasgow, UK. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.
Thank you for reading this.

Purpose of the study/benefits:

The main purpose of study is to explore Omani teachers' beliefs and practices of teaching Intercultural Competence (IC) in the EFL classroom. The study aims to understand the underpinnings of Omani teachers' current perspectives of the concept of IC and what challenges and contextual factors impact their chosen pedagogies when addressing cultural and intercultural issues in the EFL lesson. The findings will help draw implications on how policy makers, teacher educators, and other stakeholders can better orient teachers on the objectives of IC and the effective strategies in advancing intercultural teaching in higher education institutions in Oman.

Participation and withdrawal:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice and without providing a reason. In the event that you decide to withdraw, discussions will be held with you on how, if at all, any existing data will be used.

What is involved in participating:

1. You will participate in around 60 minute face-to-face interview with the researcher. The themes will be mainly about your beliefs and experiences of cultural and intercultural teaching – e.g., educational experiences, objectives, significance, implementation, contextual challenges, etc. The interview will be audio-recorded with your consent and will be held on your college premises, such as the English Language Centre.
2. Your class will be observed and audio-recorded (around) 3 times. In each classroom visit, I will be observing the whole lesson but my focus is going to be on the cultural and intercultural dimension. As a researcher, I will be as unobtrusive as possible during the lesson. Specific observation dates will be agreed on by both the researcher and the participant teacher beforehand.
3. Once your lessons are observed, you will be invited for a stimulated recall interview. During the interview, I will play some audio recordings from the observed lesson and you will be asked to recall and answer questions about these incidents.

Risks

There are no foreseen disadvantages or risks to taking part. However, in the unlikely event that you feel distressed while taking part in this study, then you may bring the issue immediately to the Counselling and Guidance Unit or the Administration Department at your college. All participants are advised that the aim of this study, in part, is to explore teachers' opinions and perspectives of including or excluding cultural content in the lesson without the need to make inappropriate references to or judgements about certain ethnic or social groups.

Confidentiality

- All information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the participants will remain confidential and will be used only and exclusively for the purposes of this study.
- The data collected (including raw field notes, audiotapes and any digitally recorded activity) will only be accessible by the researcher. In any publications resulting from this study, confidentiality will be safeguarded through the use of pseudonyms for individuals. Any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess the participant's identity will be removed.
- Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies. Please note also that because of the small sample size associated with the study, 100% confidentiality amongst the participants may be impossible to guarantee.

Usage/ Retention/ Disposal of Data

- During research, all data will be coded using pseudonyms and kept in password-secured electronic devices (offline and online) that only the researcher will be able to access.
- The results of this research will be written up as a PhD thesis. However, there is a possibility that the results will be published in a journal article or conference papers. Please note that your details will not be mentioned anywhere in any future publication. You will be referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research.
- All **personal** data which include information relating to an identified or identifiable participant will be destroyed once a successful completion of the doctoral thesis is obtained. Print material will be shredded whereas digital materials will be deleted using a removal software.
- All **research** data will be kept safe for a maximum of ten years after the successful completion of the Doctoral thesis.

Funding:

The researcher is sponsored and funded by the Omani government via the National Postgraduate Scholarship Programme represented and supervised by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Research Ethics Committee Approval

This research study has been approved by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow, UK.

For further information:

If you wish to have further information about this study, you may contact any of the following:

Researcher:	Idris Al Adawi	email:
Supervisors:	Dr Dely Elliot	email: Dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk
	Dr Sally Zacharias	email: Sally.Zacharias@glasgow.ac.uk

Complaints:

If you wish to pursue a complaint or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

7.6 Appendix F: Consent form for teachers

College of Social Sciences

Consent Form (for Teachers)

Title of Study: Investigating Omani EFL Teacher Beliefs and Practices of Intercultural Competence (IC) in a Higher Education Institution in Oman

Name of Researcher: **Idris Al Adawi**
Principal Supervisor: **Dr Dely Elliot**
Secondary Supervisor: **Dr Sally Zacharias**

