

# **Language Teacher Cognition of Academic Literacies: Narrative Case Studies of Female EFL Teachers in Saudi Universities**

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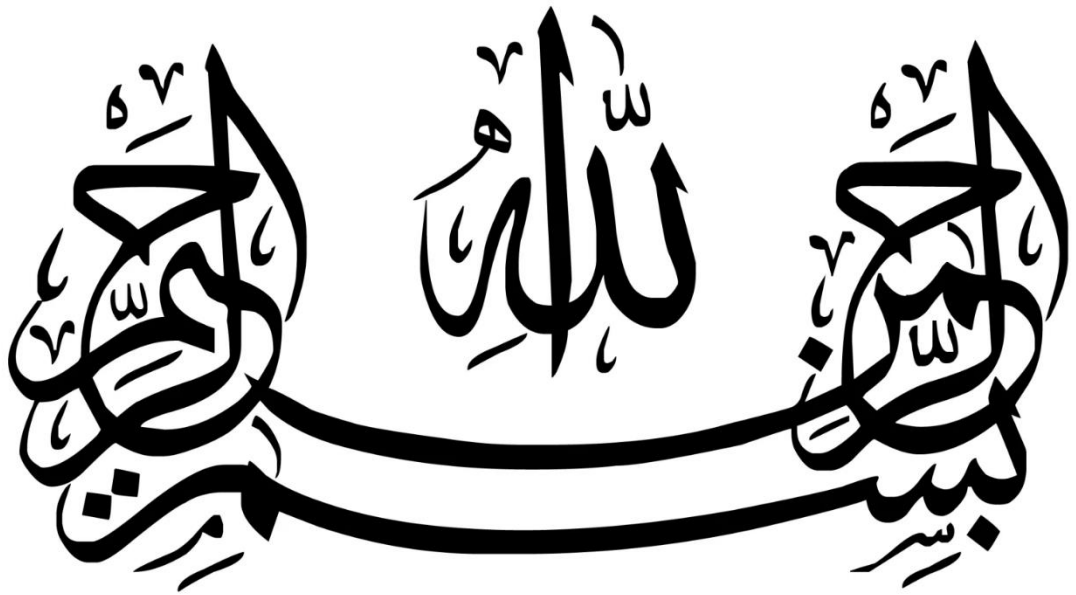
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*In the name of Allah, most gracious and merciful.*

## Abstract

The educational system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has undergone significant transformations since 2016, driven by the *Human Capability Development Program of Saudi Vision 2030* (SV2030). The primary aim of this program is to enhance the country's global competitiveness through education. In this context, English education becomes pivotal, and specifically English as a foreign language (EFL) in higher education. In KSA, students enrolling at university must complete the preparatory year program where they learn EFL alongside academic literacies (AcLits) including critical thinking, database searching, synthesising, academic conventions, formal and informal registers, and proficiency in various genres of communication. This means that EFL teachers are expected to possess both subject matter expertise and AcLits skills to teach these to their students. By guiding students through language mediation and facilitating their acquisition of AcLits, EFL teachers contribute to helping students navigate the challenges of their disciplines and to academic and professional success. Hence the question: How can Saudi's MOE ensure that EFL teachers are adequately prepared for the task?

The study employs cultural-historical activity theory to examine language teacher cognition, aiming to uncover their knowledge, beliefs, and teaching practices regarding AcLits. The research uses contradiction as a historically accumulated structural system to highlight the tensions, absence, or conflicts in the AcLits phenomenon. Narrative case studies involving six female EFL teachers at two Saudi universities were conducted. Qualitative data collection methods, such as reflective accounts, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and relevant AcLits documents were used to examine the connection between teachers' cognition and its impact on teaching practices.

The findings from this study indicate that participating EFL teachers demonstrated a vague understanding of AcLits, primarily equating them with basic study skills. Consequently, EFL teachers face challenges in effectively and consistently integrating these literacies into their instructional practices. The lack of sufficient pre-service training, education, and professional development are factors. Teachers' primary focus was on facilitating students' academic success without negatively impacting their

grade point average, resulting in an emphasis on exam-oriented skills. When attempting to incorporate AcLits aspects into the classroom, the instruction often lacked a systematic and sustained scaffolded approach. Moreover, teacher-led discussions relied mainly on lecturing, limiting interaction in a highly structured classroom setting. The study identified significant gaps in students' prior English preparation, particularly in secondary schools. Furthermore, the constrained time available for language instruction during the preparatory year program and the challenges in implementing the latest advancements in language teaching methodology, specifically the communicative approach, led teachers to prioritise developing only students' English language proficiency.

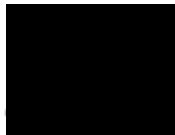
By nurturing teachers' AcLits skills, KSA can bolster its education system and incorporate the SV2030 goals. The significance of teachers dedicated to fostering AcLits in KSA cannot be understated, emphasising the urgent need for high-quality, sustainable professional development programs. Policymakers and language teacher-training providers share a responsibility to ensure the successful implementation of AcLits. Whether through pre-service training or ongoing career development, comprehensive programs are required to equip teachers with a profound understanding of AcLits principles and effective integration strategies, thereby cultivating a generation of internationally competitive students.

## Declaration

I, Eshraq Allehaby, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Language Teacher Cognition of Academic Literacies: Narrative Case Studies of Female EFL Teachers in Saudi Universities* is no more than 80,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

Signature:

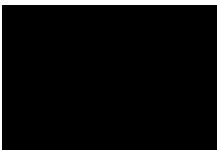


Date: 27/05/2024

## Ethics Declaration

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the application ID: HRE20-081.

Signature:



Date: 27/05/2024

## Acknowledgements

﴿عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ﴾ - سورة العلق  
*Taught man what he never knew (The Quran 96:5)*

First and foremost, I express my deepest gratitude to Allah Almighty for granting me the strength, knowledge, ability, and opportunity to conduct and successfully complete this research study. Without His blessings, this accomplishment would not have been possible.

I am incredibly thankful to my supervisors, Dr. Oksana Razoumova and Professor Fiona Henderson, for their invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout my academic journey. Their expertise, dedication, and mentorship have significantly shaped my research and overall development. Their insightful feedback, constructive criticism, and encouragement have continually motivated me to strive for excellence. I am truly fortunate to have had the opportunity to work under their mentorship, and I am indebted to them for shaping me into a better researcher and scholar.

My gratitude extends to Victoria University for providing an exceptional educational experience. The dedication of the faculty, the support of the staff, and the engaging learning environment have significantly contributed to my personal and academic growth. I appreciate the university's commitment to excellence and the valuable opportunities it has afforded me. Victoria University has had a profound impact on my educational journey, and I am grateful for the invaluable experiences I have gained.

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## List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
AcLits	Academic Literacies
Aramco	American workers in Arabian American Oil Company
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework Council
BAK	Beliefs, Assumptions, and Knowledge
BANA	Britain, Australia, and North America
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CEA	Commission of English Language Program Accreditation
CDST	Complexity dynamic systems theory
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CELTA	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
CHAT	Cultural-Historical Activity Theory
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CoP	Community of Practice
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CT	Critical Thinking
DN	Denied from final exam
DoE	Diploma of Education
DP	Discursive Psychological
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGP	English for General Purposes
ELC	English Language Centre
EMI	English as a Medium of Instruction
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
GPA	Grade Point Averages
HCDP	Human Capability Development Program
HE	Higher Education
H-PBL	Hybrid Problem-Based Learning

ICEAT	International Company for Education and Advanced Training
ICC	Intercultural Competences
IEAP	Intensive English for Academic Purposes
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
iEN	National Education Portal
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LAYS	Learning-adjusted Years of Schooling
LCE	Learner-Centred Education
LTC	Language Teacher Cognition
MoE	Ministry of Education
NAPLAN	Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy
NCAAA	National Centre for Evaluation and Academic Accreditation
NILE	Norwich Institute for Language Education
NTP20	National Transformation Program 2020
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEOLT	Professional Educational Occupation License Test
PGAT	Post Graduate Admission Test
PPP	Presentation, Practice and Production
PST	Pre-Service Teacher
PYP	Preparatory Year Program
REAP	Regular English for Academic Purposes
Qiyas	The National Centre for Assessment
SLTE	Second Language Teacher Education
SRQs	Selected-response questions
STEP	Standardised Test of English Proficiency
SV2030	Saudi Vision 2030
TED	Technology, Entertainment, Design
TPD	Teachers' professional development
Univ.A	University A

Univ.B

University B

ZPD

Zone of proximal development

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## Conference Presentations, Publications and Awards

- Allehaby, E. (2024, August). 3-Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition: Runner-Up and People's Choice Winner. Presentation at the ISILC HDR Student Competition, Victoria University.
- Allehaby, E. (2020, December 3). *Female English language teachers' beliefs and practices of intercultural awareness in Saudi tertiary education*. Presentation at the ISILC HDR Student Conference, theme: 'Maintaining the place for high-quality research', Social: Art, Education, and Psychology, Victoria University.
- Allehaby, E. (2022, October 15). *Language teacher perceptions and practice of intercultural awareness: An application of cultural-historical activity theory in a Saudi Arabian university*. Poster presented at the 7th Saudi Scientific Symposium in Australia, University of Sydney. Awarded first place in the humanities category.
- Allehaby, E. (2023, November 19–21). *Academic literacies: A narrative case studies of female EFL teachers' cognition in Saudi universities*. Individual paper presented at the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (AALA) Annual Conference, 'Resilience, Creativity, and Innovation in Applied Linguistics,' Wollongong, Australia.
- Allehaby, E. (2023, November 19–21). *Language teacher perceptions and practice of intercultural awareness: An application of cultural-historical activity theory in a Saudi Arabian university*. Poster presentation at the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (AALA) Annual Conference, 'Resilience, Creativity, and Innovation in Applied Linguistics,' Wollongong, Australia.
- Allehaby, E. (2023, November 26–30). *Academic literacies: A narrative case studies of female EFL teachers' cognition in Saudi universities*. Individual paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Annual Conference, 'Voice, Truth, Place: Critical Junctures for Educational Research,' Melbourne, Australia. Secomb Conference and Travel Fund.
- Allehaby, E. (2023, November 26–30). *Language teacher perceptions and practice of intercultural awareness: An application of cultural-historical activity theory in a Saudi Arabian university*. Poster presentation at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Annual Conference, 'Voice, Truth, Place: Critical Junctures for Educational Research,' Melbourne, Australia. Secomb Conference and Travel Fund.
- Allehaby, E., Razoumova, O., & Ciabatti, N. (in press). Intercultural awareness in the academic English classroom at a Saudi university: An investigation into teachers' perspectives and practices. In H. R'boul (Ed.), *Intercultural communication education and research in the Middle East and North Africa*. Routledge.

## **Dedication**

**To my beloved parents, Zain Fageera and Sultan Allehaby,**

This achievement is not just mine but also a testament to your unwavering belief in me. Your high expectations have been the wind beneath my wings, propelling me towards success. You instilled in me a love for knowledge and the virtues of perseverance and humility. Your wholehearted support in my academic endeavours, coupled with immense sacrifices such as relocating to Australia, has profoundly shaped my journey.

Leaving our homeland to settle in Australia and embracing retirement in a foreign land was a selfless choice made to afford me opportunities you perhaps never had. The joyous moments we've shared and the hurdles we've overcome here have only fortified our family bond. Your continuous prayers, love, and encouragement have been my pillars of strength.

To my dear brothers, your selfless sacrifices have not gone unnoticed. Taking on our father's responsibilities and duties, your unwavering love and support have been a constant source of comfort and encouragement. You have played an integral role in this journey, and I am deeply grateful for your presence in my life.

To my cherished nephews and nieces, who often ask when I will return—you are growing up so quickly. Though I'm not there in person, my heart is always with you. I eagerly anticipate the day when I can return and fulfil my role as an aunt, sharing in your lives and creating memories together. Your innocence and simple queries remind me of the preciousness of family and the joy of being part of your lives.

I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to my friends I have met in beautiful Melbourne—May Al-Hajery, Ghina Allahu, Ghalia Allahu, Fatima Al-Authman, Ekhlal Bawazeer, Dr Mona Basali, Hanan Alsoly, Al-Batool Al-Zaheani and Dr Heba Allihibi. Your support, especially your readiness to listen during my PhD journey, has been invaluable. The camaraderie and understanding we have shared have enriched my experiences in profound ways.

A special acknowledgement to my twin, Salha, with whom I've always been deeply connected, despite our paths often leading us to different places. Our time together may be brief, but our bond is enduring and profound. Our parallel journeys, though physically apart, are united by a strong and heartfelt connection. Your presence in my life, even from a distance, has been a source of joy and strength.

To Miss. Khlood Siam, my business friend, our shared aspirations for 'Sparks' will soon be realised. Your partnership and vision have been instrumental in this pursuit.

In remembrance, I honour all the dear family members who passed away during my time in Australia. Though we were unable to bid them a final farewell, they forever hold a special place in our hearts. They are remembered, loved, and dearly missed.

Lastly, a tribute to Melbourne itself, with its unique blend of bagels, coffee, and a supportive community that has positively transformed my attitude towards life. Thank you, Melbourne, for being an integral part of my story.

This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

# 1 Introduction

The impetus for this research originates from my experiences in various educational milieus, which highlighted stark differences between the pedagogical approaches of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Australian education systems. In 2016, I became acquainted with the KSA government's *Saudi Vision 2030* (SV2030) blueprint, an ambitious plan to transform the economy, including education. Inherent was a strong focus on reforming the existing education system. Higher Education (HE) and the enhancement of skills for the future, including higher-order thinking, were identified as critical for the country's development and international standing. In 2018 as an English language teacher, I strove to equip students with crucial academic skills via English language pedagogy and discipline-based learning.

My observations shed light on the hurdles that KSA teachers encounter, especially when innovating their teaching. For instance, while teaching in KSA, I noticed that the educational approach often emphasised rote memorisation and teacher-centred instruction. In this system, teachers appear to be the dominant speakers in the classroom, and students often only acted as receivers of information. Interaction is limited, as the system tends to position teachers as the sole authority and role models, leaving little room for students to actively participate or share their perspectives.

In contrast, during my experience in Australia, the educational approach was much more student-centred. Teachers encouraged students to take an active role in their learning by providing ample opportunities for them to share their opinions, particularly in tutorial sessions. This approach seems to better foster a learning environment where independent thinking and reflective discussions are highly valued, allowing students to engage more deeply with the material and with each other. The complex relationship between knowledge,

belief, and practice captivated my attention, with a particular interest in language teacher cognition as conceptualised by Borg (2003, 2006, 2015, 2019).

Language Teacher Cognition (LTC) is an intricate web of personalised knowledge, beliefs, and convictions on which language teachers rely. It is shaped by factors including personal experiences, self-reflection, education background, professional development, teachers' perceptions of students' abilities, and cultural influences (Borg, 2003; Farrell, 2020; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Johnson & Golombek, 2011a; Macalister, 2016; Nguyen, 2017; Siddiqui et al., 2020; Whyte et al., 2022). A teacher who believes in the importance of student-centred learning may adopt interactive teaching methods, whereas one with traditional views might prefer lecture-style instruction and delivery (Kaymakamoglu, 2018). Understanding these factors is crucial for tailoring teacher-education programs to effectively address specific needs and rectify misconceptions, thereby promoting evidence-based practices (Macalister, 2016).

I was aware that not all teachers in KSA HE had had exposure to newer constructivist theories and research. Despite research on academic competencies and language teacher capabilities, studies focusing specifically on the KSA context are notably lacking. As such, this study is crucial for KSA to achieve its SV2030 goals of advancement and competitiveness.

At the heart of this study, I identify how teachers are responding to the challenges they face implementing the goals of SV2030. There is a need to understand how teachers' perceptions of these challenges influence their teaching practices, and in turn, how this affects the attainment of SV2030 goal of enhancing 'Future Skills' (Human capability development program, 2021), identified in this study as Academic Literacies (AcLits). The research primarily focuses on LTC's role in AcLits. However, focusing solely on LTC, as noted by Burns et al. (2015), can be oversimplified and can produce a teacher deficit and blame focus.

Hence I extended the study by looking firstly at LTC and then using the perspective of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1987, 2015) to deepen my knowledge. Investigating LTC through the lens of CHAT offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how teachers' beliefs, practices, and professional identities are shaped by broader political, sociocultural, and historical contexts. CHAT places great emphasis on the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environments. This suggests that teacher cognition is not developed in isolation but is deeply influenced by the cultural tools, community norms, and institutional structures in which teachers engage. As Lantolf and Thorne (2006) highlight, AcLits involve the engagement with various semiotic resources and are continuously (re)shaped by the rules, norms, and expectations of academic discourse communities of practice.

## **1.1 Research Context**

The following section outlines the context of the research. It emphasises the importance of incorporating AcLits into English language teaching, particularly in the preparatory year program (PYP). Additionally, it differentiates between English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes and AcLits.

### **1.1.1 Transformation and Globalisation: KSA's *Vision 2030*, English Proficiency, and Academic Literacies**

Geopolitical shifts, underscored by events such as 9/11 and the Arab Spring, have profoundly changed the Middle East region's intellectual and policy perspectives (Barnawi, 2018). The Saudi government is actively moving from its traditional oil-based economic model, established in the 1930s, to a knowledge-driven paradigm, focusing on the cultivation of a knowledge workforce and new industries (Yusuf, 2017), embodied in the SV2030 strategic

initiative (Figure 1.1), launched in 2016 by His Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (KSA, 2022).

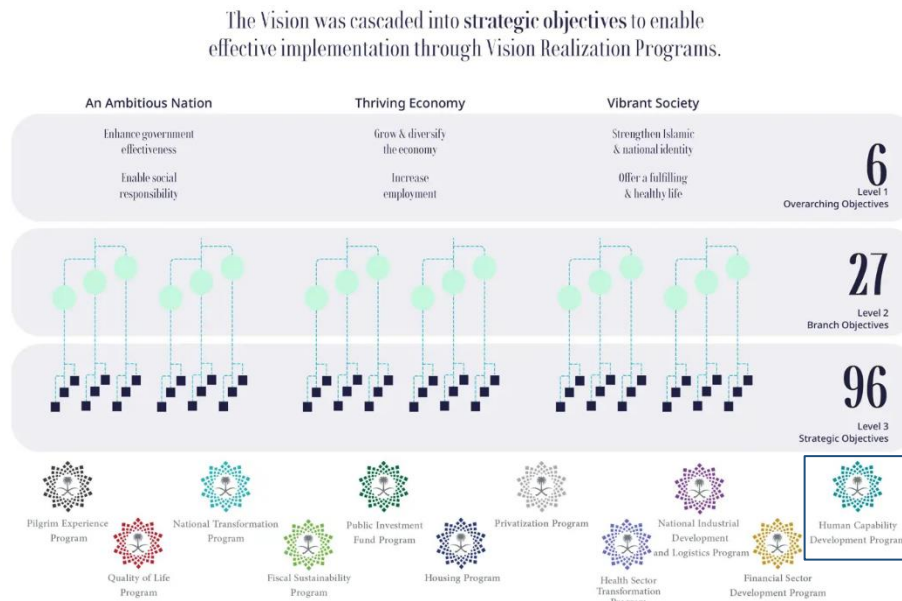
The Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE) outlined strategic objectives according to the aspirations of SV2030, focusing on enhancing teacher recruitment processes, creating more innovative learning environments, and modernising the curricula. The English language is now the world's lingua franca, facilitating international communication, especially the internationalisation of tertiary education (Alkhannani, 2021; Alzahrani, 2017; Barnawi, 2018; Canagarajah, 2013; Jenkins, 2015; Le Ha, 2013; Phillipson, 2009). Likewise, the digital realm, characterised by rapid technological advances, predominantly operates in English. The academic world is now rife with research, literature, and scientific publications more accessible to those proficient in English (Bukhari, 2022). This finds resonance in KSA's education sector, prompting discussions and decisions about its role as the prominent medium of instruction<sup>1</sup> in HE.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by Macaro (2020), English Medium Instruction (EMI) is 'the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions in which the majority of the population's first language is not English' (p. 534).

**Figure 1.1**

*Strategic Objectives of Saudi Vision 2030*



*Note.* Strategic Objectives of Saudi Vision 2030. Adapted from ‘An ambitious vision for an ambitious nation: Overview,’ by Saudi Vision 2030, 2023 (<https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en/vision-2030/overview/>). CC BY.

In the *National Transformation Program 2020* (NTP20), the General Investment Authority of KSA set ambitious targets to attract foreign investment, with proficiency in the English language being key. The NTP20 delineates specific objectives for the MoE, highlighting international competencies, digital education, and the importance of English proficiency (Khan & Iqbal, 2020). As shown in Table 1.1, major initiatives include professional development and support for teachers such as digital education, and prioritising English proficiency through the establishment of the Centre for English Language Education Development. Allocating a significant budget for a national strategy reflects a holistic approach, designed to integrate modern English teaching methodologies with global academic and commercial aspirations.

**Table 1.1***Key Initiatives and Budgets as Outlined in NTP20 (2015-2020)*

<b>Ministry of Education Initiative</b>	<b>Cost<sup>2</sup></b>
The comprehensive framework for continuing professional development for teachers and educational leaders	2,000,000
Shifting to digital education to support student and teacher progress	1,600,000
Reducing the administrative burdens of teachers and education leaders	750,000
Develop a national strategy to upgrade the teaching profession	500,000
Improve international study scholarship program	48,000
Centre for English Language Education Development	49,990
Establish the e-service framework for universities	90,000
Establish a framework to align university graduates with labour market needs	48,000
Develop curriculum assessment System	1,300,000

*Note.* Key Initiatives and Budgets as Outlined in NTP20 (2015–2020), Ministry of Education. From ‘Appendix: 2016 Initiatives for the National Transformation Program’ (pp. 100–102), in National Transformation Program 2020, 2016. Source: [https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/saudi\\_arabia\\_ntp\\_en.pdf](https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/saudi_arabia_ntp_en.pdf).

Complementing this in 2021, the *Human Capability Development Program* (HCDP) was launched (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.3). To prepare Saudi students to navigate global challenges, it prioritises global competitiveness, employability, and the requisite skills. Through e-training and on-the-job training initiatives, the Human Resource Development Fund’s on-the-job training has addressed the skills gap, aiding Saudis in securing meaningful employment. The adoption of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in certain subjects in Saudi HE institutions predates the introduction of SV2030, evidence of KSA’s growing commitment to global education norms, despite the debates about the effectiveness of English instruction and concerns of sidelining Arabic in HE (Al-Kahtany et al., 2016; Almohaimeed & Alnasser, 2022; Alwazna, 2023; Daraghmeh et al., 2021). As KSA continues its trajectory towards a

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<sup>2</sup> The total cost, in Saudi Riyal, of the initiative for five fiscal years, from 2015–2016 to 2019–2020, was borne by the government, excluding the contribution of the private sector to this initiative.

knowledge-centric global economy, English proficiency stands out as a focal asset (Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023; Bunaiyan, 2019; Yusuf, 2017).

Theoretically, the required competencies can be encompassed under the umbrella of AcLits. This concept denotes a multifaceted set of skills essential for achieving academic and societal advancement in English environments (Dooley & Grellier, 2020; Lillis, 2019; Street, 2004). AcLits extends beyond mere linguistic proficiency to encompass a nuanced understanding of academic, cultural, and rhetorical conventions in English academic contexts. This framework is pivotal for various stakeholders, including the government, teachers, and students, as it aligns with the nation's broader educational and developmental goals. In KSA, AcLits enables an opportunity for traditional Islamic pedagogies and global academic standards to converge, rather than simply superimposing Western education models such as Britain, Australia, and North America (BANA). The result could be a harmonious blend that respects the cultural and educational richness of KSA. For teachers, especially those in HE, mastering AcLits equips them to implement policies more effectively, enhancing both their own professional development and students' learning outcomes (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

### **1.1.2 Academic Literacies in KSA's Preparatory Year Program: Rationale and Position**

The rising importance of English language proficiency in Saudi universities highlights its role in academic success, especially given the move towards EMI in disciplines like engineering and medicine (Al-Khasawneh, 2023). The concept of AcLits extends beyond traditional language skills to include cognitive and analytical capabilities crucial for success in HE, which combined with exposition, clarification, and conclusion, encourage effective communication in specific academic fields (Lillis & Tuck, 2016; Weideman, 2018).

Many HE institutions in the Middle East have strategically structured their PYP EAP courses to introduce AcLits concepts to students, as highlighted by Green (2020). However, the approach in KSA is distinct, with a more specific linguistic orientation, focusing primarily on language development rather than the broader spectrum of AcLits concepts (Al-Ghamdi, 2021a; Al-Seghayer, 2021b). EAP courses are typically undertaken before students move to their main disciplines, where English is the primary medium of instruction. Therefore, it is logical to embed AcLits in EAP courses in KSA HE settings and to look for their presence within these courses. While the introduction of PYPs by various KSA universities has led to similar mission and vision statements, there is considerable heterogeneity in their structure (Alghamdi, 2017). Some concentrate on English-centric undergraduate courses, whereas others blend intensive English training with foundational courses in science or pre-medicine.