1. **I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.**
2. **I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw, up to the start of data analysis, without giving any reason.**
3. **I consent to participate in semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and post-observation stimulated recall interviews.**
4. **I consent to interviews being audio-recorded.**
5. **I consent to lessons being audio-recorded.**
6. **I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification upon request.**
7. **I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.**
8. **I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my employment arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.**
9. **All names and other research and/or personal data likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.**
10. **All raw data will be treated as confidential, kept in secure storage at all times and will be accessed only by the researcher.**
11. **All research and personal data will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research.**
12. **Research data may be used in future publications, both print and online.**
13. **I agree to waive my copyright to any collected data as part of this project.**
14. **I understand that other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.**

I agree to take part in this research study ☐ I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant: ………………………………………………………… **Signature:** …………………………………………………………

Date: ……………………………………

7.7 Appendix G: Participant information sheet for students

College of Social Sciences

ورقة معلومات مشاركة في دراسة بحثية (للطلبة)

عنوان الدراسة: دراسة معتقدات وممارسات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية حول تنمية مهارات التواصل فيما بين الثقافات في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في إحدى مؤسسات التعليم العالي في سلطنة عمان.

اسم الباحث: إدريس العدوي

المشرفون على الدراسة: Dr Dely Elliot و Dr Sally Zacharias

دعوة للمشاركة

أنت مدعوٌ للمشاركةِ في هذه الدراسةِ البحثية والتي يقوم بتطبيقها الباحث المذكور أعلاه من جامعة جلاسجو بالمملكة المتحدة كجزء من متطلبات الحصول على درجة الدكتوراة في التربية. قبل أن تقرر بالمشاركة من عدمها ، من الضروري أن تدرك الغرض من القيام بهذه الدراسة وما يتطلب من المشاركة في هذا البحث. عليه أرجو منك أخذ الوقت الكافي لقراءة المعلومات التالية ومناقشتها إن شئت مع من ترغب. كما يمكنك أيضا أن تسألني بصورة مباشرة عن أي من النقاط المذكورة لإيضاح ما قد تراه مبهما. **شكرا على وقتك الثمين.**

الغرض من الدراسة \ الفوائد المرجوة

الغرض الرئيس من القيام بهذه الدراسة هو بحث العلاقة بين المحتوى الثقافي واللغوي في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في سلطنة عمان. تهدف الدراسة على وجه الخصوص إلى فهم آراء وتصورات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية وممارساتهم الصفية المتعلقة بتدريس المحتوى الثقافي. تهدف الدراسة كذلك للوصول إلى معلومات مهمة تساعد المعلمين من خلالها على تطوير فهمهم وإدراكهم في كيفية تضمين المحتويات الثقافية أثناء تدريسهم اللغة الإنجليزية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تهدف الدراسة إلى الخروج بنتائج ما من شانها خلق بيئة تعليمية أكثر إيجابية تساعدكم كطلبة على تطوير مهاراتكم اللغوية والمجتمعية.

ماذا تتضمن المشاركة في هذه الدراسة؟

سيقوم الباحث بزيارة عدد (ثلاث) محاضرات من جدولك الدراسي في مدة تتراوح بين أسبوع إلى أسبوعين. في كل زيارة سيقوم الباحث بمراقبة المحاضرة وتسجيل أحداثها ومجرياتها باستخدام جهاز تسجيل صوتي يلتقط حديث المحاضر وجميع مشاركات الطلبة، سيقتصر دور الباحث أثناء المحاضرة على الاستماع وتدوين الملاحظات دون أن يكون له أي مشاركة مباشرة مع سير المحاضرة.

المشاركة / الانسحاب

المشاركة في هذه الدراسة اختيارية. في حال قررت عدم المشاركة، سيتم التنسيق مع قسم التسجيل بالكلية لنقلك إلى مجموعة أخرى. في حال وافقت على المشاركة فلك أيضا الحق في الانسحاب في أي وقت وبدون إبداء الأسباب. في حال قررت الانسحاب في منتصف الدراسة فسوف يتم مناقشتك حول ما يمكن استخدامه من البيانات التي تم جمعها مسبقا.