One primary issue regarding the integration of AcLits into Saudi HE is that the majority of students have fairly low English proficiency. Green (2020) argues that although Saudi HE institutions require a 5.0 or 5.5 score in International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (equivalent to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR] B1 to B2) for undergraduate entry, most universities rely on internal assessment systems. The actual English proficiency level of these HE students is in fact even lower, perhaps as low as IELTS 4.0 or 4.5 (equivalent to CEFR A2 to B1) (Green, 2020). Other research states that AcLits could be progressively taught at an earlier stage in HE (Bock, 1988; Boughey, 2000; Gunn et al., 2011; Picard, 2006b). While AcLits is seen as a Western academic tradition and may seem different from Islamic cultural assumptions, it has great potential in KSA, given its underlying universal principles of embracing diverse literacies and contextual understanding.

A pivotal policy shift between 2005 and 2007, marked the universal adoption of PYP across both public and private universities in the Kingdom — encompassing 28 public and 27 private institutions (Ahmad et al., 2021b; Mohammed, 2023). The PYP was conceived as a strategic initiative to bridge the educational gap between secondary and tertiary levels, placing a pronounced emphasis on enhancing English proficiency (Figure 1.2) (Al-Shehri, 2017; Khoshaim, 2017).

This implementation highlights decades of evolving educational priorities, culminating in the recognition of English not only as a crucial academic skill but also as an indispensable international tool. However, the PYP's dual focus on English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) presents a significant challenge. It requires students to not only achieve fluency in English but also to master domain-specific terminologies related to their academic majors. This dual mandate highlights the program's ambitious goal to equip students with the linguistic and specialised skills necessary for success in both academic and professional realms. However, this approach also raises the question of why the PYP in HE continues to emphasise EGP when students should ideally be prepared with general English skills before entering postsecondary education, allowing them to focus more on AcLits in HE.

**Figure 1.2**

*English's Integration into Saudi Education to its Role as EMI in Higher Education Learning*

<b>Late 1920s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First taught in schools by non-Saudi Arab teachers (Al-Seghayer, 2014c).</li> <li>Ambiguous rationale for introduction, possibly influenced by neighbouring countries.</li> <li>Cultural concerns about impact on Arabic/Islamic identity.</li> </ul>
<b>1930s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English introduced post-oil discovery for business purposes (Al-Johani, 2009).</li> <li>Scholarship Preparation School established in 1936 in Makkah.</li> </ul>
<b>1940s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EFL instruction officially introduced at intermediate and secondary levels.</li> <li>English became compulsory at the Islamic Law College in Makkah, taught 2 hours per week for 4 years (Faruk, 2013).</li> </ul>
<b>1950s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English included in intermediate and secondary education syllabus (Al-Abdulkader, 1978).</li> <li>King Saud University, the first to establish an English department, was founded.</li> </ul>
<b>1970s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English gains importance due to economic value and foreign companies, especially Aramco.</li> <li>MoE starts special programs for training English language teachers.</li> <li>First English department for female students established at the Women's College of Education in Makkah.</li> <li>Expansion of universities (Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud, King Fahd of Petroleum and Minerals, King Faisal) with English departments and language canterers.</li> </ul>
<b>1980s-1990s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in weekly English class hours in intermediate and high schools.</li> <li>Globalisation and Saudization policies increase the need for English proficiency.</li> <li>Official acknowledgment of ESP in academia, though still in early stages.</li> <li>Umm Al-Qura University expands with English departments and language canterers.</li> </ul>
<b>2000s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integration of ESP in university programs for fields like medicine, engineering, and business.</li> </ul>
<b>2004</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Saudi MoE allocated a significant budget to introduce English instruction in grade 6 of primary school (Alsuhaibani et al., 2023).</li> </ul>
<b>2005</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MoE endorsed preparatory-year intensive English programs at all higher education institutes to enhance first-year students' linguistic and communicative competencies.</li> </ul>
<b>2011</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MoE launched the English Education Development project to (i) introduce English as a compulsory subject in the 4th grade of primary school and (ii) enhance the quality of English education at the secondary school level (Al-Mwzaiji &amp; Muhammad, 2023).</li> </ul>
<b>2012</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English introduced in primary schools (grades 4 and 5).</li> </ul>
<b>2015</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 'Education for Career' program was launched by the MoE, emphasising English education, particularly focusing on ESP, EAP, and vocational/occupational purposes.</li> </ul>
<b>2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English introduced in the first grade of primary education (Alnasser, 2022).</li> </ul>

The challenges in achieving the PYP's dual focus on English proficiency underline the importance of examining its implementation and the effectiveness of its teaching strategies. Alghamdi (2017) identifies the absence of a unified professional development program in the PYP. Teachers demonstrated diverse teaching approaches, not aligned with the program's core curriculum and goals. The research highlighted a disconnect between the contractors' role in providing teachers and the need for a cohesive team strategy to ensure consistent, high-quality learning experiences. Teachers need to align their practices with the program's broader objectives and the goals of the subsequent academic year, highlighting the challenges in creating a unified teaching framework in the PYP. Within the English Language Centres (ELCs), there is an understanding of the evolving nature of academic English, guiding students from EGP towards ESP. The research highlights that universities have their unique take on English teaching, using a mix of EGP, ESP, and EAP (Alshumaimeri, 2013).

While diverse teaching methods reflect each institution's independence, they raise concerns about possible inconsistencies in students' learning outcomes despite the objective of imparting holistic English language skills. To achieve this, ELCs are embracing contemporary teaching technologies to enhance learning and achieve the goals prioritised in PYP while emphasising practical applications of English in real-world contexts (Alshammari, 2018; Asmari, 2015; Elshahawy, 2020; Kabouha & Elyas, 2015). The use of technology in PYPs, such as interactive learning tools supports the development of self-reliant learners (Albatti, 2022; Chan, 2016). Regular feedback mechanisms and cultural immersion are integral to these programs, enhancing students' ability to effectively communicate in both written and spoken English. Career-specific English courses are also a key feature, aligning with the objective that students should meet the minimum requirements in international English tests by the end of their PYP year (Alblowi, 2016; Elshahawy, 2020). Further details on the universities' PYP can be found in Chapter 4.

### 1.1.3 Academic Literacies vs. English for Academic Purposes: Exploring Terminology

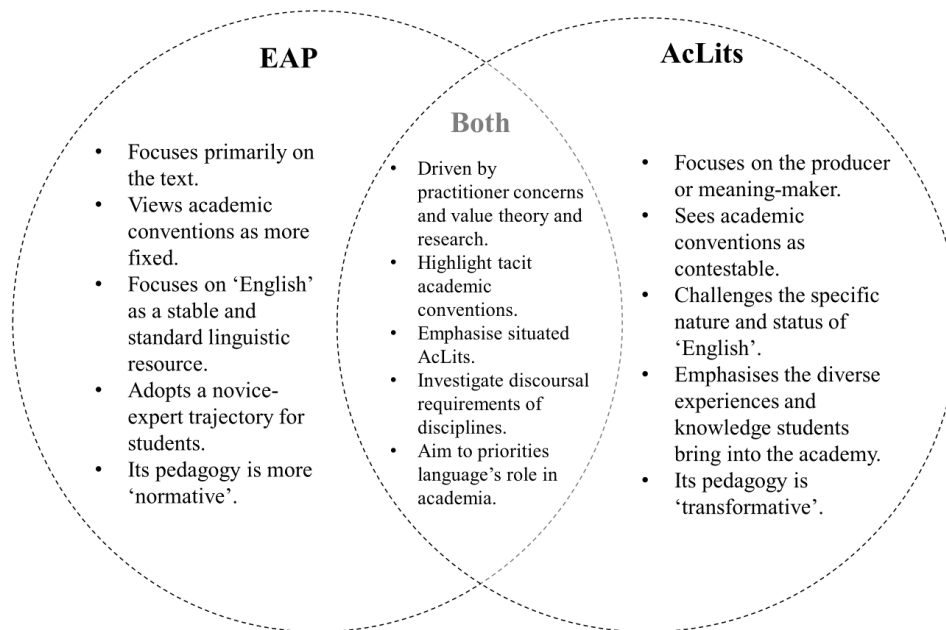
It is imperative to delineate between the often-conflated concepts of AcLits and EAP. In the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL), there are various aspects of language teaching and learning, including the development of AcLits. AcLits, often associated with EAP, is a broad concept encompassing different perspectives and approaches. While AcLits is sometimes used interchangeably with EAP, there are variations in the meanings (Li, 2017). AcLits and EAP both emerge from practitioner-driven concerns, aiming to enhance theory and empirical research to bolster students' and academics' mastery of academic prerequisites (Li, 2017). The focus of EAP is predominantly on the text and adherence to standard forms of English, whereas AcLits centres on the creator and receiver and actively challenges the conventional perceptions of academic language. AcLits is particularly inclusive of diverse linguistic backgrounds, embracing various dialects and languages beyond just English, a factor especially relevant for non-traditional students<sup>3</sup> (Lillis et al., 2016). While EAP generally follows a novice-to-expert student trajectory and a normative pedagogical approach (Lillis et al., 2016), AcLits accentuates students' diverse backgrounds and adopts a transformative pedagogical stance (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Notably, a segment within EAP, termed 'critical EAP' (Benesch, 2001; Turner, 2004), aligns more closely with some AcLits principles, suggesting areas of overlap as visualised in Figure 1.3.

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<sup>3</sup> 'non-traditional students' refer to individuals who do not follow the conventional path or characteristics typically expected of students in higher education. These may include students from underrepresented backgrounds, first-generation college students, those returning to education later in life, part-time students, students with disabilities, and those with unconventional educational trajectories. Academic Literacies research focuses on these students' unique challenges, especially in academic writing and literacy, to challenge the notion of a homogeneous student body and a singular academic English standard.

**Figure 1.3**

*Venn Diagram Comparing AcLits and EAP*



*Note.* Highlighted here are areas of overlap and difference in terms of theory and practice. Adapted from 'Academic literacies: A critical lens on writing and reading in the academy,' by T. Lillis and J. Tuck, 2016, in *The Routledge Handbook of English for Academic Purposes* (pp. 45–60), edited by K. Hyland and P. Shaw. (<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315657455>).

Navigating AcLits raises questions about responsibility. EAP practitioners are traditionally viewed as leaders in this domain (Carstens, 2013). However, the integration of literacy skills into specific disciplines by faculty is also vital, as it makes AcLits more relevant and applicable for students' academic and professional needs (Fouché et al., 2017; Richards et al., 2023). Tertiary institutions and librarians contribute by focusing on infrastructure and research literacy, respectively (Kang, 2022; Li & Wang, 2018). Despite these efforts, a persistent issue is the ambiguous accountability among stakeholders, where those who hold primary responsibility are contested. Combined with the complex nature of AcLits, the challenges are amplified and the importance of students' self-driven efforts in knowledge creation is stressed (Appleby, 2018).

There is no universally accepted definition of academic literacy and the practice remains rooted in learning and teaching isolated skills. Henderson and Hirst (2007) clearly suggest this when they simply consider academic literacy as ‘a set of skills that students must master in order to perform successfully’ (p. 26). Their focus is very much on isolated skills and outcomes. Lillis and Scott (2007) start moving away from such simplistic notions and claim that AcLits is a developing concept that has considerable fluidity, which may sometimes cause confusion. Gibbons (2009) regards AcLits to be more than just reading comprehension and other independent, isolated skills, highlighting it as the language for academic learning, which differs from everyday communication. McWilliams and Allan (2014) view AcLits as ‘critical thinking, database searching, familiarity with academic conventions such as referencing, use of formal register and the ability to manipulate a range of genres’ (p. 1). Green (2020) defines it as the ability ‘to communicate in the ways required by a particular academic community, to a standard that legitimates participation in that community at a given level’ (p. 11).

The AcLits perspective views student writing and literacy practices as socially situated and ideologically inscribed (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 2003). Academic writing is not a singular, unified practice but rather a complex and multifaceted set of skills and practices shaped by disciplinary, information literacy, critical thinking, institutional, sociocultural and other contexts (Clark, 2022; Moschkovich, 2015; Nicholson, 2016; Nygaard, 2017; Trigos-Carrillo, 2019). The AcLits framework highlights the need for a pedagogical shift from a deficit-based approach to a more inclusive and empowering teaching and learning one (Lillis & Scott, 2007). It challenges the notion of a ‘standard’ or ‘correct’ form of academic writing and recognises the value of the diverse linguistic and cultural resources that students bring to their academic work (Dutro et al., 2013). This approach encourages teachers to create inclusive

learning environments that support students in developing their AcLits while also valuing and respecting their linguistic and cultural identities (Freeman & Li, 2019).

Teachers require clear guidelines on the implementation of AcLits (Christiansen, 2019).

However, the pervasive influence of English in academia, while pivotal, introduces challenges for teachers. Particularly, Saudi English teachers grapple with myriad obstacles in cultivating AcLits such as inadequate resources, limited professional guidance, diminished motivation, and the absence of tailored writing modules in disciplines like medicine (Eligindi & Hoque, 2022). There is a palpable disconnect between the government's vision for English instruction and the extant methodologies employed by teachers, often resulting in a disproportionate emphasis on grammar and exams over communicative skills (Abahussain, 2016)..

Compounding these challenges are students' apprehensions of the English language, which may impede their readiness for studies in English-centric institutions (Ankawi, 2015).

## **1.2 Research Problem**

The sociocultural context is extremely important in understanding the problems I identified when exploring the HE system in KSA. In a country such as KSA, one cannot escape the strength and importance of these elements. It is essential I identify these elements, given that the significant transformation of the Saudi education system, as outlined in SV2030, has met with challenges, noted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as indicating a lack of success in its plans (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020). For example, in 2007, initiatives like the Tatweer Project for curriculum reform aim to enhance educational quality. These initiatives include developing new curricula to promote critical thinking (CT) and problem solving, launching the National Education Portal (iEN) for access to quality resources, improving teacher professional development, and introducing moderation programs to ensure assessment reliability. However, obstacles such as

ineffective supervision, unclear evaluation methods, and inadequate principal training have impacted their success. Addressing these issues is vital for achieving the SV2030 educational objectives.

These factors have contributed to a limited awareness among Saudi female teachers regarding AcLits and effective implementation strategies, resulting in a tendency to return to traditional teaching methods in the English classroom. In the next section, the educational challenges in KSA influencing the application of Saudi university female teachers' AcLits cognition in the English language classroom are examined from three perspectives, namely teachers' personal learning experiences, especially through their own education and training, the clash of cultural values between Islamic and Western influences, and gender differentiation among teachers.

### **1.2.1 The Impact of Learning Experiences and Teacher Education on Saudi EFL Teachers' Pedagogy**

Teachers' teaching practices are substantially informed by their previous experiences as learners (Ahn, 2011; Borg, 2006; Borg, 2015; Dunn, 2011; Egitim, 2021; Tarone & Allwright, 2005; Tedick, 2013). In KSA, where English is not the primary language, EFL programs cater for non-native speakers. These programs focus on key language skills, motivational strategies, and metacognitive techniques to improve language proficiency and communication abilities (Moskovsky et al., 2013; Sun & Zhang, 2022; Zhang et al., 2021). This is distinct from ESL, which is typically used in contexts where English is a dominant or official language and where learners are immersed in an English-speaking environment. Due to a lack of exposure to the latest education pedagogies, many Saudi EFL teachers are not aware of the latest pedagogies, leading to a reliance on familiar teaching methods (Al-Awaid, 2018; Almalki, 2020; Alrwele, 2018; Alshraideh, 2021; Bremner, 2015; Zimmerman, 2006). Culture and history play a crucial role in Saudi EFL teaching pedagogy, particularly when it

comes to shaping instructional and assessment methods (Al-Seghayer, 2021a), teachers' roles (Alghamdi, 2021) , and usage of course materials (Al-Seghayer, 2014a; Alrabai, 2016).

In KSA, EFL teaching is highly teacher-centred, relying on traditional methods like the audiolingual and grammar-translation methods (Al-menqash, 2019; Albarakati & Jendli, 2021; Alghamdi, 2021; Jamal & Aldaifallah, 2020; Yusuf & Albanawi, 2018). These approaches stem from factors such as students' low English proficiency, few environments in which to practise outside of class, and an exam-focused curriculum (Al-Ghamdi, 2021a). Teachers often dominate classroom interactions, limiting student participation and focusing mainly on knowledge transmission (Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014). Criticised for overemphasising grammar and neglecting communication skills (Mei et al., 2020), this approach often includes extensive use of Arabic in classes, reducing English immersion, coupled with a heavy reliance on textbooks for structure and exam preparation (Al-Mazroou, 1988; Al-Seghayer, 2011, 2014c; 2015b; Alghamdi, 2021; Alharbi, 2015; Alshammari, 2011; Machaal, 2012; Mahmoud, 2012; Melibari, 2015).

### **1.2.2 Striking a Balanced Approach: Neoliberalism, Islamic Philosophy, and English Language Education in Saudi Arabia**

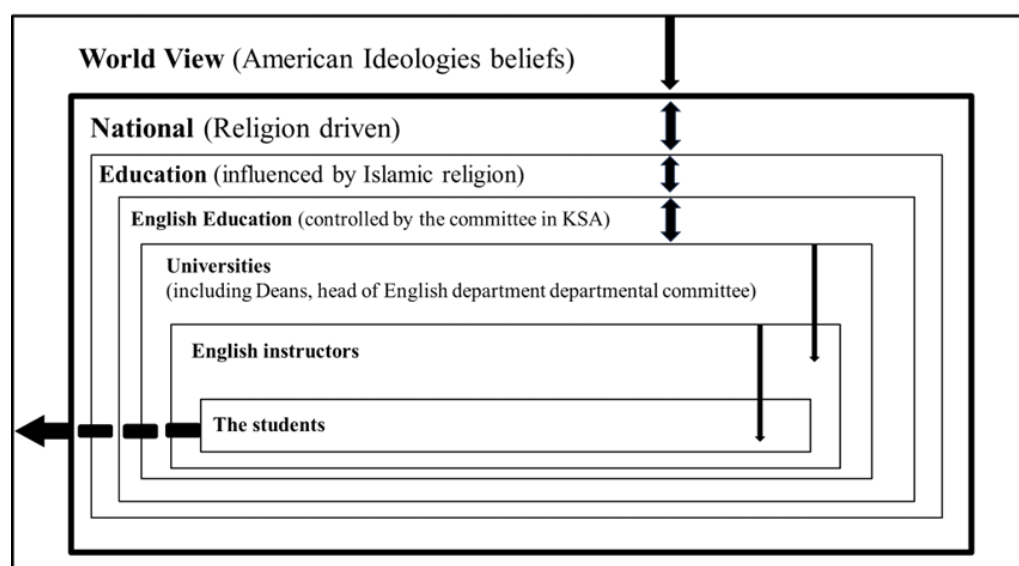
The shift in KSA from an economy largely dependent on oil revenues, to a more diversified one has led to unexpected challenges, including a clash between Western neoliberal policies and Islamic cultural values (Barnawi, 2018; Colbran & Al-Ghreimil, 2013; Elyas, 2011; Elyas & Picard, 2013; Harvey, 2005). These challenges span education, social norms, economic practices, and governance. The juxtaposition of Western values emphasising individualism and free markets with KSA's Islamic traditions results in significant discrepancies and one consequence is the clash between young Saudi people's adoption of the English language as a means of advancement and their desire to maintain Islamic cultural values (Barnawi, 2016, 2018). The origins of neoliberalism in the Saudi education system date back to the 1950s

when locals were trained for jobs in the oil industry (Elyas, 2011; Elyas & Picard, 2013). Under neoliberal ideologies, which emphasise free market economics, competition, productivity, self-reliance, and individual entrepreneurial freedom (Barnawi, 2018; Harvey, 2005), language becomes a commodity, individuals are seen as human capital, and education is viewed as work-related training, resulting in policies and curricula that prioritise standardised testing (Barnawi, 2018; Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017).

In KSA, the acceptance of Western practices and modernisation is now evident, as it is associated with the establishment of universal rights and freedoms (Habermas, 1985 as cited in Martinelli, 2005; Lee & Kaluarachchi, 2020; Ryan & Louie, 2007). This greatly contrasts with the Islamic culture's focus on stability, collectivism and respect for traditions (Yakaboski & Perez-Veléz, 2016). In the Saudi HE system, a distinctive interplay of theocratic principles and emerging neoliberal influences is evident (Figure 1.4). The state, as described by Khalid (1972), assumes a dual role in ensuring the spiritual, moral, and material welfare of its citizens, profoundly shaping the structure and ethos of learning institutions. It manifests in strict gender segregation and the compulsory inclusion of Islamic studies and Arabic language courses in university curricula, highlighting the theocratic underpinnings of the system. Teachers, as noted in Elyas (2011), navigate a complex professional landscape, balancing their adherence to state-imposed religious norms with academic freedom principles. Students, on the other hand, receive an education deeply infused with religious and moral content, leading to varied levels of acceptance or resistance to these ideologies. As Elyas and Picard (2013) indicate, this blend of theocratic and neoliberal elements creates a volatile and contested ideological space, shaping the character of KSA's HE paradigm.

**Figure 1.4**

*Power Dynamic within KSA HE*



*Note.* A conceptualisation of Foucault's (1980) power/knowledge dynamics in the KSA higher education context, illustrating power, knowledge, and ideological interplay within Saudi educational institutions. From 'Diverging Identities: A 'Contextualised' Exploration of the Interplay of Competing Discourses in Two Saudi University classrooms,' by T. Elyas 2011, Unpublished PhD thesis, *University of Adelaide, Adelaide*. (<https://hdl.handle.net/2440/69220>) Figure 23, p.273. Reprinted in T. Elyas & M. Picard, 2013, 'Critiquing of higher education policy in Saudi Arabia: Towards a new neoliberalism,' *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues*, 6(1), 31–41, Figure 1, P. 35 (<https://doi.org/10.1108/17537981311314709>). CC BY.

Until the post-9/11 era, KSA's education was deeply rooted in Islamic traditions, emphasising religious studies (Jamjoom, 2010; Rugh, 2002). While Islam promotes reading and Critical Thinking (CT) as religious obligations (Alaqqad, 2014), KSA's educational practice often prioritised memorisation over analytical skills, assessing students on recall rather than critical analysis. Despite Quranic principles of CT (Lee & Kaluarachchi, 2020; Wani, 2018), studies report deficiencies in students' awareness and teachers' methodologies (Al-Gabrey, 2007; Amen, 2008), with conformity valued over CT. Melibari (2015) suggests that importing Western English education may conflict with KSA's values. Saudi EFL teachers face challenges incorporating Western pedagogies due to cultural and religious attachment. Some students will study abroad, so EFL curricula must prepare them for this and align with

SV2030's goal of developing global citizens. Enhancing AcLits in EFL programs requires integrating socio-cultural information and developing students' intercultural awareness.

### **1.2.3 The Impact of Patriarchal Culture on Female Academic Development**

Female education in KSA was not considered until 30 years after the establishment of the Education Directorate for males due to prevailing customs (Jamjoom & Kelly, 2013). In 1962, women began attending university as part-time students, but in limited numbers and without prospects for professional employment. Between 1990 and 2004, female enrolments in Saudi universities rose by more than 500% — one of the world's fastest growth rates (Jamjoom & Kelly, 2013). Although single-sex institutions may have advantages (Pahlke et al., 2014), in the absence of parity between the two education systems, they may exacerbate problems (Baki, 2004; Hakem, 2017). The Saudi government has made strides to achieve gender parity in education and the workforce, with the King Abdullah Scholarship Program and the employment of women in both public and private sector organisations (Al Lily et al., 2020; Alasmari & Alshae'el, 2020; Peter et al., 2021). As a result, women's autonomy and empowerment have increased, enabling women to make professional decisions alongside men, despite obstacles such as discrimination and sexism (Syed et al., 2018). Nonetheless, gender differentiation in education persists despite government efforts, as female students experience limited access to resources and have less voice and power, yet they are judged on their cognitive reasoning and quality of their work and teaching abilities (Al-Asfour et al., 2017; Alasmari & Alshae'el, 2020; Alqahtani, 2020; Alsuwaida, 2016; Baki, 2004; Melibari, 2015; Peter et al., 2021). The conservative religious elite governing the female academic context imposes a highly regulated curriculum that limits academic opportunities (Melibari, 2015). Consequently, female Saudi teachers are excluded from supportive communities of practice, hindering the improvement of English language teaching (Hamdan, 2005; Melibari, 2015). Female students also face unequal teaching opportunities and limited job prospects

compared to men, exacerbating gender disparity in the labour market (Alqahtani, 2020; Mengash, 2001).

Several studies highlight the marginalisation of both male and female Saudi English teachers in KSA and their limited involvement in curriculum development in general, which suggests that decisions regarding education policy and curricula are primarily ‘top-down’, with inadequate teacher involvement. Power dynamics, oppression, and managerialist ideologies contribute to the suppression of teachers’ voices (Alnefaie, 2016; Mullick, 2013). However, there is a consensus that involving teachers in curriculum development can empower them and lead to more effective practices (Alnefaie, 2016; AlSehli, 2021; Mullick, 2013).

Collaborative efforts between the MoE and teachers will create a more inclusive and participatory curriculum development process (AlSehli, 2021).

The voice and power of female teachers in KSA are also significantly limited, hindering their professional development and quality of teaching (Hamdan, 2005; Melibari, 2015). They experience culturally sanctioned exclusion from male-dominated communities of practice, depriving them of peer support and reflective practices HE (Alqahtani, 2020; Baki, 2004; Galloway, 2014; Hakiem, 2022; Jamjoom & Kelly, 2013). Empowering women through education would provide them with equal opportunities and freedom to pursue their studies. At Women-only universities in KSA no male students or teachers are permitted on campus. These universities offer a space where women can freely express themselves, but gender disparities persist, leading to diminished motivation and devaluation of HE. Achieving meaningful change requires financial, administrative, and academic independence for women’s sections in universities.

As most English language teachers in KSA are females the aforementioned gender inequity is significant. Given that males dominate the decision-making process, but females dominate the

practice of teaching, many decisions are made by those who have limited experience with teaching and course content (Al-Asfour et al., 2017; Asiri, 2020). As a result, a major issue in exploring AcLits regards responsibility; who is accountable for the development of AcLits?

However, the issue of gender segregation is not one-sided. Research indicates potential benefits of separating males and females in some areas. Reskin (1993) discusses the complexities of gender dynamics in workplaces, highlighting how sex segregation can be influenced by socialisation and legal factors. Huffman et al. (2010) note the possible positive outcomes of gender desegregation, such as reduced inequality linked to female leadership. Elwér et al. (2013) found that gender equality in the workplace correlates with better mental health outcomes, and Makarevich (2023) emphasises the role of institutional conditions in shaping workplace gender dynamics. Recently, the improving education levels of Saudi women have enabled them to play a vital role the education system, addressing the changing needs and leadership aspirations of Saudi women and girls, and contributing to the nation's economic, social, and cultural progress (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Alharthi & Woollard, 2014; Metcalfe & Rees, 2010). Despite progress, limitations on decision-making roles at the operational level pose challenges to their influence on strategic reforms. Nevertheless, the growing participation of Saudi women in senior management and decision-making processes, both in the public and private sectors, reflects a shift in the government's vision for women's empowerment and especially in the education system (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Al-Ghamdi, 2020; Alchoui, 2009).

Acknowledging these issues affects the significance of LTC in understanding teachers' perspectives and instructional practices, which can ultimately lead to better teaching and student grades (Borg, 2006; Bullough Jr, 1992; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Dos Santos, 2019; Li & Walsh, 2011). LTC encompasses teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts, and by

recognising and addressing teachers' preconceived beliefs, LTC becomes effective in the classroom (Nespor, 1987; Weinstein, 1989). In the context of Saudi English language teachers and their approaches to AcLits, investigating LTC sheds light on the interplay between teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practices and their impact on students' language learning experiences. The findings have implications for English language instruction in KSA, Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE), curriculum development, and pedagogical practices (Borg, 2006; Li, 2017).

Favoured for its ability to provide a language and framework for understanding complex educational situations (Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014), CHAT allows analysis of individual and collective actions, bridging material and mental aspects, personal experiences, and historical contexts (Roth & Lee, 2007). It acknowledges individual agency, enabling critique and modification of policies and structures, making it suitable for exploring education activities and language teaching contexts (Roth & Lee, 2007). The adoption of CHAT, alongside LTC, facilitates a holistic examination of the sociocultural, historical, and cognitive aspects of Saudi EFL teachers' application of AcLits, aligning with Cross's (2010) insights into teaching and learning complexities. While the sociocultural context in KSA is powerful, a CHAT perspective offers new insights.

### **1.3 Research Aim and Question**

This study explores the intersection of LTC and AcLits at two public Saudi universities, using a CHAT perspective within the context of the education reforms envisaged in SV2030. Central to this investigation is the role of LTC in effectively integrating AcLits and understanding the complexity of teaching interactions. This research aims to illuminate the dynamic relationship between teacher cognition, the practical realisation of AcLits, and the sociocultural elements of teaching, with the impact of SV2030.

Given that teachers' voices are often underrepresented in Saudi education reforms (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020) , this thesis seeks to understand how English language teachers' cognitions align with the implementation of AcLits and the ambitious goals of SV2030. The study places particular emphasis on the importance of professional development and reflective practice in addressing discrepancies between current teacher cognition and the advanced pedagogical demands of AcLits. Additionally, it acknowledges the need for cultural and contextual sensitivity, especially in the unique linguistic landscape of KSA where EFL. This thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in the transition to new educational approaches in KSA. It also proposes strategies and models for enhancing the implementation of AcLits in Saudi English language classrooms. The core research question devised for this study seeks to explore the multifaceted interrelations between LTC, AcLits teaching practices, and the sociocultural influences of the KSA educational landscape:

- **What is the connection between language teacher cognition and the evolving focus on AcLits in Saudi universities?**

1. What are the teachers' interpretations of AcLits?
2. To what extent does female teachers' current cognition promote the development of AcLits required to achieve SV2030?
3. How has the development of AcLits in English Language Centre classrooms in Saudi higher education been mediated by SV2030?
4. What are the educational implications of SV2030 in relation to the purpose, implementation, and contradictions of developing AcLits?

Addressing the first sub-question provides a deeper understanding of how female language teachers perceive and enact AcLits practices in their classrooms. This insight is crucial as it influences instructional strategies, the emphasis on various literacy skills, and the support provided to students in developing these skills. By understanding teachers' interpretations, targeted professional development programs that align instructional practices with institutional goals and enhance students' academic success can be designed. Additionally, this exploration reveals the contextual and cultural factors shaping teachers' approaches, offering a more nuanced view of AcLits in different educational settings. The second sub-question assesses the alignment of teachers' cognitive frameworks with the goals of SV2030 in promoting AcLits, helping to identify potential gaps between teaching practices and students' literacies needs. The third sub-question explores how SV2030 has mediated the development of AcLits in ELC classrooms, providing insights into the effectiveness of policy implementation and its influence on classroom instruction. Finally, the fourth sub-question uncovers the broader educational implications of SV2030, including challenges and contradictions, contributing to the development of more contextually relevant and effective educational strategies. These questions aim to critically examine how female language teachers in Saudi HE interpret and implement AcLits in alignment with the objectives of SV2030. This investigation highlights the opportunities and challenges inherent in advancing pedagogical practices to better support students' academic development and align with the broader national educational goals.

#### **1.4 Study Boundaries**

This research employs a narrative case study approach to explore the integration and implications of AcLits within the EFL context in Saudi universities. The study combines two conceptual theories: the CHAT by Engeström (1987, 2015) and Borg's (2006) concept of

LTC. This synthesis is designed to capture the subtleties of AcLits in the EFL context in KSA. CHAT provides the background theory, offering a systemic and sociocultural perspective on educational practices and reforms. This broad framework is essential for understanding the multifaceted influences on the integration of AcLits in Saudi universities.

Focusing on language teachers, this study narrows CHAT's broader systemic view to the specific cognitive processes explored through Borg's LTC model. It reveals teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes essential for AcLits integration and practice. By combining this with CHAT's systemic perspective, the research takes a holistic yet focused approach to educational activities, particularly in the cognitive domain of language teaching. This approach provides insight into the relationship between teacher cognition — beliefs, subject matter understanding, and materials — and their actual teaching methods in AcLits throughout their careers.

The methodology of this study is grounded in a qualitative approach within an interpretivist philosophical paradigm, emphasising narrative case studies of six EFL teachers in two Saudi ELCs in HE. This approach is particularly suited for an exploratory and interpretive study that seeks to understand the connection between teachers' cognition and their classroom practices in the context of AcLits and SV2030. Data collection is comprehensive through a triangulated method.

The thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, allows for the identification, analysis, and reporting of themes within the data. Ethical considerations, especially in dealing with human subjects, are a priority, and the research adheres to the ethical standards set by Victoria University and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2018). The study acknowledges the limitations inherent in qualitative narrative case studies, including a small, gender-specific sample size and the potential impact

of the COVID-19 pandemic on research processes. Nevertheless, these findings provide insights into two specific ELCs; the results have limited generalisability to other settings.

## **1.5 The Significance of This Research**

The significance of this research on AcLits within Saudi HE is both multifaceted and profound. It fills a crucial void in the existing literature by exploring an LTC framework that represents a substantial theoretical leap forward, unveiling new insights into the complexities of education reform and classroom practices in Saudi HE institutions. Moreover, the study's practical implications are significant, offering a detailed understanding of the challenges Saudi English teachers face in incorporating AcLits, thereby illuminating current teaching methodologies and revealing important opportunities in the Saudi HE system. These insights will help policymakers create more tailored and culturally relevant education programs. The research also paves the way for improved language and academic skills, which may lead to more progressive educational outcomes, better employability, and improved national productivity (Phan et al., 2022; Tian, 2023).

### **1.5.1 Theoretical and Practical Contributions**

The research makes significant theoretical and practical contributions in several ways. Methodologically, it enhances narrative case studies-based research in KSA. Investigating teachers' holistic understanding of AcLits rather than focusing on isolated skills, reveals deep insights into the complex interaction between education reforms and classroom practices in Saudi HE. From a theoretical standpoint, the study's application of CHAT in conjunction with the LTC framework marks a significant advance. This dual framework helps decode how teacher cognition affects instructional decisions and, in turn, influences students' learning outcomes.

On the practical side, the study's findings highlight the gap between the Saudi government's objectives, exemplified in the SV2030, and the realities of classroom instruction. This discrepancy underscores the need for a collective approach involving important stakeholders. It calls for reforms in SLTE, enhanced in-service teacher training, and the establishment of learning environments conducive to effective AcLits integration. Furthermore, the research stresses the government's pivotal role in setting clear benchmarks for AcLits implementation and ensuring alignment with broader national education objectives. Finally, the study paves the way for future research not only on developing Saudi-specific models for embedding AcLits in English language teaching but also on testing the model presented in this study. This duality allows for both the creation of new, culturally tailored frameworks and empirical validation of the proposed model in the Saudi HE context.

The two-pronged focus on development and testing ensures that theoretical models are not only contextually relevant but also empirically sound, offering a solid foundation for future studies and projects. These efforts are aimed at enhancing both teacher and student proficiency in AcLits in KSA, thereby supporting the overall goal of education excellence and innovation as envisioned in SV2030 and HCDP. By choosing this research direction, the study establishes itself as a cornerstone for ongoing academic inquiry and practical application in the field of SLTE. It invites KSA scholars and teachers to engage in more theory-building, testing, and refinement, ensuring that the education strategies embraced in KSA are not only culturally relevant but also pedagogically effective.

## **1.6 Thesis Outline**

The thesis comprises eight chapters. This chapter introduces the topic, motivations, and the PYP, highlighting challenges in AcLits integration and teacher preparedness in alignment with the SV2030 economic plan. Chapter 2 provides an extensive literature review on LTC

frameworks, the global evolution of AcLits, and its significance in Saudi HE, incorporating discussions on SV2030 and HCDP reforms. Chapter 3 outlines CHAT as the theoretical framework guiding the study. Chapter 4 introduces the setting of the study by providing a description of the PYP in the two universities, situating both ELCs within their sociocultural contexts. Chapter 5 details the research design, encompassing methods, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations. Chapter 6 presents the findings of emerging common themes. Chapter 7 discusses the findings and illustrates the possible contradictions in integrating or ignoring AcLits. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes with reflections on the significance of the findings, the research's implications, its relevance to SV2030, and suggestions for future inquiry.

## 2 Literature Review

The primary objective of this study is to identify critical factors influencing female Saudi teachers' perspectives and how these impact teaching practices regarding AcLits. A secondary objective is to understand how these perspectives and practices align with the educational goals of *Saudi Vision 2030* (SV2030). The language teacher cognition (LTC) field, informing this study, is traditionally centred on Western contexts (Kagan, 1990; Woods, 1996), while research on LTC in less economically developed contexts like KSA is limited. This early stage understanding and integration of Academic Literacies (AcLits) in KSA's language education frameworks is significant, as it could hinder development in non-Western countries. Given AcLits' importance to KSA's economic development as outlined in SV2030, and the role of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, it is essential for the government to identify opportunities in Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE). To ensure clarity in this literature review, the chapter is structured into three, interconnected sections, each addressing a key area relevant to the research objectives.

The first section examines global and Saudi-specific trends in EFL learning and teaching, analysing the evolving interpretation of AcLits in KSA. It dissects the fundamental elements of AcLits (e.g., Critical Thinking [CT], problem-solving, learning autonomy, collaboration, and creative thinking) to provide a nuanced understanding of their manifestation and development in Saudi education. This section is crucial for understanding the challenges and opportunities in advancing Saudi HE, aligned with SV2030 and *Human Capability Development Program* (HCDP) objectives.

The next section focuses on LTC, the central theory underpinning the research. It delves into the cognitive processes involved in language teaching, exploring how teachers in Saudi HE conceptualise and implement their practices.

Finally, the review examines paradigm shifts in the SLTE field, focusing on key models enhancing SLTE. It provides a detailed review within the KSA context, exploring criteria for qualifying as an English teacher and analysing challenges in pre-service education and professional development within the Saudi system.

Overall, the review aims to bridge the gap between developed theories and models of AcLits in Western contexts and the emerging understanding in KSA. This comparative analysis is crucial for highlighting the unique educational dynamics and challenges in the region.

## **2.1 Review of Academic Literacies in the EFL Context**

An effective study of education in KSA must consider the integral role of religion, as it is a core aspect of Saudi culture. Contrary to some beliefs, Islam encourages education for all, including women. This is exemplified in a *hadith* (حديث) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), ‘It is the duty of every Muslim man and every Muslim woman to acquire knowledge’ (Sunan Ibn Majah: 224). Reflecting Islamic values, the Saudi community has historically valued education, emphasising the pursuit of knowledge. While traditional educational methods in KSA have focused on memorisation, this approach is not unique to the region, the Quran’s first revelation, *iqra*, meaning ‘read,’ underscores the importance of reading and CT as religious duties in Islam (Alaqqad, 2014). The issues raised by Butler (2021) regarding the US educational system’s shortcomings in developing writing proficiency mirror broader challenges in Western education. Similar to Butler’s critique of the US situation, educational methods in Australia have also come under scrutiny. The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing system, for example, has

been criticised for influencing teaching methods in a way that leads to formulaic writing. According to McGaw et al. (2020, p. 83), NAPLAN's 'unintended effects on how writing is taught' highlight a trend where assessment-driven education can inadvertently shape and limit pedagogical approaches. These issues are especially pronounced in secondary schools. Both Butler's analysis of the US educational system and critiques of the NAPLAN in Australia underscore a common educational problem: Traditional teaching methods, heavily reliant on memorisation or formulaic approaches, often fail to foster CT and comprehensive writing skills. This indicates a widespread need for reevaluating educational strategies to enhance language awareness and learner-centred methodologies.

In the verses of the Quran, as well as the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), traces of CT are embedded within the principles of *ijtihad*, *qiyas*, and *tafakkur*. The term *ijtihad* refers to making a physical or mental effort to resolve a problem. Similar to Western concepts of CT, it refers to the capacity for independent thinking, in which one arrives at a solution after extensively evaluating and comparing an argument to earlier related arguments. A person engaged in *ijtihad* both investigates and reflects on what they have learned, no matter their education level. *Qiyas*, on the other hand, refers to analogical reasoning and is primarily utilised in Islamic law. As for the last principle, *tafakkur*, is the Arabic word for intellectually pondering. It stresses the importance of reorganising existing information to reach conclusions of unknown objects.

Besides the three principles related to CT, Wani (2018) lists other words and terms from the Quran that promote CT. The words *aqal* (intellect; mentioned 49 times), *tadabbur* (reflection; mentioned 148 times), and *nazar* (investigation; mentioned 129 times) all revolve around the notion of thinking and questioning. In the Quran (47:24), there is even a verse that warns people that if they are not able to think deeply about the Quran, their hearts will be sealed. In other words, the Quran encourages one to think critically. Given that CT is an integral aspect

of Islamic culture, scholars and the authors of SV2030 have looked into means of understanding how the concept could be further developed in the Saudi education system.

Studies conducted in secondary schools across KSA have highlighted a deficiency in both the students' awareness of CT and in the teachers' teaching methodologies regarding to the application of the concept (Al-Gabrey, 2007; Al-Qahtani, 1995; Amen, 2008). Like the situation observed in Britain, Australia, and North America (BANA), there is a noticeable lack of emphasis on enhancing CT skills in secondary education. This deficiency often continues into tertiary education. To offer a new perspective, it seems sensible to shift the focus towards examining and improving the overall management of the education system. This approach would not only avoid uncritically replicating the frameworks from BANA countries but would also address the unique dilemmas and challenges inherent in the Saudi education system. Such a comprehensive evaluation allows for a more balanced and inclusive understanding, steering clear of a narrow or biased viewpoint.

In KSA, as in BANA, language teaching has traditionally been dominated by teacher-centred approaches, specifically the audiolingual and grammar-translation methods (Al-menqash, 2019; Albarakati & Jendli, 2021; Alghamdi, 2021; Jamal & Aldaifallah, 2020; Yusuf & Albanawi, 2018). Saudi EFL teachers often use these methods due to factors such as low student proficiency in English, a lack of practice environments, and an exam-oriented curriculum (Al-Ghamdi, 2021a). Teachers believe traditional methods are more effective for exam preparation, leading to a focus on knowledge transmission in EFL classrooms across schools and HE institutions. This results in teachers dominating class discussions and limiting student engagement, reflecting the belief that teachers should primarily impart knowledge (Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2014). Consequently, teachers do not focus on teaching students how to interpret spoken and written forms of Arabic or English, use language in different sociolinguistic situations, or employ techniques during communication breakdowns (Al-

Seghayer, 2019). Despite criticisms of overemphasising grammar and neglecting communication skills (Mei et al., 2020), teacher-centred, transmissive approaches prevail, reinforced by the course curriculum and design.

The design of EFL courses has little weight on communication or practical instructions, resulting in a disconnection between learning objectives and learners' needs (Al-Awaid, 2018). While KSA HE has learning objectives that include higher-order thinking, Umer et al. (2018) argue that EFL teachers fail to meet these objectives in actual classrooms. Their study reveals that the assessment practices in Saudi university EFL courses are predominantly based on selected-response questions (SRQs), such as multiple-choice and true/false questions. This approach underlines memorisation over CT, with a significant portion of the total assessment marks being allocated to SRQs. Additionally, the study found that these assessments often do not cover the prescribed learning outcomes, particularly higher-order skills. The reliance on SRQs, along with the lack of comprehensive assessment design and review, suggests a disconnect between the intended learning objectives and the actual evaluation of student learning, impeding opportunities for students to engage in deeper, more critical forms of thinking.

Alnofal (2018) also found that EFL first-year teachers' in-class questions largely targeted lower-cognitive levels (87.42%), such as students' comprehension and knowledge.

Furthermore, the Saudi English language curriculum focuses on teaching students the mechanics of the English language with an emphasis on passing the exam rather than its communicative value. Therefore, the use of English language is limited to an educational subject and there is a lack of opportunities to practice English language outside of classroom, or in its real communicative environment (Alanazi & Widin, 2018; Allamnakhrah, 2013; Paige et al., 2003).

Another characteristic of EFL teachers in KSA that is essential to understand is their extensive use of Arabic in classrooms, often driven by their perception that students face difficulties in understanding content when delivered solely in English. This has been linked to students' deficiencies in basic English language skills (Al-Seghayer, 2011; Alshammari, 2011; Machaal, 2012; Mahmoud, 2012). While it is natural for these teachers to use Arabic, it is crucial to strike a balance to promote English language development and provide opportunities for students to practice and engage with the target language. Teachers often use Arabic more than necessary, even during instructions and activities, leading students to initiate queries in Arabic as well (Al-Seghayer, 2015b). There is also a major issue related to the fact that using Arabic in English classes is the result of limited proficiency of some 'qualified' English teachers despite majoring in English (Melibari, 2015). This suggests that a focus on qualifications overlooks the variations in teacher-training programs' standards. Consequently, the extensive use of Arabic in EFL classrooms might hinder competency by reducing English immersion and practice, impeding English proficiency and authentic context exposure.

Another practice of Saudi EFL teachers that further enhances a teacher-centric approach is the heavy use of textbooks. The limited teaching time available makes it difficult for teachers to create their own materials or activities, contributing to a heavy reliance on textbooks (Al-Seghayer, 2014c). Additionally, textbooks provide clear and structured guidelines for teachers to follow, which can be valuable in an environment where many teachers lack formal language teaching training (Alharbi, 2015), but this standardisation of the curriculum can also limit personal communication and creativity. The textbook content may also be viewed by teachers as a reliable source of exam preparation, as Saudi exams are often based on the contents of textbooks (Al-Seghayer, 2014c). As such, relying on textbooks may provide a sense of security for EFL teachers, knowing that they are providing their students with the

necessary knowledge to achieve success in standardised tests (Alghamdi, 2021). Teachers worry that suggesting their own forms of education may divert students' attention from the required curriculum, resulting in a poor performance on assessments (Al-Mazroou, 1988).

These issues highlight the lack of diverse, selective, and appropriate teaching materials, which research has shown negatively affects English teaching and learning in KSA. In 2000, the Saudi government recognised the role of school curricula in this situation (Alshahrani, 2016). In response, the MoE implemented measures to address teacher attitudes towards the education system. In 2001, the Saudi MoE released new EFL objectives, emphasising both linguistic and communicative proficiency to enhance cooperation across various social situations and professions (Alzayid, 2012; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013).

Research indicates that the first major component of these objectives was to improve student awareness of Saudi society's cultural, economic, religious, and social issues, enabling them to provide effective community solutions. The second component aimed to enable learners to benefit from scientific and technological advances in other cultures and transfer this knowledge to Saudis (Alzayid, 2012; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). This global input would contribute to KSA's development and promote respect for other nations. The government views English as essential for acquiring and transferring knowledge, particularly scientific and technological knowledge (Alzayid, 2012; Elyas & Badawood, 2017; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). English has become the medium of instruction for many science and technology courses in several KSA universities, with some using English exclusively (Elyas & Picard, 2019). This aligns with the MoE's *Policy of English* (2002), where English is used to serve humanity and the faith of Islam. Alfahadi (2012) claims that the English curriculum and textbooks have been increasingly integrated with local Saudi culture, reflecting support for preserving and appreciating Saudi cultural heritage among learners. Significant revisions

to the curriculum and textbook content occurred in 2003 to enhance English teaching in public schools. Originally starting in Grade 7, English was introduced in Grades 5 and 6 by 2003 and extended to Grade 4 by 2012 (Alshahrani, 2016). By 2021, English began to be taught from the first grade of primary education (Alnasser, 2022), reflecting a strategic effort to boost English proficiency from an early stage. Despite these changes, Arabic remains the medium of instruction, with English taught as a separate subject.

In contrast, private schools have always taught English from Grade 1, distinguishing their approach from the gradual integration in public schools. Colliers International projects an increase in private school enrolment from approximately 820,000 students in 2022 to 1.1 million by 2030 (Argaam, 2023). This surge indicates a growing preference among Saudi families for private education and their valuing of English.

Evaluating KSA's shift to integrate English language education from first grade, instead of Grade 7, through Jim Cummins's (2009) research on bilingual education, reveals critical considerations. Cummins emphasises the importance of a solid foundation in the mother tongue for acquiring a second language, highlighting the transferability of cognitive and linguistic skills. This suggests KSA's policy could benefit bilingualism if it maintains a balanced approach that supports Arabic development. Cummins also highlights the need for academic language proficiency alongside conversational fluency for long-term academic success. Introducing English early presents an opportunity to develop bilingual, biliterate individuals excelling in both Arabic and English. KSA's initiative is forward-thinking, but its success in fostering genuine bilingualism and biliteracy will depend on a pedagogical strategy aligning with Cummins' evidenced-based principles, ensuring students achieve fluency and deep academic proficiency in both languages.

The government prioritised enhancing the attitudes and capabilities of Saudi English teachers. A new set of objectives for teaching EFL were introduced. These placed equal importance on linguistic and communicative proficiency of English learning to enhance effective cooperation across various social situations and professions (Alhums, 2021). In the following ten years, the MoE sent more than 20,000 local EFL teachers abroad to train. For professional development, all EFL teachers were also required to take workshops to equip themselves with the capability to use a communicative approach to teach English (Elyas, 2011; Elyas & Picard, 2010). Technological developments have also contributed to significant social changes.