المخاطر

لا توجد هناك أي مخاطر محتملة من المشاركة في هذا البحث . على الرغم من ذلك ، إن حدث وأن شعرت بمشقة أو توتر أو عدم ارتياح جراء المشاركة في هذه الدراسة أرجو منك أن تزور وحدة التوجيه والإرشاد بالكلية فورا لتلقي الدعم والمساعدة اللازمتين.

الخصوصية

- جميع البيانات التي سيتم جمعها خلال هذه الدراسة والتي من شأنها أن تعرف بهوية المشارك سيتم الحفاظ عليها بسرية تامة وسيتم استخدامها لأغراض البحث فقط.
- لن يتم الإفصاح عن البيانات الخام المراد جمعها إلا للباحث. كما سيتم المحافظة على خصوصية المشاركين في أي منشور يتمخض عن هذه الدراسة من خلال استخدام أسماء مستعارة. عليه فإن كل ما من شأنه التعريف بهوية المشارك سيتم حذفه.
- سيتم الالتزام التام بمعايير الخصوصية أثناء جمع البيانات ، إلا في حالات استثنائية تبين من خلالها نوايا اعتداء أوضرر محتمل من قبل أحد المشاركين ، عليه فإن الباحث سيكون ملزما حينها بمخاطبة المؤسسات صاحبة العلاقة فورا لتجنب أي أضرار محتملة. كما يجب التنويه أيضا أن ضمان درجة خصوصية بنسبة 100 % قد يكون مستحيلا عطفا على عدد ونوعية ومكان العينة المختارة لجمع البيانات.

استخدام البيانات والاحتفاظ بها والتخلص منها

- سيتم صياغة وتشفير البيانات المجمعة باستخدام أسماء مستعارة ثم حفظها في أجهزة الكترونية محمية بكلمة سرية لا يمكن الوصول إليها إلا من قبل الباحث.
- سيتم تضمين نتائج هذه الدراسة في أطروحة دكتوراه. من المحتمل أيضا أن يتم نشر بعض أو كل النتائج في أحد الدوريات أو المؤتمرات العلمية. في كل الحالات الآنفة لن يتم ذكر بيانات المشاركين الشخصية وسيتم الاقتصار على الإشارة إليهم بأسماء مستعارة.
- جميع البيانات **الشخصية** والتي من شأنها التعريف بهوية المشاركين سيتم التخلص منها فور اكتمال متطلبات الحصول على شهادة الدكتوراة. سيتم التخلص من المستندات الورقية باستخدام آلة تقطيع الورق (shredder) ، كما سيتم التخلص من البيانات الرقمية باستخدام برامج خاصة بإزالة البيانات.
- جميع البيانات **البحثية** سيتم الاحتفاظ بها لمدة 10 سنوات وفقا لسياسة جامعة جلاسجو. حيث أن النتائج المتمخضة من الدراسة قد تنشر في دوريات بحثية أو تعرض في مؤتمرات علمية.

التمويل

الباحث ممول من قبل حكومة سلطنة عمان عبر البرنامج الوطني للبعثات والذي تديره وتشرف عليه وزارة التعليم العالي.

موافقة لجنة أخلاقيات البحث

تم الموافقة على تطبيق هذا البحث من قبل **لجنة أخلاقيات البحث** التابعة لكلية العلوم الإنسانية بجامعة جلاسجو بالمملكة المتحدة.

لمزيد من المعلومات

لمزيد من المعلومات حول هذه الدراسة ، يرجى مخاطبة أي من التالية أسماءهم:

الباحث	Idris Al Adawi	email:
المشرف (الأساسي)	Dr Dely Elliot	email: dely.Elliot@glasgow.ac.uk
المشرف (الثانوي)	Dr Sally Zacharias	email: sally.Zacharias@glasgow.ac.uk

الشكاوى

في حال رغبت التقدم بشكوى رسمية أو إبداء أية مخاوف ناتجة عن المشاركة في هذه الدراسة بإمكانك التواصل مع مسؤول لجنة أخلاقيات البحث التابعة لكلية العلوم الإنسانية بجامعة جلاسجو ، موير هوستون Dr Muir Houston ، على العنوان البريدي التالي : muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk

7.8 Appendix H: Consent form for students

College of Social Sciences

استمارة الموافقة (طلبة)

عنوان الدراسة: دراسة معتقدات وممارسات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية حول تنمية مهارات التواصل فيما بين الثقافات في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في إحدى مؤسسات التعليم العالي في سلطنة عمان.

اسم الباحث: إدريس العدوي

المشرفون على الدراسة: Dr Dely Elliot و Dr Sally Zacharias

1. أقر بأني قرأت و فهمت ورقة معلومات المشاركة المتعلقة بالدراسة المذكورة أعلاه ، وقد أوتيت الوقت الكافي لاستيضاح جميع ما كان مبهما.
2. أقر بأن مشاركتي في هذا البحث اختيارية، وأملك الحق في الانسحاب من المشاركة متى رغبت وبدون إبداء الأسباب.
3. أوافق بأن يقوم الباحث بتسجيل المحاضرات صوتيا باستخدام جهاز تسجيل صوتي.
4. أقر بأنه سيتم الإشارة إلى المشاركين في هذه الدراسة بأسماء مستعارة.
5. أقر بأن مشاركتي في هذه الدراسة من عدمها لن يؤثر على وضعي ومستواي الدراسيين.
6. أقر بأن لي الحق في أن أطّلع على نسخه من النصوص **transcripts** في حال طلبت ذلك.
7. جميع البيانات المجمّعة من هذه الدراسة ستكون مجهولة الهوية.
8. سيتم التعامل مع جميع البيانات بسرية تامة ، وسيتم حفظها في ذاكرة آمنة في كل الأوقات ولن تكون متاحة سوى للباحث.
9. سيتم حفظ جميع البيانات في ذاكرة آمنة بحيث يمكن استخدامها مستقبلا.
10. قد يعاد استخدام بيانات البحث ،الورقية منها والرقمية، مستقبلا ضمن منشورات أكاديمية.
11. أوافق على التنازل عن حقي في الملكية الفكرية المترتبة من مشاركتي في هذا البحث.
12. أوافق بأن يستخدم باحثون آخرون البيانات المجمّعة من هذه الدراسة شريطة أن يحافظوا على خصوصيتها وسريتها.
13. أوافق بأن يستخدم باحثون آخرون اقتباسات وكلمات لي ، في منشورات وتقارير وصفحات انترنت وغيرها ، شريطة أن يتم الحفاظ على خصوصيتها وسريتها.

أوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ☐ لا أوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ☐

اسم المشارك: .... التوقيع: ....

التاريخ: ... .

7.9 Appendix I: Themes and sample coding from semi-structured interviews

01 Interviews and Vignettes.nvp - NVivo 12 Plus

File | Home | Import | Create | Explore | Share

Nodes

- Interviews and Vignettes
  - Educational and teaching experiences with IC
    - Schooling experiences with IC
      - It was a monocultural school environment
      - The focus on culture was missing
      - Now that I am a teacher
    - Teacher education and IC
      - There was no course or module on intercultural teaching
      - But intercultural training was imbedded
    - Teaching Experience and IC
      - The more experience, the better quality of teaching
      - You need professional training for that
  - The contexual factors which influence IC teaching
    - The Omani society
      - Well, as an Omani teacher
      - It is a unique society
      - Religion is a red line
    - The university
      - There are institutional lines
      - The textbook has a role

Now that I am a teacher

<Files\\Interviews 1\\Abrar int.1> - § 1 reference coded [0.54% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.54% Coverage

So, now when I reflect on these words today, I kind of see what my teacher meant at the time. I try to think of my clasroom as a socialising place where people learn from each other.

<Files\\Interviews 1\\Jalal int.1> - § 1 reference coded [1.14% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.14% Coverage

When you are a student, it is very easy to judge your teacher because you do not know what is going on behind the classroom. Now that I am a teacher, I know how difficult it is to attend to all students' needs with all the demands required by school management to finish coursework in the given timeframe.