With the internet, Saudi citizens have had more exposure to English in their daily lives. Mass media and technology proliferation has had a profound influence on the need and desire to learn English. A major aspect encouraging this development is that computers, smartphones, and other personal computer-type devices are coded in English. Mass media platforms, such as Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and other social media programs, are extremely popular (Alrahaili, 2013; Sharma, 2019). Thus, high levels of online interaction have given ‘a public space for discourse, debate and exchange that has been missing within Saudi society’ (Melibari, 2015, p. 33) and paved the way for a window on other countries and cultures. This may have changed Saudi citizens’ perceptions from viewing English as a threat to Islamic culture to regarding it as the universal language for modernisation, science, and even a higher economic status (Limbi & Golam Faruk, 2014). To access global information and work opportunities, Saudi citizens’ willingness to learn English has greatly increased. Still, there has been resistance to compulsory English education. In the past, it was a widespread concern among Saudis that a greater adoption of the English language would ultimately lead to the erosion of Islam (Alrabai, 2016; Elyas & Picard, 2010). This concern created many challenges when integrating English language with culture and trying to

eradicate the belief among many teachers, that learning English would destroy Saudi citizens' religious and linguistic identities (Al-Seghayer, 2023; Alfahadi, 2012).

Now, in SV2030, resistance to learning English has diminished as the government mandates English proficiency to increase global opportunities for Saudi citizens. Like previous policies, SV2030 and HCDP emphasise acquiring English in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. Besides preparing citizens to be globally competitive, SV2030 also emphasises spreading Islamic culture and values using English. Unlike previous policies, SV2030 and HCDP highlight the importance of future skills (e.g., creative thinking, critical analysis, problem-solving skills, and digital literacy) in addition to language proficiency. This suggests that English need no longer be separated from certain Western values, and the government encourages citizens to develop both language and skills to be competitive and communicative.

Government reports reveal a significant disparity between education outcomes and labour market needs under both past and present curricula (HCDP, 2021; Mellahi, 2000; Quamar, 2021). Universities still focus on theoretical materials disconnected from industries or R&D departments (Al-Aqil, 2005; Al-Eisa, 2009; HCDP, 2021). HE students lack practical knowledge and skills transferable to the workforce, and HE teachers lack the knowledge and experience to support graduates (Al-Seghayer, 2015a; HCDP, 2021). Additionally, there are no unified frameworks to identify skills and capabilities, especially at the tertiary level (HCDP, 2021). Allmnakrah and Evers (2020) argue that this lack of structure is due to educational frameworks being borrowed from Western or foreign regions without adaptation to local culture and needs.

### **2.1.1 Academic Literacies Dimensions**

Much confusion has occurred in the study of AcLits as there has been no universal definition. For some, AcLits is used interchangeably with critical EAP. However, Lillis and Tuck (2016) highlight key differences between EAP and AcLits in their exploration. They suggest that while EAP tends to focus on the text as the object of study, AcLits centres on the producer or meaning maker. EAP reifies academic conventions, considering them relatively fixed; AcLits views these conventions as contested. The explicit language of focus in EAP is ‘English,’ specifically ‘standard (academic) English’; AcLits challenges the notion of a single acceptable ‘native (academic) English’. The pedagogical orientation of EAP is described as ‘normative’ while AcLits adopts a ‘transformative’ approach. The researcher holds firm to the AcLits that are focused on the meaning maker, allow for diversity, and are transformative in nature. The researcher also has a strong belief in the importance of these elements. Explicit teaching of AcLits to tertiary students is crucial because a significant majority are unable to recognise their own issues with AcLits solely through completing academic assignments (Latham & Ahern, 2013). Cummins’s (1999) work on Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) highlights the differences between conversational fluency and academic language proficiency. Proposed in response to oversimplified views of language proficiency, Cummins clarifies that learners may quickly develop BICS, which indicates everyday communication skills, but acquiring CALP requires deeper cognitive and linguistic abilities necessary for academic success and takes longer. This distinction emphasises the challenges faced by bilingual and ESL students who may be conversationally fluent but need extended time and support to develop academic language proficiency. Cummins’s work stresses the importance of recognising these distinct aspects of language learning to avoid misinterpreting students’ abilities and to inform educational strategies and policymaking effectively. According to (Latham & Ahern, 2013), HE EFL

students may exhibit grammatical errors and struggle to organise their arguments coherently, widening the gap between expected AcLits proficiency and actual performance without guidance. The debate over how to address these issues still exists today and can be seen throughout the history of the development of the concept of AcLits. To begin this section, the focus is on the evolution and perspectives of AcLits in the context of EFL. To do this, it is instructive to examine below, which succinctly encapsulates the main trends in AcLits in BANA. Table 2.1 serves as a summary of the various approaches and perspectives that have shaped the understanding and implementation of AcLits over time, highlighting the shift from traditional views to more contemporary and multifaceted approaches. It is followed by a more detailed look at their evolution.

**Table 2.1**

*Main Trends in AcLits*

<b>Trend</b>	<b>Description</b>
Traditional View	Views academic literacy as discrete linguistic skills transferable across contexts, emphasising language structures and text-driven instruction.
Psycholinguistic Trend	Considers academic literacy to be connected to cognitive development, knowledge construction, and discipline-specific communication.
Sociocultural and Socialisation Theories	Frames academic literacy as a social practice involving engagement in academia, highlighting cultural values, and beliefs.
Genre Approach	Sees academic literacy as communicative practices within specific communities, emphasising appropriate actions in academic contexts.
New Literacy Studies (NLS) Perspective	Views academic literacy as a value-laden social practice, influenced by power dynamics, focusing on literacy and orality.
AcLits Approach	Focuses on academic literacy through an epistemological and identity perspective, emphasising aspects like access, communication, and fairness in academia.
Emerging Trends	Includes an emotion-based approach, cross-cultural literacy for global competencies, and digital literacy exploring technology's impact.

The table identifies that the concept of academic literacy has evolved from focusing on individual skills to a broader understanding of social practices, genre, and the recognition of academic literacies that encompass cognitive, linguistic, and sociocultural dimensions within

specific contexts. It also acknowledges the evolving concepts of AcLits, emphasising the need for a transformative approach that views literacy as a social practice embedded within academic discourse communities. This perspective recognises how power and identity influence students' engagement with academic writing, while advocating for a multiliteracies framework that accounts for diverse modes of communication across cultural, digital, and institutional contexts. Through the lens of negotiation and transformation, the study argues that AcLits must move beyond rigid institutional norms to foster inclusive practices that empower students to assert their identities, challenge conventional norms, and actively participate in shaping academic discourse.

The teaching of AcLits in HE gained momentum in the BANA in the 1990s due to the increasing diversity of students entering universities, particularly in relation to supporting writing in educational contexts (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 2019; Lillis & Tuck, 2016; Wingate & Dreiss, 2009). Unlike in the past, the student population in the 1990s began to become ethnically and socioeconomically diverse so that student populations comprised of individuals with varied ethnic, educational, and economic backgrounds, both locally and internationally. This resulted in a disparity in AcLits proficiency among students. However, researchers observed that not only did international students require support in developing AcLits, but native English speakers, particularly those with lower English proficiency, also benefit from guidance to improve their AcLits skills (Hillege et al., 2014).

This led to a significant wave in what were known as EAP courses. EAP requires a genre-based pedagogy that examines how CT is expressed holistically through different levels of discourse and text (Hyland, 2005). The suggestion in EAP is that developing students' ability to comprehend and express evaluative judgements contributes to their overall discourse competence in EAP (Moore et al., 2019). Recognising this issue, HE institutions saw EAP

and AcLits as interchangeable and so started promoting the teaching of EAP assuming that AcLits were being covered (Leung & Street, 2024). The challenge focused on the view that AcLits merely extended the traditional view of literacy as a generic set of skills inherent in which as a belief in a ‘deficit model,’ which focused on perceived shortcomings in student writing (Lillis & Scott, 2007).

#### ***2.1.1.1 Academic Literacies as Social Practice within Discourse Communities***

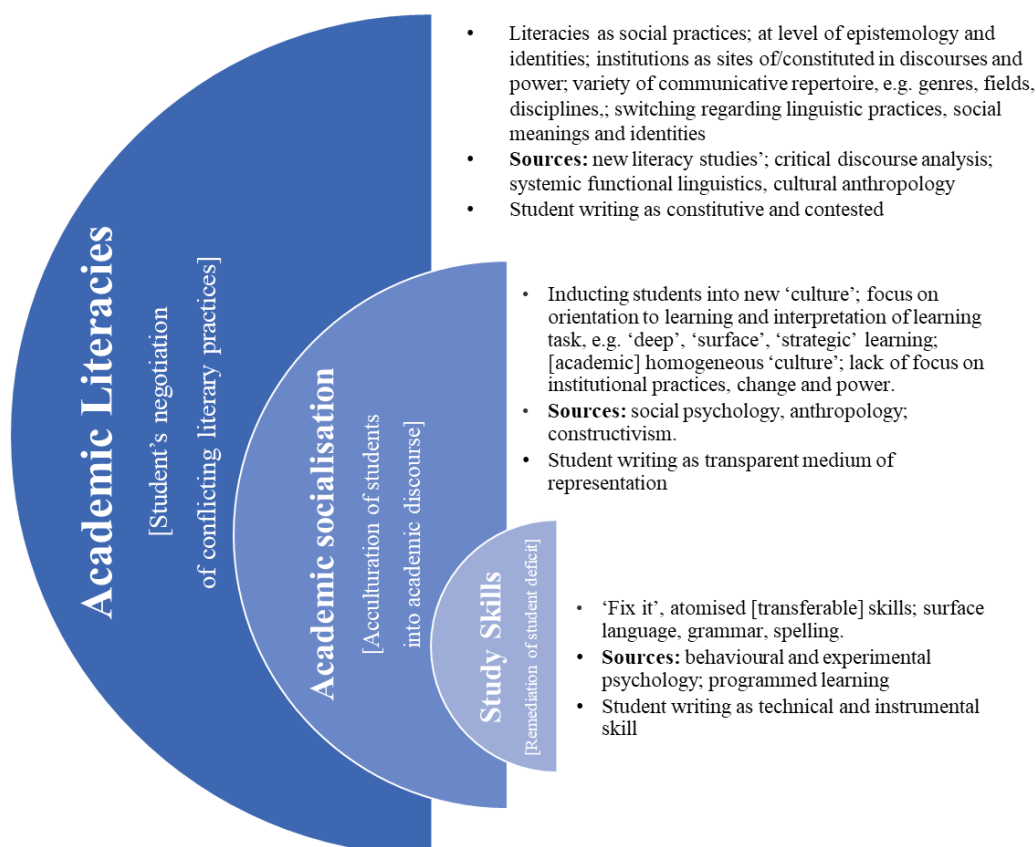
New Literacy Studies (Gee, 2004; Hall, 2006) did a great deal to challenge the traditional notions of literacy and this extended into the concept of AcLits. No longer was it as generally accepted that academic writing is solely about acquiring transferable cognitive skills (Lea, 2004; Lea & Street, 1998). Instead, the concept of AcLits followed the New Literacy Studies that highlight the social nature of literacy, influenced by cultural contexts (Street, 1984). Thus, academic writing slowly began to be viewed as a social practice that highlights previously overlooked aspects of student writing, such as power dynamics, identity, and the influence of ideology on knowledge construction (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 2003). The paradigm shift that was New Literacy impacted AcLits in acknowledging that literacy practices differ across disciplines and cultural settings, emphasising the need for a context-sensitive approach to teaching and learning (Lea & Street, 1998).

By the end of the 1990’s, (Lea & Street, 1998) proposed an AcLits model that includes three overlapping perceptions. The comprehensive model integrates the above two approaches, offering a broader understanding of student writing within institutional practices, power relations, and identities (Lea & Street, 1998). This concept has had a significant impact on academic writing pedagogy and ethnographic perspectives on student writing. The three layers of the AcLits model consist of study skills, academic socialisation, and academic literacies (Figure 2.1). The study skills layer views writing and literacy as individual skills,

emphasising the surface features of language form. The academic socialisation layer addresses students' ability to learn, understand, and reproduce genre-specific rules. The final layer, academic literacies, encompasses meaning making, identity, power, and authority, and disciplinary knowledge. While so many universities have remained at either level one or two, it is this latter layer that informs the focus of this study as it is this layer where the focus is on the meaning maker (student) and it is in the empowering of these that the transformative nature of the concept is realised.

**Figure 2.1**

*Academic Literacies Model and Models of Student Writing in Higher Education*



*Note.* The three layers of Academic Literacies and Models of student writing in Higher Education, adapted from 'The Academic Literacies Model: Theory and Applications' by M. Lea and B. Street, 2006, *Theory into Practice*, 45(4), 368-377. ([https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4504\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4504_11)). Also adapted from 'Students' and Tutors' Understanding of 'New' Academic Literacy Practices' by A. Robinson-Pant and B. Street, 2012, in M. Castello and C. Donahue (eds.), *University Writing: Selves and Texts in Academic Societies* (pp. 71–92, Table 5.1, p. 72). ([https://doi.org/10.1163/9781780523873\\_006](https://doi.org/10.1163/9781780523873_006)). Additionally adapted from H. Webster's blog (2019, March 07), <https://rattusscholasticus.wordpress.com/2019/03/07/uhmlg-academic-literacy-ies-talk/>.

Despite recognising AcLits as a social practice, the need for a more comprehensive and holistic approach to AcLits remains an ongoing issue. Unfortunately, the third layer of the model in Figure 2.1 demands significant time, flexibility, and commitment to student transformation. Furthermore, developing AcLits is a complex task that cannot be effectively taught within a short period of time (Bailey & Orellana, 2015; Gibbons, 2009; Jefferies et al., 2018). The competitive environment in which HE exists poses much pressure on institutes

and many trade-offs occur. This causes many problems in implementing a truly effective AcLits approach and often leads to adoption of EAP as the most efficient way of addressing the identified academic issues of HE students. All of the above is exacerbated by the fact that it is often difficult to determine who is responsible for teaching AcLits. While some believe that it should be taught by teachers in the disciplinary fields, evidence shows that it is more often taught in EAP courses (Green, 2020; Turner, 2012). Debates have centred on what elements are essential for acquiring AcLits. Research has primarily investigated the reading and writing abilities of students (Green, 2020; Lillis & Tuck, 2016). Green (2020) asserts that this perspective both confines the concept of AcLits to written texts and tends to focus on procedural knowledge and the technical abilities required for reading and writing. Green (2020) stresses that AcLits is not a single technical ability, but rather the competence of several, distinct ways of expressing oneself in written and spoken language, as well as other semiotic resources that are distinctive to certain communication domains.

Koutsantoni (2007) examines how disciplinary communities shape AcLits, the challenges students face in acquiring these literacies, and the pedagogical strategies that can support students in mastering them. Koutsantoni argues that each academic discipline operates as a distinct community with its own set of cultural norms and rhetorical practices. These norms are often tacit, making it challenging for students to understand the expectations around writing and communication within their chosen field. AcLits are not merely about learning to write correctly but involve understanding how knowledge is constructed, argued, and communicated in a specific discipline. Koutsantoni emphasises the need for students to engage deeply with the genres and rhetorical conventions of their discipline in order to become successful academic writers. Each discipline requires distinct methods of argumentation, evidence presentation, and knowledge construction. What counts as valid evidence in the sciences may differ from the humanities, making it challenging for students to

navigate these differences (Koutsantoni, 2007). Thus, writing must be taught within the specific context of each discipline's needs (Lea & Street, 1998).

Students, particularly those from non-traditional or international backgrounds, often face challenges in understanding the implicit rules of academic writing within their disciplines. Koutsantoni (2007) notes that these students may be unaware of the unwritten expectations that shape how knowledge is communicated in academic communities, which can hinder their ability to produce work that meets academic standards. This issue is exacerbated when students are required to quickly adapt to new genres and styles of writing (Wingate, 2012). The assumption that students will automatically acquire these skills through exposure to academic texts is flawed, as many struggle to internalise disciplinary conventions without explicit instruction. This is especially true in interdisciplinary studies, where students must navigate multiple sets of literacy practices depending on the context (Hyland, 2004).

The AcLits model argues that writing should not be taught as a generic skill but as a practice specific to each discipline. Task-based learning, where students engage with writing tasks that reflect real-world academic work in their field, can help them better understand the literacy practices required. Koutsantoni (2007) emphasises that explicit instruction in the genres and rhetorical practices of a discipline can bridge the gap between students' prior knowledge and academic expectations. Additionally, scaffolding learning experiences and providing feedback through revision and peer review are essential for building students' confidence in academic writing (Lillis & Scott, 2007; Lillis, 2002). By understanding academic literacies as discipline-specific practices, teachers can design more effective writing instruction that prepares students to meet the demands of their field (Lillis & Tuck, 2016).

Since language teachers are seen as essential factors in reaching successful outcomes in an EFL classroom, their beliefs, or cognition, of what AcLits involves is critical for students'

development of the ability (Borg, 2009). Not only do students need to take an active role in the acquisition of AcLits, education practitioners also need to ensure that they are equipped with sufficient AcLits skills to guide their learners (Green, 2020; Whitehead, 2002). Green argues that teachers require explicit consciousness of the nature of their own AcLits practices and that most students may not be aware of these practices. Through this recognition, teachers can assist EFL students in fostering AcLits abilities.

To sum up, the concept of AcLits has evolved to encompass not just the skills required to read and write academically but also the social practices embedded within academic discourse communities. These communities shape how knowledge is created, shared, and evaluated, situating academic literacy within the specific norms, values, and expectations of different academic settings. Understanding AcLits in this way emphasises that literacy practices are not only technical but also deeply embedded in the social and cultural contexts in which they are used.

#### ***2.1.1.2 Power Dynamics and Identity Construction in Multiliteracies***

As stated Section 2.1.1.1, the AcLits framework views literacy as a socially situated practice shaped by power dynamics and identity construction. Flowerdew (2020) emphasises that academic writing reflects institutional power structures, where linguistic features, such as hedging, influence how students construct authority and identity. Power imbalances are particularly significant for multilingual students, who often struggle to access resources and succeed in environments that favour native speakers (Canagarajah, 2020).

Scholars like Broom (2004), as well as Lea and Street (2006) highlight that AcLits is not just about mastering textual skills, but also about navigating institutional power structures. This framework points out that academic norms can marginalise students from non-dominant

linguistic backgrounds, making literacy development a site where power and equality are contested.

The concept of multiliteracies expands literacy beyond print to include digital, visual, and multimodal forms, allowing for more diverse expressions of identity (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). In multilingual settings, engaging with multiliteracies helps students assert their identities and improve academic outcomes (Cummins et al., 2015; Hyun et al., 2022).

However, multilingual students often struggle to find their authorial voice within dominant academic discourse, which may not fully accommodate their linguistic backgrounds (Gee, 2015).

Challenges arise in implementing multiliteracies pedagogy, as some students prefer traditional academic structures such as writing formal essays and reports, or taking standardised exams (Ntelioglou, 2012). These structures often rely on linear, teacher-centred learning models, where students are evaluated through fixed assessment methods and expected to master content primarily through standard academic English. In contrast, multiliteracies pedagogy introduces diverse modes of expression like digital storytelling and visual communication, which some students may find unfamiliar or less rigorous compared to traditional academic approaches. Teachers must adopt culturally responsive pedagogies to bridge the gap between students' cultural identities and academic expectations (Boakye, 2015). Overall, power and identity are deeply intertwined in AcLits practices, and adopting a multiliteracies approach provides opportunities to address power imbalances and promote equity in educational settings.

#### ***2.1.1.3 Institutional Context and its Impact on Negotiation and Transformation***

The institutional context influences both the teaching of literacies and the experiences of students within HE. Institutions often impose rigid academic conventions that shape students'

writing practices and understanding of academic success (Mäkitalo, 2003). These conventions, such as standardised assessment criteria, strict genre requirements, and fixed rules on citation and structure, often serve to reinforce traditional power structures within academia, privileging certain voices while marginalising others (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Such institutional norms can limit opportunities for creativity and personal expression, particularly for students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds who may feel pressured to conform to these rigid expectations (Street, 1995).

However, as Neculai (2015) has pointed out, negotiation and transformation are possible within these institutional frameworks when students and teachers engage critically with the dominant norms. Students are not passive recipients of institutional knowledge but can become active participants in the negotiation of meaning and identity as they navigate academic literacies. Through this negotiation, students can reshape academic conventions to better align with their personal and cultural experiences, thus fostering a more inclusive learning environment (Lillis & Scott, 2007). For instance, students might challenge rigid genre expectations by incorporating personal narratives or cultural perspectives into their academic writing, asserting their own voice within the discourse.

The process of transformation is a dynamic one. It requires teachers and institutions to support students in these acts of resistance and transformation by moving beyond rigid, prescriptive pedagogical approaches (Vanarsdale, 2020). This involves creating student-centred learning environments that prioritize flexibility, critical thinking, and inclusivity. A transformative approach to academic literacies enables students to redefine academic norms in ways that are meaningful to them, contributing not only to their academic success but also to their broader sense of identity and agency within the academic sphere (Lea & Street, 1998). Such transformations, however, are not without challenges. Institutions must actively support flexible learning environments that recognise the plurality of academic literacies and offer

students the freedom to engage with these literacies in ways that reflect their own experiences and voices (Lillis, 2002). This can be difficult in systems that prioritise standardised outcomes, but the potential for transformation lies in the critical engagement between students and teachers, who work together to negotiate the terms of academic success and make space for diverse identities and literacies (Lillis & Scott, 2007).

### **2.1.2 Academic Literacies in Saudi English Language Teaching: Pre-21st Century**

To fully understand the relationship between LTC and AcLits in KSA requires a detailed insight into the KSA educational context. This section focuses on the historical and social-cultural context. This is essential to evaluate the challenges that are confronted when superimposing what are existing, modernised Western concepts such as AcLits into Saudi society, and how KSA attempts to address this. Further reasons for detailing the context in this study are the more complex challenges to understanding LTC in countries where there is non-secular education. These challenges include the natural resistance that arises if there is not careful integration of Western concepts into a deeply religious country.

The English language education policy in KSA during the pre-21st century reflected the dominance of Islamic values, which significantly impacted the development of AcLits throughout all educational levels. Unlike other Middle Eastern countries, KSA did not experience colonisation by European or English nations, leading to delayed inclusion of English as a school subject (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). It took the discovery of oil in the 1930s that fuelled economic growth that encouraged the establishment of the first Scholarship Preparation School in 1936. The task for this being to prepare citizens for Western education, primarily in the United States. While EFL was introduced in Grades 7 to 12 in 1970, resistance meant it was soon scaled back due to fears of westernisation and potential challenges to religious beliefs (Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017).

However, in discussing the misconceptions about perceptions of education in the Quran, this study established that there is much similarity between aspects of AcLits and the guidance offered in the Quran. Furthermore, it can be argued that current policies outlined in SV2030 reflect similarities between modernised Western nations' education beliefs and Saudis as both are seeing the importance of AcLits as essential to developing global citizens. The SV2030 framework notes important AcLits elements such as being a 'proactive thinker,' 'creative thinker,' and 'analytical thinker' (HCDP, 2021) and SV2030 reinforces 'higher-order thinking skills' in their list. However, significant differences remain. The addition of personal and cultural elements outlined by HCDP (2021) include characteristics such as positivity, courage, perseverance, tolerance, and national pride; all of which suggest the strong religious and communal nature of the country. The current research has identified the characteristics of Saudi society in the 1970s, which included the majority of Saudi families discouraging their children from learning English, considering it merely a utilitarian tool for understanding science and technology (Al-Seghayer, 2013; Al Dameg, 2011; Elyas & Picard, 2010; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

However, this view has dramatically changed, as both families and the government have put significant effort into incorporating English into daily life. It has become the medium of instruction at universities, and there is a recognition that mastery of English is crucial for those intending to pursue higher education abroad or compete in the global job market (Aljuhaish et al., 2020; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017).

This highlights a need for caution in the research as the power of the cultural context is noted as a strong variable that impacts LTC and suggests there are still challenges in imposing Western concepts based on social constructivism that emphasise individualism and student-centred learning and teaching on Saudi's system based on formal teacher-centred pedagogy (Lee & Kaluarachchi, 2020; Vavrus, 2009).

Nowadays, the debate as to whether the Islamic foundation of education has resulted in a skewed focus on religious themes within English language teaching continues (Elyas & Badawood, 2017). There is also concerns over a lack of explicit guidelines for EFL instruction that hinders the development of CT and AcLits among students. Furthermore, students' exposure to essential English vocabulary and grammatical structures remains limited, thwarting their language acquisition potential. Such attitudes also help understand the adoption of outdated, teacher-cantered approaches like auditory and grammar-translation methods, which further hinders students' language learning experiences (Al-Seghayer, 2011; Sofi, 2015). Mekheimer and Aldosari (2011) contend that although both teachers and students acknowledge the need to incorporate Western cultures in EFL courses, rarely has this translated into classroom practices. Adams et al. (2016) argue that by stressing the importance of the learning outcomes, rather than the process of learning, the Saudi education system is perhaps more designed to train exceptional test takers and not critical thinkers. These researchers further claim that there is a significant difference between students learning via relying on materials provided to them, and acquiring academic skills that require them to think on their own. However, the current educational curriculum in KSA still supports the latter, in which students are taught to be information reciters not ideas generators. A further significant barrier is that most teachers are not fully aware of the target culture and so, they may not be able to impart intercultural knowledge to the students (Elyas & Picard, 2010).