<Files\\Interviews 1\\Maimoona int.1> - § 1 reference coded [0.95% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.95% Coverage

So as a student you will not understand, unless you are smart, what teachers were doing but if you look back, you start to think "what would I have done if I was that teacher? Would I had done something different?" It is hard to tell because each teaching situation and each type of students demands a certain way of teaching. I am a teacher now and I strongly believe in this

<Files\\Interviews 1\\Nassir int.1> - § 1 reference coded [0.83% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.83% Coverage

I think the short English languge lessons made it difficult for teachers to incorporate a lot of cultural discussion. So the focus was on improving the language skills I guess which I can understand now.

01 Interviews and Vignettes.nvp - NVivo 12 Plus

File | Home | Import | Create | Explore | Share

Paste | Cut | Copy | Merge | Clipboard | Properties | Open | Memo Link | Add To Set | Create As Code | Create As Cases | Item | Query | Visualize | Explore | Code | Auto Code | Range Code | Uncode | Coding | Case Classification | File Classification | Classification | Detail View | Sort By | Undock | Navigation View | List View | Find | Workspace

- Quick Access
  - Files
  - Memos
  - Nodes
- Data
  - Files
    - Interviews 1
    - Interviews 2
  - File Classifications
  - Externals
- Codes
  - Nodes
  - Sentiment
  - Relationships
  - Relationship Types
- Cases
- Notes
- Search
- Maps
- Output

Nodes — Search Project

Name

- The contexual factors which influence IC teaching
  - The Omani society
    - Well, as an Omani teacher
    - It is a unique society
    - Religion is a red line
  - The university
    - There are institutional lines
    - The textbook has a role
  - The classroom profile
    - Students' language level is key
    - Students play a massive role
- Perceiving and implementing IC in relation to EFL teaching
  - Intercultural teaching is important but ...
  - The meaning of IC in relation to EFL teaching
    - To know about cultural differences
    - A broader concept
  - Operating IC in the EFL classroom
    - Providing cultural knowledge
    - Utilising compare and contrast
    - Fostering critical thinking
    - Facilitating classroom communication and interaction

Drag selection here to code to a new node

Providing cultural knowledge

Reference 1 - 0.64% Coverage

would give students a particular passage which might add to the students' knowledge and would motivate them to ask questions about something they are unfamiliar with or they don't know much about,

<Files\\Interviews 1\\Nassir int.1> - § 1 reference coded [0.99% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.99% Coverage

expose the students to different cultural topics, to different texts, to different videos, to different scripts and listening about different cultures. So, it should be like they're embedded within the curriculum and the syllabus of the teaching

<Files\\Interviews 1\\Nihal int.1> - § 2 references coded [0.61% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.36% Coverage

by exposing them to some new cultural aspects that they were never exposed to at home or at school.

Reference 2 - 0.24% Coverage

so you can expose the students to some things in different cultures

<Files\\Interviews 2\\Shujoon int.2> - § 1 reference coded [2.04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.04% Coverage

I want them to be acquainted with other cultures as well and to get a clear image of what's happening outside their small world.

Summary | Reference | Text

7.10 Appendix J: Themes and sample coding from classroom observations

02 Classroom Observations.nvp - NVivo 12 Plus

File | Home | Import | Create | Explore | Share

Cut Copy Paste Merge — Clipboard | Properties Open Memo Link Add To Set Create As Code Create As Cases — Item | Query Visualize — Explore | Code Auto Code Range Code Uncode — Coding | Case Classification File Classification — Classification | Detail View Sort By Undock Navigation View List View Find — Workspace

Quick Access: Files, Memos, Nodes
Data: Files, File Classifications, Externals
Codes: Nodes, Sentiment, Relationships, Relationship Types
Cases
Notes
Search
Maps
Output

Nodes — Search Project

Name
- 6.2.1 Relating foreign cultural content to the local Omani context
- 6.2.2 The textbook as a basis for classroom instruction
- 6.2.3 Teacher as a source of cultural knowledge
- 6.2.4 Lack of student-student interaction in interculturally related discussio
- 6.2.5 The pivotal role of students' level of English