The neglect of intercultural issues in EFL classes was also noted by Mahboob and Elyas (2014); Osman (2015) who stress that teachers still rely on superficial and biased sources such as films, magazines, pop-songs, and travel experiences to impart English culture. This lack of authentic and educational resources presents a skewed perspective of other cultures, undermining the development of empathy and CT skills among students.

As globalisation increased and the desire to diversify the economy and become more competitive grows, the shortcomings of the pre-21st century English language education policy has been identified as a major challenge that calls for urgent reforms. Elyas and Picard (2019) claim that the development of EFL education in KSA would have remained quite slow if it were not for the events of 11 September 2001. While the world was blaming the KSA education system for fostering hatred between Islamic and Western cultures and values, KSA advocates (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al-Miziny, 2010; Elyas, 2008) urged the government to take immediate action for educational reform. It is now a commonly held belief that the economic returns of having well-educated citizens are immense (Lee & Kaluarachchi, 2020). In fact, Western education systems ‘have been praised for being the cornerstone of modernisation’ (Lee & Kaluarachchi, 2020).

Researchers have begun to note that the lack of attention to AcLits in EFL has limited students’ development and hindered their ability to engage effectively in the global community (Mahfoodh & Pandian, 2011; Masadeh, 2021; Zhang & Yang, 2021). To address these shortcomings, a more critical and balanced approach to education is urgently required. By empowering English teachers with innovative pedagogical strategies and diverse resources, KSA has hoped it could nurture well-rounded individuals capable of engaging critically and respectfully with diverse perspectives on the world stage.

For developing countries<sup>4</sup> such as KSA, the development of AcLits is accepted as important as ‘an embodiment of higher-order language and thinking skills within the academic

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<sup>4</sup> I believe that labelling Gulf countries, including KSA, as ‘Third World’ or ‘developing’ is inaccurate and unfair. Echoing Al-Harbi (2015), these nations have shown notable advancements in infrastructure, education, and technology, aligning them more with developed countries. Yet, despite these advancements, they are often still classified in outdated terms that do not reflect their current status, which could perpetuate economic exploitation and imbalances in global relations. It is crucial to reassess these classifications to foster more equitable international partnerships.

community bears huge significance for language socialisation, resource distribution and even power disposition within the larger sociocultural context' (Li, 2022, p. 1). Therefore, while there is a need to present AcLits as a unifying concept, KSA is behind in achieving this. Nevertheless, there have been significant attempts to catch up. With these issues outlined, the HCDP (2021) has presented a framework that reflects the three stages of education (Figure 2.2). The three strategic pillars include the development of a resilient and strong educational base in the early years, the preparation for future local and global labour markets within HE, and the opportunity to engage in lifelong learning. The Saudi government has outlined several duties and responsibilities that HE teachers and institutions should take to enable the program. These include improving the teachers' competencies and the overall quality of the education system. At a tertiary level, the government has plans to globally connect Saudi universities with the world, offering international exchange programs to motivate students to study abroad. The researcher herself being a beneficiary of this program.

**Figure 2.2**

*Skills for the Future*



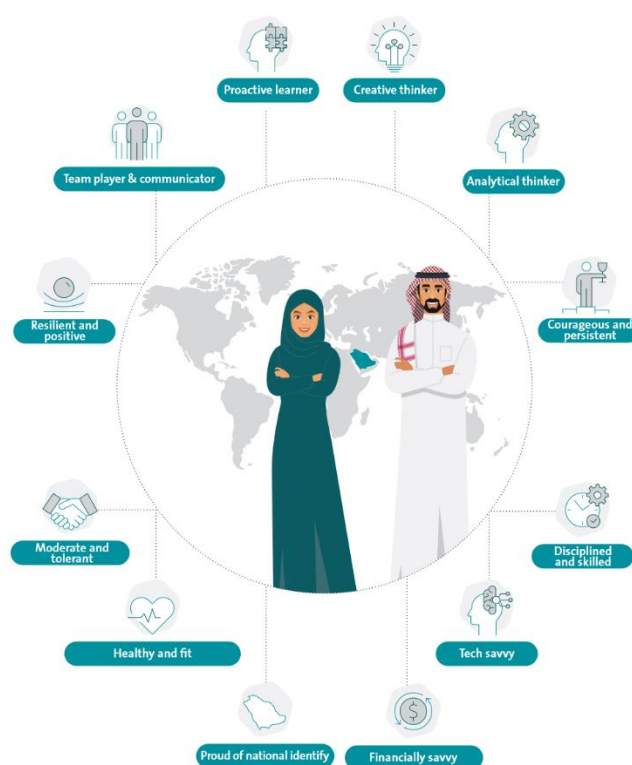
*Note.* Skills for the Future. From 'Human Capability Development Program 2021–2025, Media Document,' Saudi Vision 2030, Figure 20, p. 51. Retrieved from <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/media/kljd5wha/2021-2025-human-capability-development-program-delivery-plan-en.pdf>. CC BY.

In previous documents, the government did not openly share a unified framework with all educational institutions (Quamar, 2021). Although the Tatweer Project, an initiative started in 2007, which focused on establishing professional learning communities in schools and integrating neoliberal ideas into education policy, significantly influenced English language teaching (Al-Mutairy & Shukri, 2017; Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020; Ghbban, 2021; Tayan, 2017), and introduced the concepts of future skills, it was only accessible to certain schools and universities (Al-Eisa, 2009). In the (HCDP, 2021) framework, the government officially stresses the importance of creative thinking, critical analysis, problem-solving skills, adaptability, teamwork, and digital literacy, all of which are essential to secure Saudi citizens' readiness to work in the future in both local and international settings. Figure 2.2 further illustrates the skills that are needed for the future. Within this framework, the government plans to develop higher-order thinking skills, social and emotional intelligence, and practical skills of higher education students.

Derived from these three pillars, a unified framework targeted at enhancing Saudi citizens' core capabilities was introduced via the SV2030 in 2020 (Figure 2.3). Throughout education, traditional and newly emphasised values, and attitudes, such as having curiosity, determination and resilience, guide Saudi people while they acquire basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy. These values and attitudes continue to guide Saudi people when they enter, HE and learn more skills focusing on higher-order thinking, social and emotional intelligence, as well as practical skills. These core abilities can then be used to foster knowledge that is required for a certain industry.

**Figure 2.3**

*Traits of a Globally Competitive Citizen*



*Note.* Traits of a Globally Competitive Citizen. From 'Human Capability Development Program 2021–2025, Media Document,' Saudi Vision 2030, Figure 24, p. 56. Retrieved from <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/media/klj5wha/2021-2025-human-capability-development-program-delivery-plan-en.pdf>. CC BY.

SV2030, as well as the HCDP, suggests a concerted effort by the Saudi government to advance the quality of overall education to promote the capabilities of Saudi citizens. Given that the target of the program is to connect Saudi citizens to global markets and industries, values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge of the 21st century need to be acquired. With a unified framework to refer to, HE practitioners and institutes may amplify the outcomes. SV2030 also briefly introduces the characteristics of globally competitive citizens which connect directly with AcLits concepts, such as being a creative thinker, autonomous learner, and team player (Figure 2.3).

An analysis compiled under HCDP (2021) revealed opportunities in KSA's educational system on all levels, especially with regards to the teaching of future-oriented skills and the application of higher-level thinking. HCDP aims towards giving students authority and at the same time forces the students to be more focused on their studies, and hence more able to pass examinations. It is a balance that is very difficult to achieve in any context. However, while the HCDP identified challenges, numerous researchers assert that in contrast to modernised Western educational environments, Saudi undergraduate students who may demonstrate CT abilities in a variety of settings, still frequently use rote rehearsal as a way of preparation for class presentations, written assignments, and tests (Alkubaidi, 2019; Almusharraf, 2021; Pilotti et al., 2019). Al-Seghayer (2021a) suggests that the issue with rote learning has become a focal point in pedagogy and the focus of future policies. For KSA to become a serious player on the global stage, establishing a high-quality, long-term, professional development program for teachers is essential.

### **2.1.3 Trends in Saudi English Teachers' Cognition of Academic Literacies**

Research into AcLits in HE in KSA is receiving increased attention. There is a consensus that for optimal development of AcLits, Saudi HE students should be introduced to these literacies

at the start of their tertiary education (Gunn et al., 2011; Picard, 2006b). However, implementing such policies poses significant challenges, including balancing competing agendas and designing discipline-specific literacy programs (Dooley & Grellier, 2020; Wingate & Tribble, 2012). To facilitate this process effectively, teachers need to be equipped with clear program directives that adequately prepare them for the successful integration of AcLits into their EGP or ESP programs. Therefore, this section investigates the cognitive aspects of AcLits among Saudi EFL teachers, encompassing CT, problem solving, learning autonomy, collaboration, creative thinking, and other institutional factors.

Research on ESP and EAP in KSA is limited, and the existing studies have not paid much attention to teachers. Some studies in the Saudi context can be categorised into learners' needs analysis for military cadets (Al-gorashi, 1988), medical colleges (Javid, 2011; Javid & Umer, 2013), and business (Liton, 2012), evaluation of English PYP (Alseweed & Daif-Allah, 2012; Alshumaimeri, 2013; Hussain et al., 2016; McMullen, 2014), and discourse analysis of students' written work (Daif-Allah & Albeshir, 2013). These studies provide insights into various aspects of ESP/EAP in the Saudi context, albeit with limited attention to teachers' perspectives and HE contexts.

A study on the teaching of EAP in a PYP found that teachers had limited knowledge of EAP/ESP and relied primarily on their own experiences instead of formal professional development (Alhadijah, 2017). Similarly, Alsharif and Shukri (2018) and Eligindi and Hoque (2022) identifies critical challenges in the field of ESP, focusing on the lack of ESP-specific knowledge among teachers and the insufficient managerial support for professional development in this area. Consequently, their teaching practices did not align with recommended practices in ESP/EAP literature recent research on ESP teaching practices in KSA primarily focuses on teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward PD, rather than their

actual engagement in these activities, with a notable absence of studies on teachers' involvement with current research and the ineffectiveness of ELCs' mechanisms to promote this engagement (Alghamdi, 2019; Melibari, 2015; Nazim & Hazarika, 2017). Despite positive attitudes towards the program, teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the administration, assessment system, classroom heterogeneity, and student proficiency levels. Many teachers had degrees unrelated to EAP and lacked specific training, hindering effective instruction. Challenges included the passive role of teachers, time constraints, reliance on textbooks, and the assessment system's emphasis on teaching to the test. In relation to LTC, it was suggested that teachers had mixed attitudes, with negative perceptions primarily directed towards the administration's lack of professionalism and limited involvement in course design.

In the realm of AcLits in EAP classes, the concept of CT extends beyond mere logical argumentation. It encompasses a contextual understanding that necessitates the implementation of activities fostering the development of students' discourse competence in extended academic tasks, rather than isolated exercises (Din, 2020). Several studies conducted in KSA indicate that EFL teachers generally hold positive opinions and attitudes towards CT (Al-Degether, 2009; Alasmari, 2022; Alharbi, 2022a; Alnofaie, 2013). However, there exists some uncertainty among these teachers regarding the specific constructs associated with CT (Al-Degether, 2009). At Taif University, the EFL teachers in KSA have defined CT as the analysis and judgement of data, ideas, opinions, and relationships (Alzahrani et al., 2022). Despite this shared definition, their instructional practices do not consistently align with this perspective. There is a range of approaches employed by EFL teachers. Some heavily rely on course books and the exercises they provide, while others integrate tasks that require CT skills, such as summarising, evaluating, contrasting, and discussing diverse viewpoints (Alzahrani et al., 2022). Another study notes that CT methods were occasionally used by

teachers, with students' presentations and small group discussions being the most common activities (Al-Degether, 2009). The challenges identified in the various studies related to CT in KSA seem immense and include difficulties in applying CT skills to low-level students, including language barriers, lack of interest, and knowledge hindering student participation, disagreements regarding the subskills of CT (Alzahrani et al., 2022), cultural barriers and resistance to change, limited teacher training and suitable instructional materials, large class sizes and time constraints (Al Zahrani & Elyas, 2017), learner disengagement in remote teaching (Alasmari & Alshae'el, 2020), power relations within the educational system affecting the implementation of CT pedagogy, and the vagueness in applying CT (Alnofaie, 2013). These challenges highlight the need for cultural shifts, comprehensive teacher-training, development of appropriate resources, and addressing issues of power and engagement to effectively integrate CT into education in KSA.

Two studies have investigated the impact of problem-based learning strategies on EFL students in KSA. Neither demonstrates a thorough testing of CT as they focus on isolated skills such as writing and speaking. The first study focused on the enhancement in students paragraph writing skills in the secondary school (Alghamdy, 2023), while the second study examined the effectiveness of a Hybrid Problem-Based Learning (H-PBL) approach in improving speaking proficiency and motivation in a speaking course in HE (Kassem, 2018). Teachers interviewed for the second study perceived the H-PBL approach as useful and emphasised the importance of innovation while preserving the strengths of traditional methods. They recommended developing a customised hybrid curriculum, incorporating interactive presentations, and utilising teaching strategies to address challenges and achieve desired learning outcomes, particularly for speaking skills.

The role of collaborative learning in English classrooms has received significant attention in enhancing AcLits (Moore et al., 2019). Previous Saudi studies have primarily focused on learner perceptions and benefits of these strategies in both secondary school and HE in KSA. However, it is equally important to consider the perspectives and understandings of teachers in implementing collaborative approaches. The only available study is by Alahdal and Al Ahdal (2019) who revealed that 55% of Saudi EFL teachers preferred collaborative teaching, with 85% considering collaborative learning more favourable than traditional lecture methods. Teachers believed that collaborative learning not only enhanced participation and encouraged active interaction among all students but also offered particular advantages to less proficient students, helping to bridge the gap in their understanding more effectively than for their more proficient counterparts. Small group activities facilitated clarification of doubts and extended learning beyond class hours, resulting in positive impacts on learning outcomes, motivation, thinking skills, focus, and problem-solving abilities. The researchers concluded that successful implementation of collaborative learning requires policy changes, curriculum review, needs assessment, teacher training, and the development of supporting materials.

Research on learner perceptions and benefits of collaborative learning indicates that positive teacher–student interpersonal behaviour has been linked to improved academic performance (AlDhafiri, 2015), and successful collaborative writing activities necessitate training and positive perceptions (Aldossary, 2021). Addressing challenges such as mixed-ability groups, difficulties in conveying ideas, and emotional barriers can significantly enhance understanding in the classroom (Alfares, 2017).

Additionally, tackling issues related to learner motivation, student classroom participation, and learner disinterest is essential. Altalib (2019) highlights the crucial role of aligning language learning with students' personal and professional aspirations, suggesting that

enhancing the ‘ideal L2 self’ — a concept where students are encouraged to envision their future selves using the language in professional and personal contexts — can significantly boost learner motivation. This approach is particularly effective in ESP courses, where content is tailored to students’ future goals, fostering a more engaging and motivating learning environment.

Furthermore, Alharbi (2022b) highlights a paradoxical situation where students recognise the importance of English but often show disinterest in its classroom study. This disinterest could be attributed to the nature of the work assigned outside class hours, indicating a need for more engaging and relevant classroom activities to bridge this gap between perceived importance and actual interest. Addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach that fosters both student motivation and active participation, making the learning experience more relevant and enjoyable.

In terms of creative thinking, the recent findings of Masadeh (2021) reveal that public-school Saudi EFL teachers lack a clear understanding of creativity and have limited knowledge about its components. The analysis also showed that teachers do not frequently practise activities to promote creativity, indicating a gap in their performance. Teachers’ training, experience, culture, biases, and perceptions were identified as factors influencing their understanding of creativity. Similarly, Aldujayn and Alsubhi (2020) report positive attitudes towards creativity among teachers but also note a lack of clarity in its definition and application. These findings indicate a need for improved understanding of creativity among teachers and the development of shared definitions within the Saudi EFL context.

In a study by Alzahrani et al. (2022), EFL teachers acknowledged the importance of creative thinking in language learning, emphasising its connection to CT and the ability to generate new ideas and perspectives. The teachers believed that fostering a question-friendly

environment and encouraging original ideas were crucial for promoting creative thinking in the classroom. Some participants mentioned specific activities like problem solving, storytelling with pictures, and writing tasks that required generating new content. However, there was a lack of consensus regarding the subskill of creating new content. Al-Qahtani (2016a) found that EFL teachers associated creativity with other subjects and had limited training on fostering creativity in language classrooms or acting as facilitators in learner-centred classrooms (Al-Qahtani, 2016a; Gulnaz & Alfaqih, 2015). Then came COVID-19, which has significantly impacted EFL teachers' creativity in KSA, limiting their preparedness and ability to develop creative teaching methods during the transition to online teaching (Al-khresheh, 2022).

Research on teachers' cognition regarding autonomous language learning in KSA is limited compared to research that primarily focuses on learners with a low level of learning autonomy (Alrabai, 2017; Alzubi et al., 2017; Asiri & Shukri, 2020; Mohammed, 2022). Teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of learner autonomy, defining it as the ability of students to act and regulate their own learning activities (Khreisat & Mugableh, 2021). They recognise the importance of autonomy in the learning process, highlighting its role in fostering independence and decision-making skills (Alhaysony, 2016; Khreisat & Mugableh, 2021). Teachers also emphasise the need for students to rely on themselves rather than being dependent on the teachers (Khreisat & Mugableh, 2021). From a technical perspective, teachers emphasise the significance of independent study, learning outside the classroom, and utilising technology for out-of-class tasks (Alhaysony, 2016). Psychological perspectives underscore the importance of confident and motivated learners who possess the ability to monitor their learning progress and adopt effective learning strategies (Alhaysony, 2016). Social perspectives highlight the value of providing learners with opportunities for independent work, cooperative group activities, and learning from each other (Alhaysony,

2016). They are seen as facilitators who provide guidance, advice on language learning strategies, and involve students in decision-making processes (Al Asmari, 2013b; Khreisat & Mugableh, 2021). However, research identifies that while the concept of independent, student-centred learning is noted, teachers require professional development and training to enhance their autonomy-oriented skills (Al Asmari, 2013b). Teachers' own autonomy influences their ability to foster autonomy in students (Al Asmari, 2013b). Student-centred approaches that promote active participation, group work, and discussions result in higher levels of student engagement and autonomy (Almusharraf, 2020). Students' weak language skills and lack of interest or motivation are identified as barriers to autonomous learning (Khreisat & Mugableh, 2021). Cultural expectations of authority and a passive learning culture further hinder the development of learner autonomy (Al Asmari, 2013b; Alhaysony, 2016). Additionally, strict curricula and time constraints limit the opportunities for autonomous learning (Al Asmari, 2013b).

The significance of integrating Intercultural Competences (ICC) into AcLits to enhance student outcomes in EAP is widely recognised, especially for international students in contexts like KSA (Blair, 2017; Chen, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2022; Orsini-Jones et al., 2017; Reid & Garson, 2017). Studies reveal ICC's potential in motivating students and enhancing their cultural awareness, highlighting the dynamic link between culture and ELT (Mekheimer & Aldosari, 2011). The importance of considering students' perspectives towards ICC is also highlighted (Al-Jarf, 2006a, 2006b; Al Musaiteer, 2015)

Despite the benefits, challenges such as language barriers and cultural tensions persist in KSA, affecting AcLits achievement (Bury, 2016; Pitts & Brooks, 2017). Multilingual students with prior English exposure and the use of scaffolding techniques by teachers can mitigate

these challenges (Baroni et al., 2019; Rizvi, 2020; Wingate, 2015). Additionally, online intercultural exchanges have been suggested to improve cultural knowledge (Thorne, 2016).

However, the successful implementation of ICC in ELT faces hurdles including concerns over the erosion of religious and linguistic identities, limited cultural familiarity among teachers, and the impact of technology on cultural understanding (Al Hasnan, 2015; Farooq et al., 2018; Havril, 2015; Osman, 2015). A shift towards promoting multicultural competence and incorporating international perspectives into the EFL curriculum is advocated by recent studies (Alhuthaif, 2019; Alsamani, 2015).

Resistance to Western cultural adoption and concerns over linguistic and religious identity erosion are notable, yet the proliferation of technology and mass media in KSA highlights the growing need for English language proficiency (Alrabai, 2016; Alrahaili, 2013; Elyas & Picard, 2010; Sharma, 2019). This technological influence has opened new avenues for cultural exploration and interaction, suggesting a pathway towards building intercultural competence in KSA's EFL education (Melibari, 2015).

The importance of the teacher in EFL education is widely accepted and while structural issues exist, it is important to understand EFL teachers' beliefs about their roles and responsibilities. LTC and CHAT have contributed a great deal to such understanding. Given that teachers' conceptions greatly impact the way they design and implement instructions in their classroom (Dos Santos, 2019), I address this next.

## **2.2 Language Teacher Cognition**

The influence of teachers' deeply ingrained beliefs on their classroom behaviours is widely acknowledged (Farrell, 2015b). Within the domain of SLTE, LTC is experientially derived professional knowledge that significantly shapes both initial teacher training and reflective

practice (Borg, 2009; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Li, 2020; Sun & Zhang, 2021; Yu et al., 2020). The research on LTC, as emphasised by Johnson (2006), has played a pivotal role in advancing our understanding of the work of SLTE. It encompasses the examination of teachers' perceptions, including their thoughts, knowledge, beliefs, and emotional aspects (Borg, 2003).

Various scholars have significantly contributed to defining LTC. Pajares (1992) emphasises the importance of teacher beliefs, Richardson (1996) addresses challenges in distinguishing beliefs from knowledge, Verloop et al. (2001) highlight the interconnected nature of knowledge and beliefs, and Woods (1996) proposes the concept of BAK (beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge). Woods argues that BAK collectively shapes teachers' decisions and strategies, influencing how they evaluate new information and choose instructional methods.

Borg has emerged as a leading proponent of LTC, providing a comprehensive understanding of the concept. Borg's earlier work presents LTC as an umbrella term encompassing the cognitive dimension of teaching, including teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts (Borg, 2003). He argues that LTC is multifaceted, linking teachers' thinking and actions, and offering insights for implementing institutional change. Borg's subsequent research emphasises the complexity and context sensitivity of LTC, describing it as a personalised and practically oriented network of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs that language teachers draw upon in their work (Borg, 2015). In the context of this research, 'cognition' refers to teachers' viewpoints, beliefs, and attitudes regarding their implementation or avoidance of AcLits in their teaching practice, as well as the shared meaning associated with these actions within pedagogy.

Despite the complexity of the holistic concept of LTC, its significance cannot be overstated. Examining LTC is crucial for gaining insights into teachers' perspectives, decision-making processes, and instructional practices, leading to improved teaching and learning outcomes (Borg, 2006; Li & Walsh, 2011). Exploring teachers' understanding and actions provides valuable insights into their views on teaching and learning, pedagogical considerations, and factors influencing classroom dynamics, such as material selection, task design, interaction patterns, and assessment (Borg, 2003; Breen et al., 2001; Mangubhai et al., 2004). Additionally, investigating LTC sheds light on classroom dynamics and the evolving identity of teachers, enhancing the comprehension of pedagogy and the sociocultural aspects of language learning (Bullough Jr, 1992; Clark & Peterson, 1986). By recognising and addressing teachers' preconceived beliefs and supporting their thinking processes, LTC contributes to their effectiveness in the classroom (Nespor, 1987; Weinstein, 1989).

For female Saudi English language teachers and their AcLits, using LTC as a conceptual framework offers valuable insights into the interplay between teachers' beliefs, knowledge, practices, and their impact on students' language learning experiences (Borg, 2006; Dos Santos, 2019). This research investigates the influence of sociocultural context, professional experiences, and educational policies on teachers' understanding and implementation of AcLits in KSA. The findings have implications for SLTE, curriculum development, and pedagogical practices to enhance English language instruction in the country.

The subsequent section delves deeper into the progression of LTC research throughout history, examining the models and frameworks employed in LTC studies, with a specific emphasis on the impact of sociocultural shifts. It also discusses present-day trends in LTC research, focusing on the context of KSA.