Drag selection here to code to a new node

6.2.1 Relating foreign cultural co

<Files\\Amjad C.O. 03> - § 1 reference coded [23.36% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 23.36% Coverage

T asks ss to look at pic on page 45. T asks ss to answer questions at the top: How would you describe the place where these young women are walking? What do you notice about their clothes? T: What about question number two? S: They are wearing traditional clothes. T: Thank you for that. What else. How is their dress different from the way Omani women dress? S: Short. Taboo. T: Taboo? What will happen if a woman dress like that in Oman? Ss: Killed. T: Killed?! That is extreme don't you think?! Ok, let us move to part B.	00:45:00	T elicits answers from students

<Files\\Shujoon C.O. 02> - § 2 references coded [19.61% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 14.21% Coverage

T plays a listening tape about Pow-wows, a native American gathering where they eat traditional food and dance traditional dances. A follow-up discussion: T: can you give me some examples of similar traditions here in Oman? Ss: Razha, Baraa, (traditional Omani dances) T: Very good	00:01:22	T-Ss T elici answe from stude

Summary | Reference | Text

In: Nodes | Code At: 6.2.1 Relating foreign cultural content to the local Omani context (Nodes)

7.11 Appendix K: Themes and sample coding from stimulated recall

03 Stimulated Recall.nvp - NVivo 12 Plus

Nodes

- Rationales related to teachers' pedagogical content b
  - Language should be put in context
  - It is good for their critical thinking
  - Knowledge is important
  - You have to know your priotities
- Rationales related teachers' educational and professio
  - When I was at school
  - When I was studying abroad
  - From my experience
- Rationales related to teaching context
  - There wasn't enough time
  - I was following the textbook
  - Because of their level of English

You have to know your priotities

<Files\\Abrar SR1 - Done> - § 1 reference coded [2.04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.04% Coverage

I actually wanted to build more on this topic today but unfortunately we didn't have enough time for this so I focused on the main objectives of the lesson.

<Files\\Abrar SR2 - Done> - § 1 reference coded [2.86% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.86% Coverage

it's not really connected to the topic we were discussing in the textbook so it was not a priority in the lesson. I think it is important to focus on covering the objectives of the textbook first to prepare students for their assessment.

<Files\\Muhammed SR2> - § 1 reference coded [1.04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.04% Coverage

You have got to deal with many L.O.s (*Learning outcomes*), or let's say objectives upon which studnets will be tested. So, you don't have that enough time for everything. You have to know your priorities.

<Files\\Nassir SR2 - Done> - § 1 reference coded [3.26% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.26% Coverage

I didn't put them to work in groups at all, because this would waste my time as I think I have to cover many things, but it could be good to let them mix and share their different

7.12 Appendix L: List of codes, themes, subthemes, and sub-sub-themes

(A) Semi-structured interviews and vignettes

<table>
<tr><th>Themes</th><th>Sub-themes</th><th>Sub-sub-themes</th><th>Codes</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="7">Educational and Teaching Experiences with IC</td><td rowspan="3">Schooling Experiences with IC</td><td>“It was a monocultural environment”</td><td>Only Omani teachers
Only Omani students
Monocultural environment
Similar cultural backgrounds</td></tr>
<tr><td>“The focus on culture was missing”</td><td>Culture was missing in the lesson
Cultural content unnoticeable
Focus on language
Teaching language forms</td></tr>
<tr><td>“Now that I am a teacher…”</td><td>Now that I’m a teacher
Reflecting on past schooling experiences
My views changed</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Teacher Education and IC</td><td>“There was no course or module on intercultural teaching”</td><td>No module on intercultural teaching
No focus on teaching culture
Focus on English literature</td></tr>
<tr><td>“But intercultural training was embedded”</td><td>Learn from foreign teachers
Intercultural training was embedded
Extra-curricular activities during BA</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Teaching experience and IC</td><td>“The more experience, the better quality of IC teaching”</td><td>Teaching is an ongoing learning experience
Understanding students’ cultural preferences
Understanding students’ needs</td></tr>
<tr><td>“You need professional training for that”</td><td>In-service professional development is poor
More specialised IC training is needed
teachers’ responsibility to develop professionally</td></tr>
</table>