### **2.2.1 Tracing the Trajectory of Language Teacher Cognition Studies**

Language Teacher Cognition (LTC) research has undergone significant transformations over the years. In the 1970s, teaching research shifted from the process-product approach to focusing on teachers' cognitive processes and decision-making (Borg, 2015; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). This has led to increased interests in psychological aspects of teaching, such as problem-solving and decision-making, with researchers exploring teacher planning, judgement, and implicit theories (Clark & Yinger, 1977; Shavelson & Borko, 1979). Findings revealed that teaching involved complex mental frameworks beyond observable actions (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

In the 1980s, research expanded to foreign language teaching, emphasising teachers' thoughts, judgements, and decisions (Borko & Livingston, 1989). It acknowledged that teaching practices are shaped by teacher beliefs, classroom environments, and routines, challenging behaviourist views (Elbaz, 1981). This era recognised the role of teachers' prior experiences, personal knowledge, and the work context in shaping their professional understanding (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988; Pajares, 1992). Teaching knowledge was seen as constructed through classroom experiences and ongoing social negotiation (Grossman, 1990).

In the 1990s, research on LTC gained momentum focusing on teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and subject-specific cognition (Fennema & Franke, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Thompson, 1992). Teacher cognition emerged as a comprehensive framework, offering insights into teaching across personal, professional, sociocultural, and historical dimensions (Borg, 2015). In the realm of second language teaching, teachers' metacognitive knowledge was acknowledged as influential in shaping their practices (Schmidt, 1990). The concept of teacher cognition provided a fresh perspective, highlighting the interplay between beliefs and knowledge and aiming to understand how teachers' thinking and emotions impact their work (Borg, 2019;

Walberg, 1990). For instance, Burns (1996) conducted a study on experienced TESOL-trained teachers, exploring their beliefs, thinking processes, and influence on teaching practices. Through interviews and observations, Burns revealed the interconnectedness of teachers' theoretical and pedagogical thinking with various contextual factors, including institutional culture. The study underscored the importance of considering contextual elements, such as sociocultural taboos, when teaching adults in an EFL context to ensure effective learning experiences.

Since 2000, research on LTC has continued to evolve, focusing on teacher knowledge and the interconnectedness of knowledge and beliefs (Munby et al., 2001; Verloop et al., 2001).

Recent studies have explored LTC and its impact on students' learning experiences (Golombek, 2015; Moodie & Feryok, 2015). Golombek (2015) delves into the exploration of emotions in teacher education, while Moodie and Feryok (2015) investigate language teaching commitment and its development within teachers' specific contexts. The findings show that language teaching commitment is influenced by both positive and negative experiences, changing intentions and perspectives, as well as contextual factors.

The prevailing terms and concepts used in smaller-scale qualitative studies on LTC are extensive. They have centred around 'cognition' and 'belief' (Borg, 2019). Recent LTC studies have focused on teaching methodology (Barrot, 2016; Miri et al., 2017; Moodie, 2016; Zhu & Shu, 2017), pronunciation (Burri et al., 2017; Couper, 2017; Lim, 2016), communication strategies (Rahmani Doqaruni, 2017), in-service teacher education (England, 2017; Moodie, 2015), grammar teaching (Graus & Coppen, 2017; Liviero, 2017), interactive thinking (Jackson & Cho, 2018; Karimi & Norouzi, 2017), professional development (Wyatt & Ager, 2017), L1 use (Tajeddin & Aryaeian, 2017), and literacy (Cross, 2011). Research on LTC is also highlighted for bridging the gap between teachers' perceptions and practices and

students' language learning (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Understanding the impact of teachers' beliefs on their teaching practice can lead to reflective practice and positive outcomes.

The studies conducted in the KSA context focus on the concept of 'cognition' and shed light on the cognitive processes and perspectives of English language teachers. Alghamdi (2013) investigated the perceptions and beliefs of ESP and content area teachers regarding the teaching of English technical vocabulary in the industrial sector. Similarly, Alghanmi and Shukri (2016) explored the relationship between teachers' beliefs of grammar instruction and their classroom practices in KSA. Ahmad (2018) examined the cognition of non-native EFL teachers in a Saudi HE classroom, particularly in relation to the teaching of grammar across different mother tongues and genders.

Furthermore, Aldayel (2018) investigated the knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of teachers regarding teaching English prosody (pronunciation and intonation) in KSA. Borg and Alshumaimeri (2019) specifically focus on teachers' beliefs and practices concerning learner autonomy in a tertiary context. Additionally, Alhuwaydi (2020) explored the impact of overseas professional development experiences on the cognitions and practices of EFL teachers.

Moreover, Alsalem (2020) investigated teacher cognition on English grammar assessment, while Allehidan (2020) delved into the cognition of EFL teachers regarding pronunciation instruction. Ahmad et al. (2021a) examined the contextual factors affecting teacher cognition in teaching English to university students in an EFL context in KSA. Lastly, AlHarbi (2021) compared TESOL standards with EFL teacher-preparation programs in KSA. These studies contribute to our understanding of English language teaching in the specific context of KSA by providing insights into the cognitive processes and perspectives of English language

teachers and demonstrate consistent moves towards acceptance of LTC as an important area of research.

By 2021, Rahman and Singh (2021) were exploring and emphasising the complex nature of teacher cognition in an EFL context. Al-Faraj (2021) investigated the impact of teachers' perceptions on teaching and learning in the ESP classroom in Kuwait. These studies emphasise the complexity of literacies and underscore the importance of collaboration among academic learning services, educational developers, and subject leaders to foster students' AcLits.

Although some studies are limited due to small sample sizes, it is now generally accepted in the West that it is important to continue investigating teachers' cognitions and their impact on teaching AcLits (Colombo & Prior, 2016; Jonsmoen & Greek, 2017). Interconnections and translational research highlight that the scope goes beyond reading and writing to other dimensions of AcLits and teaching practices. Therefore, despite ongoing debates and challenges in the West, the field of LTC has experienced substantial growth over the past 30 years (Borg, 2015). Fortunately, the research outlined above identifies a similar pattern emerging in countries such as KSA.

## **2.2.2 Key Theoretical and Conceptual Models of Language Teacher Cognition**

In the field of applied linguistics, models and frameworks serve as a conceptual foundation for investigating and interpreting the thought processes and decision-making of teachers. Li (2017) explored the theoretical perspective of LTC, including cognitive, interactionist, and discursive psychological perspectives, which define the nature of LTC construct and guide the appropriate research methodology. Freeman and Johnson (1998) established the knowledge-base of language teacher-education framework, while Borg (2015) developed a

similar model for LTC elements and processes. Many researchers, in line with Borg's model, have also employed the CHAT, also known as sociocultural turn or activity theory, to comprehend LTC from a holistic viewpoint. These later frameworks constitute the theoretical foundation of the current study (see Chapter 3 for a detailed application).

In response to the absence of a coherent framework and empirical exploration of different theoretical perspectives and methodological considerations in LTC, Li (2013) and Borg (2003) examined three theoretical perspectives of LTC: cognitive, interactionist, and discursive psychological approaches. Originally, research on LTC adopted a *cognitive perspective*, focusing on fixed assumptions held by teachers that are guided by decision-making and actions (Calderhead, 1996; Eisenhart et al., 1988) and overlooking the contextual and interactive nature of their work in classrooms (Li, 2013; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). This approach tends to emphasise the mismatch between teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom practices (Speer, 2005). Borg's perspective examines the convergence and divergence of teachers' beliefs and practices (Basturkmen et al., 2004; Orafi & Borg, 2009) and considers contextual factors such as curriculum, testing, educational policy, and school culture as influences (Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). Likert-scale questionnaires and tests are commonly used research methods to elicit and describe teachers' beliefs (Andrews & Hatch, 1999; Andrews, 2003; Andrews & McNeill, 2005; Borg, 2006; Horwitz, 1985; Johnson, 1992).

The *interactionist perspective*, as the second theoretical viewpoint, challenges the notion that beliefs alone dictate teacher actions. It argues that teachers' motives should not be predetermined by their subject priorities but should be seen as entities that can be transformed through interactions with students (Skott, 2001). It suggests that beliefs are fluid and can emerge through interactions, rather than being fixed entities that determine teacher actions

(Li, 2013, 2020). Research in this perspective analyses classroom interaction data to understand the relationship between teachers' beliefs, actions, and actual classroom practices. As far back as 1974, Argyris and Schon. (1974) advocated for inferring beliefs from observable actions rather than relying solely on self-reported beliefs. The interactionist perspective highlights the importance of studying the unity of teachers' actions and words in understanding their cognition (Li, 2017).

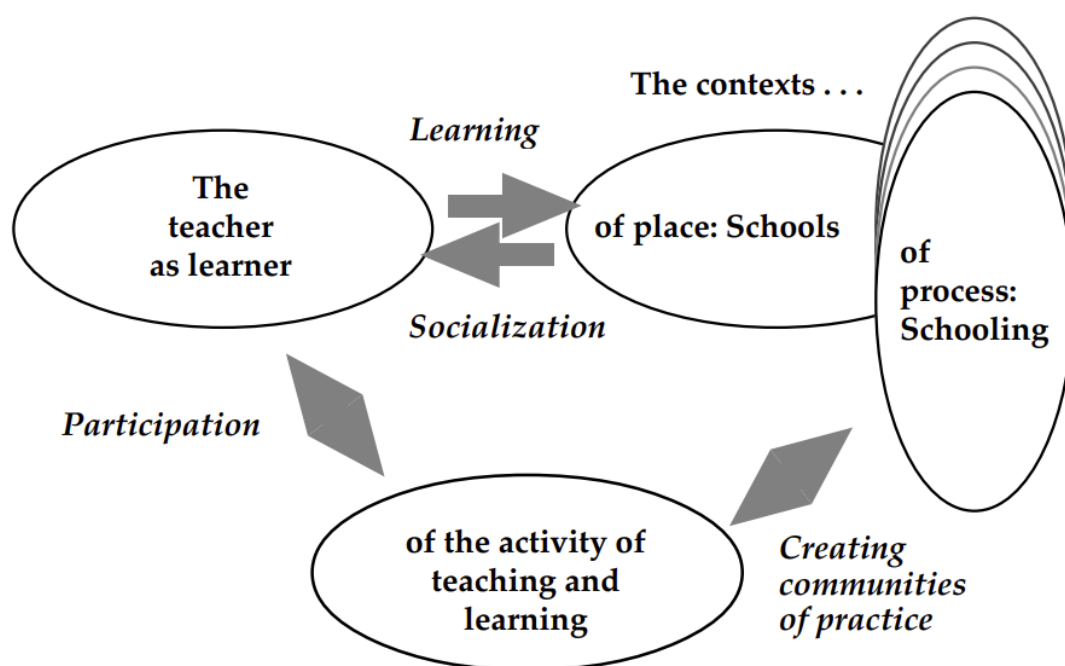
The third perspective is the *discursive psychological (DP) perspective*. Introduced by Edwards and Potter (1992), it examines the influence of language and discourse on shaping psychological phenomena . DP offers a unique approach to studying teacher cognition, focusing on how language and discourse impact teachers' thinking and understanding. It views language as an active and central activity in social life, where psychological concepts are constructed through discourse (Harré & Gillett, 1994; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). DP further emphasises the local and situational organisation of talk and considers talk as a medium of action, considering the perspectives of the interactants (Barwell, 2003; Molder & Potter, 2005). By analysing natural interactions, such as pre-service teacher (PST) interactions and interviews, DP uncovers the socially constructed nature of beliefs and highlights the unity of beliefs and practice (Morton, 2012). While DP has faced criticism for potential researcher bias, it excels in revealing the implicit reasoning processes underlying talk and interaction (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; Speer, 2005).

A redefinition of the knowledge-base of language teacher education is proposed by Freeman and Johnson (1998), with an emphasis on the importance of understanding teaching within the personal and social context of teachers' professional lives. The framework emphasises the interconnectedness of three domains: the *teacher-learner*, the *social context* (schools and schooling), and the *pedagogical process* (language teaching and learning) (Figure 2.4). It aims

to redefine the core of language teacher education by considering the professional lives of teachers, the settings in which they work, and the circumstances of their work. It seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge, valuing both conceptual and perceptual knowledge. The authors argue that understanding language teacher education requires examining how individuals learn to teach, the sociocultural contexts of schools and schooling, and the complex dynamics of the pedagogical process. They emphasise the need to study the interdependence of these domains to develop a comprehensive understanding of the knowledge base and promote effective teacher education.

**Figure 2.4**

*Framework for the Knowledge Base of Language Teacher Education*



*Note.* Framework for the Knowledge Base of Language Teacher Education. Domains are in boldface; processes are in italics. From 'Reconceptualising the knowledge base of language teacher education,' by D. Freeman & K. Johnson, 1998, *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), p. 406, Figure 1. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588114>. CC BY.

The first domain, the *teacher-learner*, focuses on teachers as learners of language teaching. It highlights the importance of considering teachers as individuals who think and learn, rather than who are merely conduits to students. Freeman and Johnson (1998) propose investigating factors such as prior knowledge, beliefs, and the development of teaching knowledge over

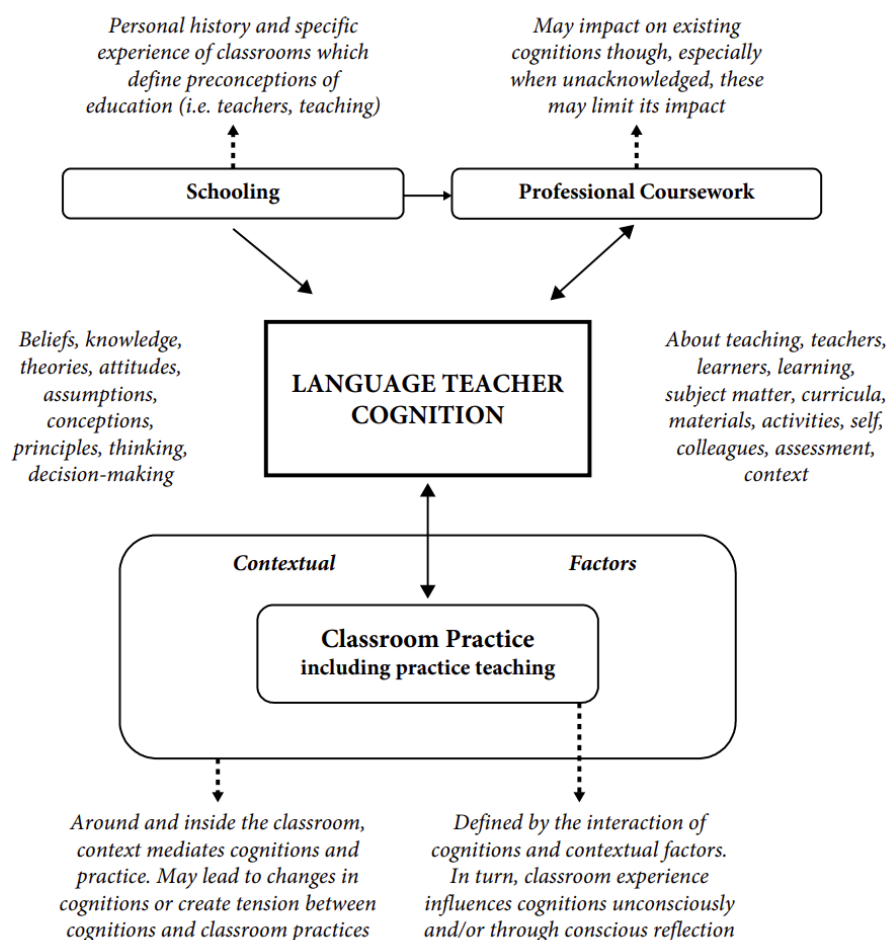
time. The second domain, the *social context*, emphasises schools and schooling as the sociocultural contexts for teacher learning. It examines the physical and sociocultural settings of schools and the sociocultural and historical processes of schooling. The authors argue that understanding the dynamics of schools and schooling is essential for effective teacher education. Lastly, the *pedagogical process* domain encompasses language teaching and learning. It asserts that teaching cannot be separated from learning and the contexts in which it takes place. The authors stress the interdependence of the three domains, advocating for a systemic view that recognises their constant interaction and influence on language teacher education.

Borg (2015) adopts the LTC model (Figure 2.5), which considers potential factors related to teacher cognition, including *schooling*, *professional coursework*, and *context*, that directly impact language *classroom practice*. To categorise the elements and processes, Borg explored eight themes of LTC, including the nature of cognition, scope of research, cognition-practice relationship, contextual impact, pre-service learning, cognitive-behavioural change, expertise in teaching, and methodological issues. The first consideration is *schooling*, which encompasses teachers' earlier experiences as students and their educational backgrounds. These experiences shape their initial conceptions of teacher preparation and continue to influence their cognition throughout their careers. The second consideration is *professional coursework* and preparedness, examining the impact of formal teacher education and professional development programs on teachers' cognition. The coursework and training they receive shape their current cognitions and inform their teaching practices. *Contextual factors* form the third consideration, encompassing elements within the educational context that influence teachers' ability to align their cognition with their teaching. These factors include institutional settings, educational policies, curriculum requirements, available resources, and the sociocultural context of teaching. Lastly, *classroom practice* is emphasised as a significant

factor that can spontaneously or deliberately alter teachers' cognition through tasks requiring reflection on prior experiences. This reciprocal relationship between cognition and classroom practice highlights the dynamic nature of teacher cognition.

**Figure 2.5**

*Elements and Processes in Language Teacher Cognition*



*Note.* Elements and Processes in Language Teacher Cognition. From ‘Teacher Cognition and Language Education: Research and Practice,’ by S. Borg, 2015, p. 333, Figure 10.2. Bloomsbury Publishing. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/vu/detail.action?docID=1938192>. CC BY.

In researching this topic, I believe that the combination of the LTC model and the CHAT framework provides a comprehensive understanding of teacher cognition-in-interaction as a social phenomenon. Both perspectives emphasise the role of context and interaction in shaping cognition and consider the social and cultural aspects of teacher knowledge and

beliefs. This integration offers valuable insights into learning environments, teacher education, and the broader sociocultural context.

### **2.3 Critical Examination of Theoretical Paradigm Shifts in Second Language Teacher Education**

Traditional teacher education relied on the positivist paradigm, focusing on the transmission of knowledge through theoretical readings, lectures, and workshops (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Lave, 1988; Tedick, 2013). However, this approach often neglected the complexities of real-world teaching contexts and failed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the teaching process (Yazan, 2012). As a result, there has been a shift towards recognising the importance of teacher cognition and preparing teachers for the complexities they face in the 21st century.

SLTE has also experienced significant developments. Previously, SLTE was not recognised as a distinct discipline, leading to language teachers lacking specialised knowledge and skills (Freeman, 2009). However, as the demand for language education increased and understanding of second language acquisition evolved, SLTE gained recognition as a vital field of study (Freeman, 2009; Tütüniş & Yalman, 2020; Vélez-Rendón, 2002; Zhang, 2022). The purpose of SLTE is to equip novice teachers with effective teaching skills, efficient techniques, and a deep understanding of second language acquisition grounded in current research (Burns & Richards, 2009; Richards, 1990).

SLTE has emerged as a critical component of language teacher preparation, emphasising a deep understanding of second language acquisition and pedagogical techniques grounded in current research. These developments have led to a more comprehensive and holistic approach to teacher education, empowering teachers to create meaningful learning environments for their students (Farrell, 2015a; Woods & Çakır, 2011).

Over several decades, paradigm shifts in SLTE have moved from behaviourism to cognitivism, constructivism, sociocultural, and complex dynamic systems theory. The behaviourist paradigm, which focuses on identifying links between teaching processes and student achievement, dominated research from the 1960s until early 1980s. This approach further generated two lines of research, one focusing on observable teaching behaviours (Brophy & Good, 1986; Rosenshine, 1971; Tarone & Allwright, 2005), and the other compared teaching methods (Krashen, 1981; Seliger, 1975; Widdowson, 1981; Wilkins, 1976). However, this approach has encountered limitations in explaining the complexity of language teaching and learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Li & Walsh, 2011), which has led to a shift for behaviourism research to study second language learners and their acquisition processes (Freeman, 2009; Loughran & Hamilton, 2016). Despite this, the limitations of this approach has resulted in passive learner-teacher relationships, with PSTs expected to replicate their trainers' behaviour and beliefs (Barduhn & Johnson, 2009; Freeman, 2009).

In response to the deficiencies of the behavioural model, the cognitive revolution restored a paradigm shift to education inquiry in the mid-1970s (Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Shulman, 1986; Zhang, 2022). Teacher cognition refers to teachers' thinking, beliefs, and knowledge about teaching, learners, and the subject they teach (Kagan, 1990). Different methods have been used to measure teacher cognition, but challenges exist due to the lack of connection between teacher cognitive processes and teaching outcomes, as well as the contradictions resulting from different epistemological positions (Borg, 2009; Kagan, 1990; Kalaian & Freeman, 1994; Weinstein, 1988). Nonetheless, some scepticism has been raised regarding the usefulness of research on teacher cognition. Few studies have linked teacher cognitive processes to planning and interactive teaching or to student attitudes and achievement (Zhang, 2022). Additionally, the literature is complex and contradictory due to the various epistemological positions employed in studies (Kagan, 1990). It is challenging to compare

and evaluate conclusions drawn from numerous investigations on the same topic area because of the different approaches used. This difficulty may also stem from the chosen methodology, for instance, the generalisability in qualitative and quantitative research. Despite these challenges, research on teacher cognition remains an active and developing field in language instruction (Burns et al., 2015). It has transformed the focus from observing external teaching behaviours to analysing internal cognitive processes (Borg, 2019). Ultimately, understanding teacher cognition may provide a strong basis for educating teachers and implementing educational changes.

The constructivist perspective emerged in response to disputes of knowledge and learning in SLTE, arguing that knowledge is not an objective representation of the world but rather a subjective construction (Fox, 2001; Richardson, 1997; Steffe & Gale, 1995). This new paradigm emphasised the importance of learners' agency and their prior knowledge, attitudes, and assumptions in shaping their learning processes. In SLTE, this period led to a focus on how PSTs develop their own knowledge rather than being passive recipients of pre-packaged knowledge (Shulman, 1992). Constructivism challenges traditional learning theories and expands SLTE research and practice by highlighting the need for explicit examination of teachers' prior theories and beliefs (Roberts, 1998; Williams & Burden, 1997). Thus, constructivism has significant implications for SLTE by promoting the active role of learners in knowledge building and expanding the understanding of how teachers develop their professional knowledge.

The sociocultural turn in SLTE is rooted in Vygotskian sociocultural theory, which places importance on social interactions for learning and development. If Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) theory is applied to teacher education, teachers' cognitive development, including the development of higher-order mental functions such as thinking, reasoning, and problem-

solving, might differ depending on the cultural context. This concept has had a significant impact on the study of SLTE (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011b; Johnson & Golombek, 2020). The sociocultural perspective introduces a theory of mind that recognises the cognitive and social interconnectivity of teacher learning. It redefines second language teaching as dialogic mediation, where students, teachers, and objects communicate (Johnson, 2009). It transforms the way teachers perceive their roles by emphasising the significance of situatedness and context, modifying the way researchers think about teacher education by emphasising the necessity of supporting teacher learning within the circumstances of their professional lives (Johnson, 2009; Johnson, 2015; Johnson & Golombek, 2011b). This perspective emphasises context and teacher learning, conceptualises language and teaching, and stresses situatedness and context in teacher education (Johnson, 2009; Korkmaz, 2013). It serves as a foundation for continuous study and practice and is essential for comprehending SLTE (Johnson, 2009; Li, 2019; Miller, 2009; Nguyen, 2019).

The linear approach to SLTE and development has been criticised, leading to the emergence of the complexity dynamic systems theory (CDST) (Cochran-Smith et al., 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Spelman & Rohlwing, 2013; Zeichner, 2005). This theory acknowledges that SLTE is a complex and dynamic process, requiring context-specific approaches to support teacher learning. CDST emphasises the nonlinear and dynamic nature of SLTE, making it difficult to capture with traditional research methodologies (Larsen-Freeman, 2020; Larsen-Freeman, 2018; Strom et al., 2023). Adopting a complex viewpoint has important implications for teacher education and development programs. It offers a valuable framework for analysing and understanding the complexity of SLTE.

These paradigms have contributed to a better understanding of SLTE, emphasising teacher cognition, learner agency, social interactions, context, and teacher learning. Research, education, and implementation around these paradigms remain active fields of research.

### **2.3.1 Key models and frameworks for Second Language Teacher Education**

This section explores key models and frameworks in SLTE that provide valuable insights for designing and implementing effective programs. Three notable models are examined:

Freeman's (2009) three dimensions of apprenticeship model, Wright's (2010) curriculum model, and Daoud's (2019) curriculum development framework. Although primarily focused on English teaching, these models are relevant to SLTE programs. They illuminate important aspects such as teaching design, curriculum development, PST empowerment, and learning experiences, all contributing to the professional development and efficacy of SLTE in KSA.

To enhance the formation of teachers' professional identity, Freeman (2009) created a model highlighting the interdependence of aspects involved in designing and implementing teaching practices. This model supports teachers' professional growth by understanding and improving SLTE. It includes three key dimensions: substance, process, and influence (Figure 2.6).

Substance refers to the content and learning objectives, process focuses on methods and PST engagement, and influence relates to the measurement and evaluation of outcomes.

Understanding these interrelationships is crucial for effective teaching and learning.

Freeman's model also highlights the impact of professional learning on teachers' careers and identities. It includes three sectors representing different SLTE approaches:

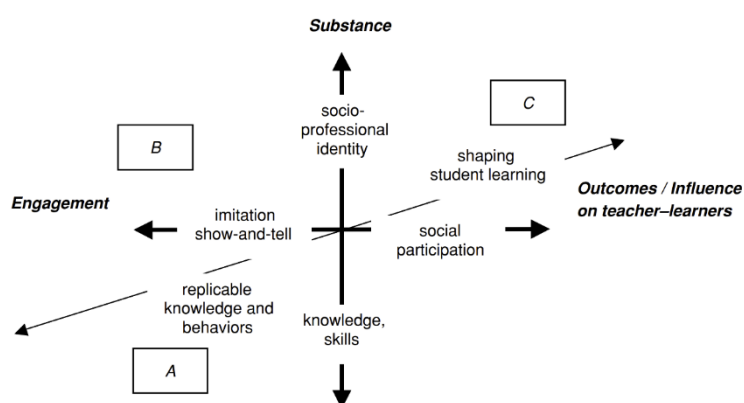
**Sector A:** Traditional methods like lectures, short courses, and micro-teaching, aiming to generate replicable knowledge and behaviours.

**Sector B:** Emphasises learning as it naturally occurs in the classroom, using informal strategies such as ‘learning by doing’ and ‘learning by observing,’ similar to apprenticeship models (Lortie, 1975).

**Sector C:** Focuses on fostering professional identity through structured social activities like mentorship and team-teaching. This sector includes formal requirements, such as team projects and feedback groups, as well as informal study groups formed by students, both contributing to professional development and utilising participation as a learning tool.

**Figure 2.6**

*Three Dimensions of Apprenticeship in an SLTE Model.*



*Note.* Dimensions of the Scope of SLTE. From ‘The Scope of Second Language Teacher Education’ by D. Freeman, 2009, in *Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education*, edited by A. Burns & J. C. Richards, Cambridge University Press, pp. 11–19, Figure 2, p. 16. (<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139042710>). CC BY.

In a similar vein, Wright (2010) used Breen and Candlin’s (1980) work on communicative curricula for language teacher training to advance SLTE. A formal SLTE curriculum, typically temporal and institutionalised, serves as a professional gatekeeper. It combines curriculum objectives, learning experiences, and evaluation protocols, raising pivotal questions.

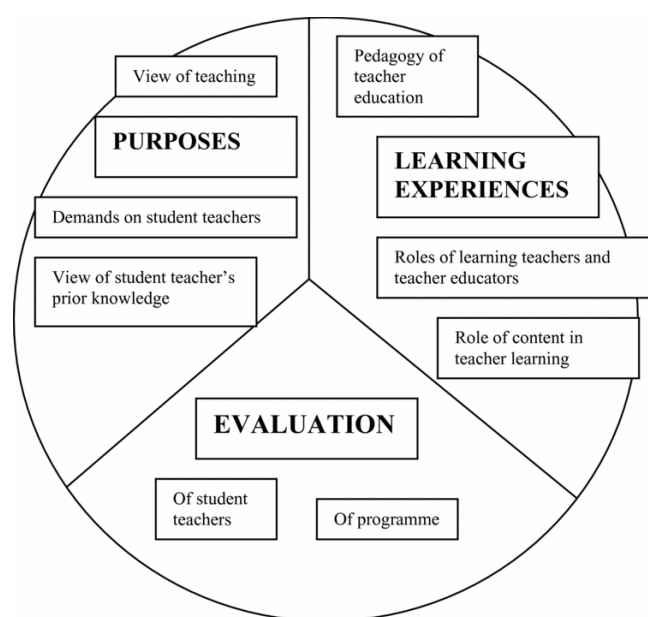
Breen and Candlin’s (1980) model addresses key questions for developing effective language teachers, including program purposes, learning demands, prior knowledge, teaching methods,

educator roles, content relevance, and evaluation of curriculum goals and standards. Wright (2010) adapted Breen and Candlin's model for SLTE by reformulating these questions into three sets: goals and purposes of the program, structured learning experiences, and program evaluation.

Wright's model aims to produce reflective teachers through socio-cognitive demands and acknowledges previous learning and life experiences. It emphasises varied learning experiences in institutional settings and real classrooms and highlights the importance of evaluating personal and professional learning and long-term follow-up of successful SLTE graduates (Figure 2.7).

**Figure 2.7**

*The Curriculum of SLTE*



*Note.* The Curriculum of SLTE, adapted from 'Second language teacher education: Review of recent research on practice' by T. Wright, 2010, *Language Teaching*, 43(3), 259–296.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444810000030>, Figure 1, pp. 262. Also adapted from 'The essentials of a communicative curriculum in English language teaching' by M. P. Breen and C. N. Candlin, 1980, *Applied Linguistics*, 2(1), 89–112, Introduction section, p. 90. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/1.2.89>. CC BY.

Daoud (2019) advocates for a bottom-up approach in SLTE, promoting active involvement and collaboration among English teachers and students. He proposes a teacher-oriented framework for ELT curriculum development, emphasising teacher empowerment and

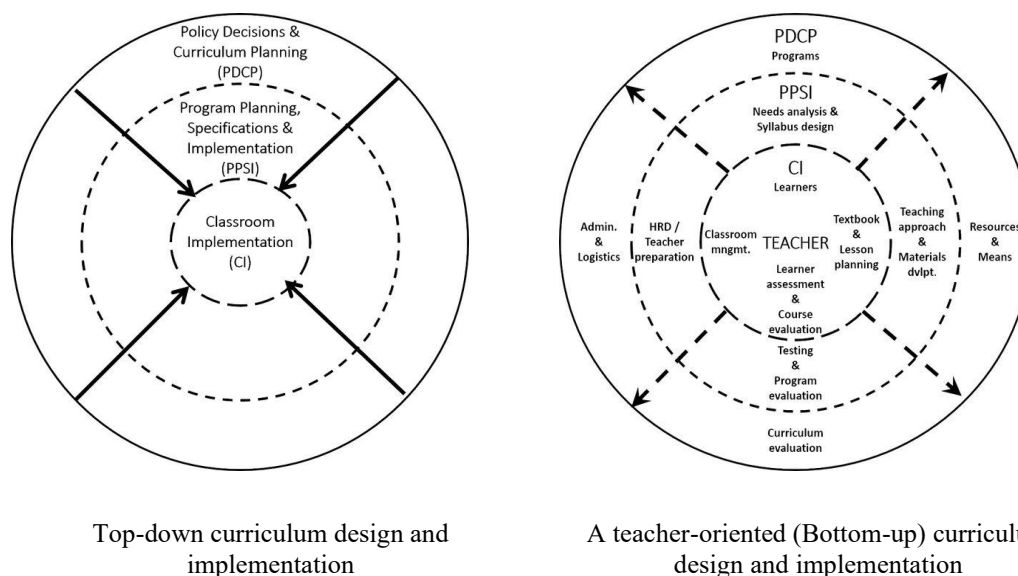
involvement. This framework highlights the difference between top-down and bottom-up approaches and their impact on teachers.

In a top-down approach, decisions come from higher authorities, limiting teacher input and autonomy. Teachers follow a predetermined textbook and assessment system with minimal interaction with other stakeholders. Conversely, the bottom-up approach encourages teacher participation and collaboration, allowing them to adapt teaching methods and collaborate on curriculum development.

The framework involves classroom implementation, where teachers engage learners through effective materials, lesson planning, and management (Figure 3.2). At the program planning and implementation level, teachers understand learner needs, teaching approaches, and evaluation, playing a crucial role in program evaluation and improvement. At the policy and curriculum planning level, teachers align learners' needs with the curriculum's socioeconomic context and participate in decision-making. This empowers teachers to shape student learning experiences, enhancing teaching practices and job satisfaction.

**Figure 2.8**

*Framework for Curriculum Development and Implementation in English Language Teaching*



*Note.* Framework for Curriculum Development and Implementation in English Language Teaching. From ‘Language teaching in turbulent times: Curriculum-savvy teachers for curriculum success and sustainability’ by M. Daoud, 2019, in C. Wright, Lou Harvey, & J. Simpson (Eds.), *Voices and Practices in Applied Linguistics: Diversifying a Discipline*, White Rose University Press, pp. 177–193, Figures 8 and 9, pp. 183 and 184. (<https://doi.org/10.22599/BAAL1.k>). CC BY. Adapted from *The Second Language Curriculum*, by R.K. Johnson, 1989, Cambridge University Press.

These key models and frameworks provide valuable insights into SLTE, including teaching design, curriculum development, and teacher empowerment. Integrating these perspectives into SLTE programs can enhance professional development and promote effective language teaching and learning practices (Wright, 2010).

### 2.3.2 Empowering Saudi English Language Teacher Education: Tracing the Evolutionary Progression

Effective training of English language teachers is vital for the educational process and overall economic growth (Tang, 2015). In KSA, the demand for qualified teachers is high, and schools prioritise recruiting academically capable individuals with relevant knowledge and experience. The government acknowledges the pivotal role of teachers in achieving educational goals and the significance of schools in providing quality education (Adnot et al., 2017; Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017). Adequately preparing teachers is crucial for the successful

implementation of SV2030, a priority recognised by MoE. The integration of multiple technological tools and platforms has led to the increasing complexity of studying and teaching English (Al-Abiky, 2019; Lee & James, 2018; Yang & Walker, 2015). In line with this, teacher education has gained significant importance in KSA, as demonstrated by several studies (Al-Madani & Allaafiajiy, 2014; Alghofaili & Elyas, 2017; Allam & Elyas, 2016; Alqurashi et al., 2017; Jamjoom, 2010; Oyaid, 2009).

From the 1920s through the 1980s, KSA predominantly relied on English language teachers imported from neighbouring Arab countries, such as Jordan, Egypt, and Sudan (Al-Abiky, 2019). This approach was necessitated by the critical role English played in economic domains, particularly in contracts, negotiations, and interactions with international companies involved in the oil and infrastructure sectors learning (Al-Seghayer, 2014c; Faruk, 2013; Hakim, 2012; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Niblock, 2006). The 1970s marked a pivotal period when the Saudi government embarked on a comprehensive strategy to train local citizens as English language teachers, aiming to mitigate the dependence on foreign teaching professionals (Al-Abiky, 2019; Al-Seghayer, 2014c). This shift was driven by the accelerating demand for English language proficiency, emphasised by its economic utility in the growing sectors that were fundamental to the nation's growth and international engagements.

Prior to the establishment of MoE as the official governing body for education in KSA, three key institutions were responsible for education and teacher training. The *Directorate of Knowledge*, founded in 1926, oversaw male education, while the *General Presidency for Girls' Education*, established in 1959, focused on K–12 general education for girls (Hakim, 2012; MoE, 2021). In 1975, the *Ministry of Higher Education* was created to implement the government's strategy for university education (MoE, 2021). These institutions played crucial roles in shaping the education system. Subsequently, the MoE took charge of general education, merging with the *General Presidency for Girls' Education* in 2003. The *Ministry*

*of Higher Education*, established to oversee HE, was amalgamated with MoE in 2015, under the name MoE. This merger aimed to promote cohesion between general and higher education, improve educational outcomes, and align educational efforts with the needs of the labour market, as envisioned by King Salman bin Abdulaziz (MoE, 2021).

The general preparation of English teachers in KSA has gone through several iterations (Al-Abiky, 2019). Previously, it was common for university graduates with bachelor degrees in English and Translation to be employed as teachers without any prior teaching training. However, MoE has taken strategic steps to address this issue. In 2005, the MoE introduced a large-scale government scholarship program to send Saudi students to English-speaking countries, such as Canada and BANA to study English and pursue HE, including master and doctorate degrees.

In 2016, pre-service EFL teachers (PSTs) were required to complete a rigorous one-year educational preparation program leading to a Diploma of Education (DoE) before becoming school English teachers for all levels and/or university lecturer. This program included comprehensive curriculum and instruction courses covering teaching methods, curriculum design, technology integration, micro-teaching, and assessment. Additionally, PST were required to complete a twelve-week practicum in public or private schools before graduating. In mid-2016, MoE launched the ‘Khebrat’ program, a high-quality professional development initiative that selects teachers, including EFL teachers, for an intensive six-month to one-year training program abroad to learn about and bring back best practices in teaching and learning. The program is conducted in partnership with renowned universities in Finland, Canada, and BANA, known for their excellence in education and academic achievements (OECD, 2020). The professional master’s program was launched in 2019, marking a recent development in the field. Moskovsky and Picard (2019) made predictions about the potential positive

outcomes of such programs. However, the actual outcomes, whether positive or negative, remain uncertain as further research is needed to assess them accurately.

The development of the DoE program in KSA was undertaken by education faculties in universities. These faculties were situated in major Saudi cities only at the beginning, including Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca, Medina, and Abha (Albadrani, 2018). The DoE played a pivotal role in reforming preparing teachers (Al-Nasser, 2015; Alsubaie, 2014; Alzaydi, 2010) not only in SLTE but also other departments, including Arabic Studies, Islamic Studies, Sciences, and Social Studies (Albadrani, 2018). As a result, enrolment in teacher-education programs has grown significantly, reflecting a commitment to providing qualified teachers for Saudi schools (Ahmed, 1979).

The DoE program included both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching courses, integrated pedagogical and academic subjects (Ahmed, 1979). The DoE program varies slightly between different institutions, which are segregated by gender. Female teachers may receive slightly different EFL education compared to male teachers, but the content hours of the DoE are the same for both genders (Al-Seghayer, 2014b). For example, as stated by King Abdulaziz University (2009) and cited by Albadrani (2018), the objectives of the DoE program include providing a continuum of studies for students pursuing teaching careers and offering opportunities for in-service personnel to become qualified educational practitioners. As of 2022, King Abdulaziz University offers a range of enrolment options for both male and female students in distance education programs accredited by the National Center for Electronic Education. The programs are tailored to provide practical educational services to the community and to offer a variety of specialised professional tracks that support the goals of SV2030. The university is committed to addressing both the needs of the labour market and the educational goals of its students with these programs. The DoE covers various subjects related to education, including teaching methods, educational psychology, and tests and

measurements. The practicum module, which carries the highest credit hours, emphasises the application of theoretical knowledge in practice (Alzaydi, 2010).

The lack of systematic planning by universities and a shortage of TESOL qualified Saudi teachers contributed to the challenges in this system. Additionally, the employment requirements for university positions have traditionally emphasised high the Grade Point Averages (GPAs) and passing written exams, without specific preparation for university lecturing. Nonetheless, as highlighted by Bin Abdullah (2019) a new system has been implemented for aspiring teachers to obtain qualifications for teaching at universities in KSA. Under this system, students are required to initially complete a bachelor's degree in English and subsequently pursue a professional master's degree in English teaching. Given the program's relative novelty, the available information regarding its effectiveness remains limited.

### **2.3.3 Certification Criteria and Professional Qualifications in Saudi English Language Teacher Education**

The availability of general descriptive studies providing an overview of the DoE plan is notably limited. This scarcity may be attributed to the absence of a specific criteria followed by universities, as there exists variation in how the program is presented and implemented across different institutions. Hence, this analysis focuses on the main improvements to facilitate a better understanding of the participants' educational preparation. Only three comprehensive studies have been found that specifically discuss the DoE program in KSA (Al-Seghayer, 2011; Albadrani, 2018; Maash, 2021). Albadrani (2018) highlights that no previous researchers have explored the issues related to the education of PSTs of English and the quality of the DoE program from the perspective of PSTs themselves. Previous KSA research in the SLTE has primarily concentrated on identifying the deficiencies of the

program by examining teacher performance, student achievement, and overall outcomes (Al-Seghayer, 2016; Althobaiti, 2017; Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017). However, there is a need for further research to examine the value and impact of these courses on the classroom practice of EFL PSTs. My next analysis compares the DoE's outdated system and the professional master's, specifically on aspects related to English language instruction, including the systems, modules, courses, and admission requirements and criteria (Table 2.2).

**Table 2.3**

*Saudi English Language Pre-Service Teachers Preparations*

		Outdated programs			New programs
Systems	Blended	Consecutive system (Diploma of Education Program)			Professional master's degree
		Integrative	Sequential		
Commenced	1967, merged with HE in 2013.	in 90s and discontinued in 2018			2019 onwards
Modules	Specialisation with few educational courses	Specialisation + educational	Specialisation	Educational	Educational
Duration	4 years	5 years	4 years	1 year	2 years
Qualification	BA in English literature	BA in English language and a minor degree in education (Diploma of Education Program)	BA in English language	Diploma of Education Program	Master's degree in Applied Linguistics
Internships	24-week School with a Monitor (could be from other educational field) and Cooperating Teachers	twelve-week School with a monitor (could be from other educational field) and cooperating teachers		fictitious scenario with colleagues and lecturer	With courses and a research project and monitors
Institution Levels	Girls' Junior collages Both Elementary and high-school levels	Choose one level either intermediate or high school	University		University The level is not available but the outcomes: university English institutions and schools
Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Special teaching methods I &amp;II</li><li>Practical education for two semesters</li><li>Applied linguistics I &amp; II</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Designing school-based activity</li><li>Method of teaching English language I &amp; II</li><li>Student teaching in teaching English language</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Writing in EFL &amp; Reading in EFL</li><li>English language acquisition</li><li>Language testing</li></ul>	(section 4.1.5 for further details)	
Requirement		Admission Requirements for Some Universities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bachelor's degree with a 'good' accumulated average.</li><li>Minimum Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of 400.</li><li>Ability to attend advanced courses for at least six weeks.</li><li>Fulfilment of necessary criteria for admission tests.</li></ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>BA degree with a minimum grade of 'Good'</li><li>Two letters of recommendation</li><li>Overall IELTS Academic exam score of bands 6.0</li><li>Previous training and experience</li><li>GPA - 30% &amp; PGAT score - 30%</li><li>Previous training and experience - 30%</li><li>English language proficiency - 10%</li></ul>
Criteria					

*Note.* Systems of teacher-preparation programs in KSA, adapted from 'An overview of teacher education and the teaching profession in Saudi Arabia: Private vs. public sector' by W. Maash, 2021, *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education (IJCDSE)*, 12(1), pp. 4335–4338, Table 2, p. 4336. (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20533/ijcdse.2042.6364.2021.0531>).

In the past, the preparation of EFL teachers in KSA followed two different streams: the blended program and the consecutive program, which included both integrative and sequential approaches. The blended program was established in 1967 and became part of higher education in 2013, while the consecutive program started in the late 1980s and was discontinued in 2018. These two programs operated simultaneously for a period before being replaced by the professional master's degree program in 2019.

The blended program, which had a duration of four years, focused on specialisation in English literature. Throughout the program, the practicum component was integrated with the coursework. This means that students had the opportunity to gain practical teaching experience while simultaneously studying the relevant theoretical concepts. By combining theory and practice, this system provided students with the chance to directly apply their knowledge in real classroom settings. The program catered to both intermediate and high-school levels, as the English subject was only allocated for those school levels. It spanned two semesters, with PSTs spending 24 weeks teaching in cooperation with a monitor and a senior teacher.

In addition to the blended program, the outdated mandatory preparation of EFL teachers included the consecutive system, which had two options (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Alzaydi, 2010). The first option was the integrative system, which was designed for PSTs who knew they wanted to pursue a career in the educational field (Maash, 2021). Under this option, PSTs would complete four years of English courses and then an additional fifth year with various educational modules including a three-month school practicum, totalling 12 weeks of practical teaching experience (Maash, 2021).

Upon completion, PSTs would receive a certificate indicating that they had completed an English language bachelor degree program with a minor in education. The evaluation criteria

for the assessment of individuals involved in the educational process allocates different weights to different roles. For example, in Umm Al-Qura University, the school principal's evaluation carries 10 marks, the senior teacher's evaluation holds 20 marks, and the supervisors have the highest weight with 70 marks allocated to their assessment.

The second option in the consecutive system was the sequential system. Unlike the integrative system, this option did not require PSTs to undergo teaching practice during their training.

These two options in the consecutive system provided different paths for individuals interested in becoming EFL teachers. The integrative system offered a more holistic approach, combining English and educational training with a practical teaching component. In contrast, the sequential system allowed flexibility for graduates to pursue additional educational training at a later stage without mandatory teaching practice, after completing their bachelor's degree in English, students could enrol in a one-year training program (Al-Seghayer, 2011).

Both consecutive curricula include designing school-based activities, teaching English language skills, and student teaching. For example, a previous program offered by DoE at Umm Al-Qura University comprised a total of 30 credits over a span of one year. Only four credits were allocated to TESOL courses and another four for TESOL training, constituting merely 27% of the entire program. Moreover, while the TESOL components may be taught wholly or partly in English, the remaining 73% of the program was conducted in Arabic.

There is no distinction made between teacher training for K–12 and higher education. The goals of the DoE program in KSA encompass preparing English language teachers for intermediate and high schools, emphasising practical language skill development, contributing to the qualification of English language graduates, organising training courses for teachers, studying English literature, fostering creativity and CT, and providing an integrated approach to language learning.

Currently, for PSTs to be qualified to teach in universities, they need to complete a BA degree in English and then apply for a professional master's degree in English teaching (Bin Abdullah, 2019). Because the program is relatively new, no research has been conducted to evaluate its effectiveness. However, looking at a university website that offers a professional master's degree in applied linguistics, the curriculum varies according to the university. However, it shares some characteristics: this program has a duration of two years and places a strong emphasis on EFL educational modules. It provides opportunities for internships, along with coursework and a research project supervised by mentors. The program aims to cater to both university-level English institutions and schools, without targeting a specific audience. Therefore, PSTs are prepared for all levels, which could still be overwhelming.

Admission requirements varied across programs. For the outdated program, criteria included holding a bachelor's degree, achieving a minimum TOEFL score, and participating in advanced courses that served as an orientation program. The new program required a minimum grade of 'Good' for a bachelor's degree, along with letters of recommendation, IELTS Academic exam scores, and previous training and experience. The most recent program considered factors such as GPA, Post Graduate Admission Test (PGAT) score, previous training and experience, and English language proficiency, with a required overall IELTS Academic exam score of 6.0 bands. Overall, the new program with a professional master's degree demonstrates a shift towards higher academic qualifications and specialisation in applied linguistics, aiming to enhance the quality of EFL teachers in KSA.

In terms of program textbooks, my personal experience in 2013 involved primarily studying *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). This textbook provided an overview of various methods such as the grammar-translation method, the direct method, audiolingual method, and Suggestopedia. Suggestopedia is a teaching method that utilises a comfortable and stress-free learning environment, combined with

elements like music, art, and positive suggestion, to enhance the speed and efficacy of language learning. It aims to overcome psychological barriers to learning by creating an atmosphere that promotes relaxation and confidence, thereby facilitating a more effective acquisition of knowledge (Harmer, 2007; Lozanov, 2005). Supplementary materials such as booklets provided by the lecturer and study notes were utilised. Studying merely the characteristics and limitations of each language teaching method in detail for a whole semester may be perceived as inefficient for PSTs, as it focused solely on historical details. However, the current master's program includes textbooks covering a wide range of language teaching topics, such as different approaches and methods, interactive and communicative language teaching (CLT), cultural studies, language learning strategies, teaching English to learners with special educational needs, and inclusive pedagogies. This comprehensive curriculum aims to equip PSTs with a solid theoretical foundation and practical knowledge to address diverse educational contexts.

For example, the master's degree in applied linguistics at Umm Al-Qura University prepares graduates for careers in English language teaching, supervisory roles in government schools, translation positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Saudi embassies/consulates, and roles in the Presidency of the Two Holy Mosques. Graduates can also engage in translation, Islamic outreach, cultural dialogues, media, and promoting Saudi culture.

The program focuses on enhancing comprehension, critical analysis, research capabilities, cognitive growth, problem-solving skills, and understanding of English language and culture. In 2019, the course became more specialised, highlighting the need for practical preparation to enhance teachers' theoretical knowledge, practical skills, reflective capacities, and research-based approaches, which are critical. While past and present systems train PSTs to teach at any education level (Maash, 2021), the effectiveness of the current system in producing highly qualified EFL teachers for KSA remains to be seen.

### **2.3.4 Navigating Challenges in Pre-Service Diploma of Education Program**

As previously mentioned, the professional master's degree is a relatively recent program, which has limited critical evaluative research. Consequently, the following section of this discussion will primarily concentrate on the examination of the DoE program. Despite the MoE's substantial attention, funding, and various transformations in DoE, there are still significant deficiencies that need to be addressed to achieve progress. The outdated DoE was lacking in coverage and consistency, inadequately preparing future teachers (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al-Seghayer, 2014c). Merely increasing the number of teachers may not effectively address issues associated with the teacher shortage; instead, emphasis should be placed on high-quality teaching programs (Albadrani, 2018). While the available research on the education of pre-service English teachers and the quality of the DoE program from their perspective is limited (Albadrani, 2018), previous criticism has pointed out the lack of a comprehensive examination of these programs. Thus, further research is needed to determine whether they are inadequately or non-systematically presented before drawing any conclusive judgements.