The contextual factors which influence intercultural teaching	The Omani society	"Well, as an Omani teacher"	As an Omani teacher I know the Omani culture I understand my Omani students Making the lesson content more Omani-like
		"It is a unique society"	Only specific to Oman The influence of students' parents on intercultural teaching Filtering inappropriate cultural content Avoiding taboos
		"Religion is a red line"	Religion is inseparable from culture Avoiding religious discussions in the lesson Islam plays a huge role
	The university	"There are institutional lines"	policies of the university institutional authority teacher's voice internal regulations
		"The textbook has a role"	cultural content of the textbook culturally-oriented textbook textbook includes different cultural perspectives some unsuitable cultural content must follow the textbook
	The classroom profile	"Various student-related factors"	Different types of students Student's age Students' nationality Students' attitudes
		"Students' English level"	Primary aim of the lesson is linguistic competence Intercultural discussion requires linguistic competence

			Omani cultural content is easier for students
Perceiving and implementing IC in relation to EFL teaching	“Intercultural teaching is important but …”		Intercultural teaching is important Linguistic competence is not everything raising the learners’ language proficiency is a priority
	The meaning of IC in relation to EFL teaching practice	“To know about cultural differences”	Cultural knowledge Knowing cultural differences Being familiar with other cultures
		A broader concept	Sociolinguistic meanings IC is not only about *what* but *how* and *why*
	Operating IC in the EFL classroom	Providing cultural knowledge	Providing cultural knowledge unlearn pre-conceived misjudgements stereotypes provide students with new cultural content
		Utilising “compare and contrast”	Compare and contrast Identify similarities and differences Without judging others
		Fostering critical thinking	Asking why Not challenging students’ pre-determined values Question students’ stereotypes
		Facilitating classroom communication and interaction	Working in groups Utilising a communicative approach Eliciting students’ cultural experiences

(B) Classroom observation

Themes	Codes
Relating foreign cultural content to the local Omani context	What about Oman? The Omani society Highlighting cultural differences Highlighting cultural similarities Do we have this in Oman?
The textbook as a basis for classroom instruction	Adhering to the content of the textbook Cultural topics of the textbook Modifying some content in the textbook Supplementing the textbook with external materials
Teacher as a source of cultural knowledge	Sharing stereotypes Teacher's cultural experiences Sharing cultural knowledge with students
Lack of student-student interaction in interculturally related discussion	Lack of student-student interaction Teacher-student interaction Teacher's talking time
The pivotal role of students' level of English	Elaborating culturally-related discussions Asking *why* questions in advanced levels Students' short sentences during dialogues

(C) Stimulated Recall

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Rationales related to teachers' pedagogical content beliefs	"Language should be put in context"	Language should be put in context Local content is more interesting Local content makes learning easier
	"It is good for their critical thinking"	To raise students critical thinking skills Asking students provoking questions Encourage students to think Asking more *why* questions To elicit students' opinions
	"Knowledge is important"	To make students aware Students do not know much To know the cultural differences Information about cultures
	"You have to know your priorities"	Focusing on the main objectives Culture was not a priority in the lesson
Rationales related to the teacher's educational and professional experiences	"When I was at school"	Teacher's knowledge as a learner Remembering schoolteachers Having similar learning experiences at school
	"When I was studying abroad"	studying abroad experience with cultural diversity abroad
	"From my teaching experience"	From my teaching experience I used to teach it this way
Rationales related to the teaching context	"Because of their level of English"	Some students are able to talk more level of English affects participation Level 4 students share more Students can share more in Arabic
	"I was following the textbook"	We are restricted with the textbook It is included in the textbook unit I had to go through the content of the book
	"There was not enough time"	I wanted to discuss more but time So many learning objectives to cover That would waste time