These shortcomings can be categorised into five areas: the need to upgrade PSTs' English proficiency (Alqahtani, 2019b; Khan, 2009; Mofareh, 2019; Tamran, 2016), an excessive focus on English literature and language theories (Al-Nasser, 2015; Alqahtani, 2019b; Alrabai, 2016; Alshammari, 2021), insufficient training in teaching methods (Alhaisoni, 2012; Alkubaidi, 2014; Alsowat, 2022), and inconsistent selection of mentors (Alkubaidi, 2014).

Recruiting EFL PSTs with adequate English language proficiency remains a challenge, despite mandatory testing that involves entry and exit cut-offs for proficiency level, such as those in IELTS. The goal is to produce future EFL teachers with a certain level of English proficiency. Initial years of the program focus on enhancing PSTs' language skills. However,

insufficient English proficiency among some PSTs upon enrolment has been identified, necessitating improvements in PST preparation (Al-Seghayer, 2014a). Perception regarding the program's impact on English language proficiency varies among PSTs (Albadrani, 2018). Despite training efforts, some argue that PSTs may graduate without sufficient mastery of English (Alqahtani, 2019b). Low English proficiency is still evident among Saudi English teachers (Mofareh, 2019). This necessitates the assessment of prospective PSTs' English proficiency and a curriculum review to build in language development (Khan, 2009; Tamran, 2016).

Another critical problem identified in the teacher-training program is the excessive focus on English literature and language theories, particularly in the study of Anglo-Saxon literature, Shakespearean literature, 19th and 20th-century literature, poetry, and drama. While linguistic branches like syntax, semantics, morphology, phonology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and translation are also included, PSTs receive limited exposure to English teaching methods and pedagogy beyond theories of language acquisition and assessment (Alqahtani, 2019b).

Consequently, many Saudi EFL teachers lack the necessary professional and linguistic competence, leading to difficulties in effectively teaching language concepts (Al-Seghayer, 2014a). Moreover, many PST graduates enter the classroom underprepared, lacking a clear understanding of language teaching strategies and lacking adequate knowledge about key factors influencing second language learning, such as motivation, attitudes, aptitude, and age (Al-Seghayer, 2014a). They also lack familiarity with past and current language teaching pedagogies and assessment methods, as well as practical experience in language teaching, which hampers their abilities in material design and language evaluation (Al-Seghayer, 2014c).

One noticeable issue with Saudi SLTE programs is the insufficient training provided in teaching methods. The courses taken by PSTs are brief and fail to equip them with the necessary knowledge to effectively implement teaching concepts (Albadrani, 2018). English teaching-method courses constitute less than 10% of the total offerings in English departments, as there is a predominant focus on the theoretical history of teaching methods rather than on implementing contemporary approaches (Al-Seghayer, 2014a). The extensive and condensed curriculum of the DoE leads to superficial coverage of subjects, impeding the proficiency of PSTs. Furthermore, there is a lack of pedagogical awareness among PSTs, which poses additional challenges to effective teaching in the classroom (Al-Seghayer, 2014c). Modules designed to educate PSTs about the education system and raise awareness of teaching-related issues were found to be inadequate (Albadrani, 2018); improved and comprehensive modules that address the specific needs and challenges of English language teaching in KSA would be beneficial (Albadrani, 2018). Traditional teaching methods, lack of student motivation, inadequate assessment techniques, and administrative constraints also contribute to the difficulties faced in English language teaching (Al-Seghayer, 2014c; Fareh, 2010).

During the practicum stage, there are several aspects that require attention. Firstly, there is a significant gap between theoretical instruction and practical application, with unclear roles and responsibilities assigned to PSTs, supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers (Al-Seghayer, 2011; Iraki, 2011). Secondly, the pre-service mentoring practice is poorly managed, as mentors without specialised knowledge in English teaching are responsible for advising and evaluating PSTs (Iraki, 2011). Additionally, PSTs receive inadequate observation and feedback from their supervisors, impeding their teaching progress. The evaluation tools used to assess PSTs are often unclear and lack validity (Mohasseb & Hakami, 2008). These issues with the mentoring system during the practicum can be attributed to a

lack of training for supervisors themselves (Babaeer, 2021). Furthermore, there is limited emphasis on student self-assessment, a common practice in TESOL programs in Western contexts (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013; Zohairy, 2012).

The inconsistent selection and guidance of supervising teachers/mentors have a detrimental impact on PSTs' methods and impede their professional development (Alkubaidi, 2014).

Novice teachers often face a lack of sufficient support and guidance, which limits their ability to apply new language theories and teaching methods during practice teaching (Farrell, 2012).

To rectify these issues, establishing conducive conditions that encourage the application of contemporary language teaching approaches and offering support to novice teachers are essential as these enhance teachers' comprehension and implementation of effective teaching strategies (Albadrani, 2018).

Teachers' attitudes, actual performance, and beliefs have been identified as additional factors contributing to the challenges in EFL education. These factors include the perception of motivational strategies as unclear (Al-Qahtani, 2016a), prioritising exam scores over language proficiency in teaching (Al-Seghayer, 2022), allowing the use of Arabic during English-speaking activities (Al-Seghayer, 2021a), inadequate reading abilities (Al-Qahtani, 2016b), limited knowledge of learner-centred language assessment (Alsowat, 2022), insufficient use of language learning strategies (Alhaisoni, 2012), inadequate technical skills for integrating technology in classrooms (Al Shammari, 2007), and persistently low English proficiency among Saudi students (Al-Abiky, 2019). To address these issues and enhance the quality of EFL education, a systematic approach is required in Saudi EFL teacher-preparation programs that specifically target these concerns and promote effective teaching practices.

### **2.3.5 Advancing Professional Development for English Language Teachers in Saudi Arabia: Constraints and Current Trends**

Teachers' professional development (TPD) is a vital factor in determining educational outcomes as it enhances teachers' knowledge and skills (Avalos, 2011; Desimone, 2009). TPD encompasses a range of activities, such as workshops, mentoring, and collaborative learning, which enable teachers to stay abreast of new teaching methods and educational research. These can occur spontaneously or be intentionally structured (Day, 1997). Recent research highlights that TPD for teachers is an ongoing and collaborative learning process that facilitates continuous teacher empowerment (Dai et al., 2022). Given the increasing challenges and expectations of education, high-quality TPD for teachers is logical (Ganser, 2000). Effective initiatives in this regard include opportunities for reflection, which have the potential to transform teaching practice (Saylor & Johnson, 2014). Furthermore, mentoring and support practices within teams have been shown to be valuable for teacher teachers in improving their professional or subject pedagogy (Griffiths et al., 2010). Teachers participating in TPD may encounter various challenges that can impact the effectiveness of a program. These challenges encompass aspects such as relevance, quality, support, follow-up, collaboration, and logistical constraints.

The historical dominance of Western knowledge in TESOL education, particularly from BANA, has been criticised for its colonial and one-sided transmission. TPD involves complex knowledge that differs between practice and transmission. Local contexts and epistemic cultures shape the interpretation and application of knowledge. TPD is nonlinear and TESOL teachers' international mobility is increasing (Ahmed & Barnawi, 2021). The deficit perspective on TPD ignores valuable knowledge gained from real-life experiences and classroom experimentation. In response to SV2030, the Saudi government has been implementing tailored TPD programs to enhance students' English proficiency and address

context-specific (Borko et al., 2010) challenges faced by in-service teachers (Al-Harbi & Ahmad, 2022). Hence, engaging in a comprehensive discourse on the prevailing trends in TPD within KSA assumes paramount significance, encompassing not only the examination of existing practices but also the identification and exploration of limitations that hinder further advancements in this domain.

In-service TPD is an obvious approach for implementing SV2030 in KSA (Alfahadi, 2019). However, problems have emerged from the current teacher TPD in universities across the country. For Saudi EFL teachers, in-service training sessions and workshops are the most common TPD types (Alshaikhi, 2018). University language centres, which serve as educational authorities, are responsible for defining the training needs of teachers and the training activities to be supplied to training centres in local educational directorates, where they are then provided to teachers through their regional supervision (Alharbi, 2011; Sywelem & Witte, 2013). In addition, Fareh (2010) argued that although TPD was provided to teachers, most teachers were still facing difficulties in their teaching. While several problems are identified in TPD, the most evident in the Saudi context are mismanaged and limited programs, failure to address contextual needs, and teacher dissatisfactions (Alshumaimeri & Almohaisen, 2017; Tawalbeh, 2015).

Interestingly, the issues of cost that seem to dominate concerns in the modernised West are not a major obstacle in KSA, as TPD programs are provided free of charge for faculty members. However, it is worth noting that some private universities in KSA have recently introduced additional TPD workshops, which require a fee for participation. For example, Umm Al-Qura University hosted the ‘Forum of the English Language Centre to Enhance the Skills of Teaching English in the Twenty-First Century. English Language Institute’ through its English Language Institute (2021). Remarkably, this event was made completely free for English teachers, emphasising the university’s commitment to accessible education and

professional development in teaching English in the 21st century. In terms of location, TPD programs are primarily held at the main campus; in recent times, these programs have expanded to include both online and face-to-face formats. Previously, TPD sessions were typically conducted during the summer holidays once the semester was completed; now these sessions are held after working hours to accommodate teachers' schedules. Attending TPD sessions allows teachers to accumulate points that can contribute to their professional growth and potential promotion opportunities, hence the new practice of providing attendance certificates.

Concerns about cost, location, and time are overshadowed by the issue with Saudi EFL teacher TPD, which is that it is rather scarce and poorly managed. Al-Seghayer (2014a) indicated that there is an urgent need to reconsider the TPD programs, especially targeted at EFL teachers as the current one is presented only on a small-scale that is managed in an unsatisfactory manner. Alharbi (2011) claims that most TPD programs are not designed or managed by Saudi educational experts. In addition, Aldhafiri (2019) asserts that TPD training often lacks a continuous strategic approach and is rather limited in scope and depth. She further argues that the current TPD programs in KSA are often managed by authorities and forced onto in-service teachers. This could limit the effectiveness of the training. Further complicating the issue, Almossa (2021) reported that English teachers do not have equal access to paid PD opportunities due to several factors such as nationality, family situation, centre/institute policy, and university fund policies. It has also been observed with concern that some English teachers, although having taught English in public schools for over a decade, have received absolutely no in-service training (Al-Seghayer, 2014c). In relation to this, professional progression for English teachers, other than promotion to a supervisory role, is not assured. Knowing that there is no incentive for English teachers to participate in professional self-improvement and that teacher-training resources are scarce exacerbates the

situation (Al-Seghayer, 2014c). All these indicate that Saudi TPD programs could be better structured, publicised, and managed.

In addition to the unsystematic execution of English TPD, perhaps an even more significant problem is that universities have introduced and adopted workshops directly from Western teaching and learning settings. As per investigations, both Saudi Arabian pre-service and in-service teacher-training programs do not adequately address either the prevalent teacher-centred practices or the widespread propensity towards rote memorisation of grammar rules and translations that are typical within the Saudi educational system (Al-Mohanna, 2010). Since TPD programs are seldom adapted to the Saudi context, they have been evaluated as having limited effects on teachers' pedagogical habits or students' academic performance (Al Asmari, 2016). One explanation is that TPD programs have been directly transplanted from other EFL environments that do not meet local requirements. TPD initiatives created in democratic cultures in the West and East do not transfer well into the conservative and religious Arabian Gulf (Al-Harbi & Ahmad, 2022). Formal programs are mostly government-led that often comprise teacher training to novice and in-service experienced EFL teachers by foreign professional bodies such as the British council, Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE), Cambridge Assessment, and Pearson. Mansory (2019) indicated that these programs failed to achieve the desired goals. The TPD of English teachers within such an environment has received relatively insufficient consideration (Al-Seghayer, 2014c). As TPD programs do not take into account contextual factors, Saudi EFL teachers have shown unwillingness and inability to adopt and implement communicative language teaching strategies. Al-Harbi and Ahmad (2022) attribute this to the fact that many teachers learned English using the grammar-translation method.

A third observed concern with the existing English TPD is that most teachers perceive it to be unsatisfactory (Alhoussawi, 2022). Zohairy (2012) evaluated the status of Saudi EFL TDP in

seven states and four private universities. The results show that only two of the 11 universities offered training for EFL teachers. In addition to lacking TPD opportunities across the country, the teacher participants who did undergo TPD training have reported the program to be unsatisfactory. One reason could be because teachers did not possess the authority to apply what was learned in the workshops into their teaching due to institutional restrictions (Ahmad et al., 2018; Almannie, 2015). In a recent survey conducted by Alzahrani and Althaqafi (2020) exploring EFL teachers' perceptions on online TPD in HE, encompassing aspects such as content, duration, structure, and interaction, findings revealed that out of the sample of over 200 Saudi EFL teachers, only 40% of the participants expressed satisfaction with the utilisation of their time in the TPD program. Additionally, the study reported that while 75% of these teachers acknowledged the workshops' efficacy in terms of content and timing, less than 50% perceived the program as adequately addressing their specific needs.

In another study, Alzahrani (2020) found that the teacher participants in the research were largely dissatisfied with the amount and quality of TPD training due to inadequate information, a shortage of qualified trainers, and a limited range of topics. Not only were there few opportunities for TPD training and a lack of qualified trainers, the content of the TPD workshops often did not meet teachers' needs. The study by Hazaea (2019) revealed that English language faculty members at Najran University in KSA have a high need for professional development in teaching and learning activities and research, while activities related to university and community service were identified as areas of low priority. As little has changed, these studies suggest that Saudi EFL teachers are not satisfied with current TPD programs. Alzahrani and Althaqafi (2020) argue that future TPD programs should be structured using a bottom-up approach. This could be achieved by administering a needs analysis to understand what Saudi EFL teachers feel they are currently lacking. Studies have

also pointed out that the enhancement of Saudi teachers and education could lead to a better implementation of SV2030 (Assulaimani, 2019; Picard, 2019).

Research, including the government's own research, identifies room for improvement in teacher training and development (HCDP, 2020) and identifies that the MoE in KSA needs to ensure that TPD offerings for teachers are in line with the demands of the new curriculum (Alshaikhi, 2020; Alsowat, 2021). Change requires a shift in focus from policies and decisions made by educational authorities to one of providing carefully crafted and well-designed professional learning experiences.

In recent years, Saudi universities have experienced substantial growth in offering TPD programs specifically focused on SLTE such as Umm Al-Qura University, Taif University, Jeddah University, and Prince Sultan University. This growth has been facilitated through collaborative partnerships established with renowned Western publishing companies such as Cambridge and Oxford, as well as with the International Company for Education and Advanced Training (ICEAT). These collaborations have enabled Saudi universities to enhance the quality and accessibility of TPD initiatives in the field of English language education. By leveraging the expertise and resources of these esteemed press companies, Saudi universities aim to provide teachers with comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge, instructional materials, and training opportunities to improve English language instruction in the country. The TPD sessions are conducted both online and face-to-face, allowing flexibility in participation. Prominent speakers and experts in the field, such as Peter Lucantoni (Professional Learning and Development Manager for Cambridge University Press) and Scott Thornbury (an internationally recognised academic and ELT teacher trainer), are often invited to share their insights and experiences. The workshops aim to provide English teachers with practical ideas, strategies, and valuable insights to improve their instructional practices and create engaging and interactive learning environments for their students.

An exemplary case is the ELC at Taif University, referred to as TUELC, which has made significant progress in advancing TPD in SLTE with Western publisher collaboration. Since 2018, TUELC has organised a series of symposiums under the banner of UELC Symposiums. These symposiums have been designed to tackle crucial topics within the field, including Active Learning, Emerging Trends in TESOL, Life Competencies in TESOL, and Saudi EFL Learners' Needs (TUELC, 2020).

These symposia aim to enhance teaching practices and offer practical perspectives for teachers in English language instruction. By addressing these key themes, TUELC strives to equip teachers with innovative approaches and strategies to effectively teach English, fostering professional growth and contributing to the advancement of SLTE in KSA. During the TPD sessions at TUELC, English teachers are exposed to a diverse range of topics to enhance their teaching skills. These sessions cover various aspects of language instruction such as written and oral communication, listening skills, reading comprehension, vocabulary teaching, and addressing spoken errors. Teachers also explore strategies for differentiating instruction, promoting learner autonomy, creating student-centred classrooms, facilitating meaningful writing activities, fostering CT skills, incorporating technology, utilising formative assessment techniques, and promoting emotional engagement. These comprehensive topics might enable English teachers to expand their knowledge, refine their instructional practices, and create engaging learning environments for their students, addressing the specific needs of Arab learners.

Despite its significant growth, the current TPD exhibits certain characteristics that warrant further consideration. Alshaikhi (2020) argues against traditional approaches to TPD in KSA that rely on a top-down, deficit model of training, such as solely focusing on workshops. These approaches view teachers as passive recipients of knowledge and skills provided by external experts, often through in-service training programs. However, such training has faced

criticism for its narrow focus (Garet et al., 2001), lack of contextualisation, and inability to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Kennedy, 2005). Additionally, it promotes a managerial professionalism discourse that emphasises standardisation and compliance.

In contrast, Alshaikhi (2020) proposes the growth paradigm of TPD, which emphasises teachers' active role in their own development. This bottom-up approach recognises the complexity of teaching and learning and values teachers' experiences and ways of knowing (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). It promotes site-based professional learning opportunities that enable teachers to initiate and design their own development activities based on their specific contexts. The growth paradigm focuses on continuous learning, deepening teachers' understanding of teaching and learning processes, and fostering transformative reflection and critical inquiry (Kerka, 2003).

Alshaikhi (2020) emphasises the importance of self-directed learning (Raza, 2010; Smith, 2017), workplace learning (Forde et al., 2006), and the development of adaptive expertise (Timperley, 2011), in empowering teachers to enhance their practice, bridge theory and practice, and promote continuous professional growth. These elements enable teachers to actively engage in their own professional development, aligning with the growth paradigm's principles. By valuing teachers' agency and providing opportunities for meaningful learning within their work environments, TPD can become more effective and relevant to their needs.

The literature shows that numerous issues have surfaced in both pre- and in-service EFL teacher training in KSA (Al-Seghayer, 2011, 2014a; Alzahrani & Althaqafi, 2020; Maash, 2021). Various studies have indicated that teacher education and TPD are essential for the development of Saudi EFL education (Al-Harbi & Ahmad, 2022; Hazaea, 2019). Studies have also pointed out that the enhancement of Saudi teachers and education could lead to a better implementation of SV2030 (Assulaimani, 2019; Picard, 2019). However, from the literature,

the current gap between what teachers need and what they are trained for needs to be bridged for this to occur.

## **2.4 Summary**

Chapter 2 highlighted the need for further research on AcLits to help KSA develop globally competent citizens and become a competitive, modernised country. The scarcity of research utilising CHAT and LTC frameworks in the Saudi context stresses critical gaps in understanding the interplay of sociocultural, institutional, and cognitive factors influencing ELT. These gaps include limited insights into EFL teachers' cognition, underexplored cultural influences on teaching practices, and insufficient analysis of the impact of pre-service and in-service training on teacher development. Additionally, the lack of contextual adaptation in professional development programs and weak mentorship structures further underscore the need for studies that apply these frameworks to better tailor teacher training to the specific educational and cultural dynamics of KSA.

The literature review evaluates SLTE, examining models and paradigms like behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism, sociocultural theory, and complexity dynamic systems theory. It assesses SLTE in KSA, focusing on the need for alignment with English instruction requirements and the gap between teacher training and classroom needs. These issues are discussed both internationally and within the specific context of KSA, particularly in the LTC and AcLits domains. The next chapter demonstrates how the chosen theoretical frameworks are applied in the research, addressing the identified gaps and issues.

### **3 Theoretical Framework: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory**

In this thesis, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), also known as activity theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015), is employed as the theoretical framework. However, applying it independently, without specific contextual insights into language teacher cognition (LTC), presents challenges. The works of Cross (2010) and Peng (2024) have been instrumental in clarifying numerous concepts bridging CHAT and LTC model proposed by Borg (2006, 2015). This chapter explores the progression of CHAT, examines significant challenges in applying CHAT as an analytical framework, and illustrates the blending of CHAT principles with LTC to enhance our understanding of teacher cognition.

Although CHAT has been employed in a few studies investigating teacher beliefs and practices in diverse contexts, such as Saudi classrooms and English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher reflective practice, it is often adapted under various terminologies. Some studies label similar concepts as sociocultural theory or constructivist approaches (Al Khader, 2018; Alghamdi & Alanazi, 2019; Almalki, 2022; Almutairi, 2022; Alrawili et al., 2019; Alsulami, 2016; Alzahrani, 2023; Luppigini & Walabe, 2021; Nouraldeem & Elyas, 2014). The term ‘generations’ within CHAT scholarship is frequently used to distinguish between these adaptations, akin to branches of a tree, as noted in personal communications with J. Nuttall (22 June 2022). Marx represents the foundational root, while Vygotsky, Leontiev, and Engeström are seen as branches that have contributed valuable concepts to the field (Lompscher, 2006). In this study, I specifically draw on Engeström’s (2015) adaptations of CHAT to explore how EFL teachers develop and implications for academic literacies (AcLits) in the KSA preparatory year program (PYP).

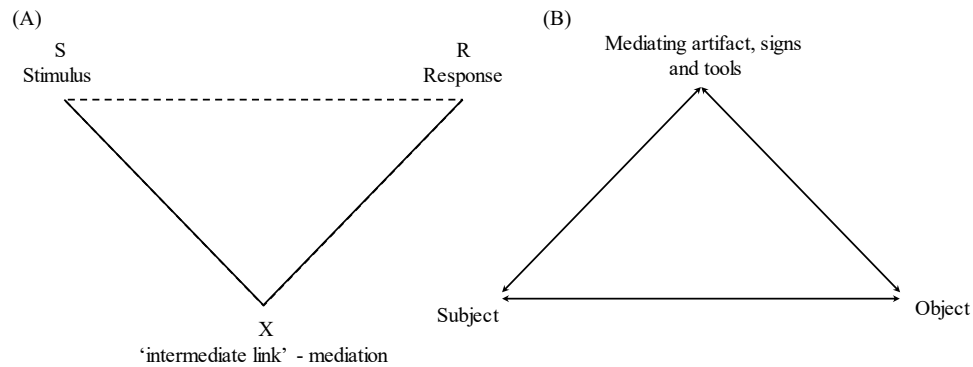
### **3.1 A Brief Progression of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory**

In the 1920s, Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist, introduced the concept of cultural tools into the multi-directional relationship between the subject and object, a central idea in mediated action (Hasan, 1998). Vygotsky's work laid the foundation for the current framework of CHAT, which encompasses sociocultural and cultural-historical theories (Ellis et al., 2010). This approach was not initially prominent among British and American scholars, but there are connections between CHAT and American philosophers such as John Dewey's pragmatism and Margaret Mead's symbolic interactionism (Kaptelinin et al., 1995; Kuutti, 1996).

Vygotsky (1978) contends that human behaviour is planned and intentional, aligning with mental and physical development. The activity of a single brain centre is not responsible for specific functions, but instead the result of integrated activity across interconnected centres (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 140). Rather than considering the location of these processes in the brain, it is more important to examine the real-time interaction between distinct functional brain networks (Vasileva & Balyasnikova, 2019). Vygotsky's theory (1978) of mediation features a triangle model (Figure 3.1), based on human tool mediation, in which the stimulus and response formulation (common to behaviourism) is superseded by a complex mediated act (Engeström, 2001). Human activity, according to Vygotsky, is deliberate and carried out by sets of activities always mediated by tools and artefacts — physical (e.g., a whiteboard) or psychological (e.g., language). By understanding the interactions between subject (the doer), object (the deed), cultural tools and signs (mediated artefacts), progress can occur (Engeström, 1999a).

**Figure 3.1**

*Human Action is Governed by the Cultural Tool Triangle*

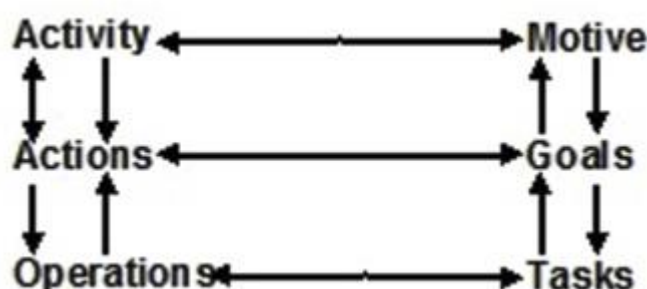


*Note.* (A) Vygotsky's Model of Mediated Act and (B) Its Common Reformulation. Adapted from 'Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity-theoretical reconceptualisation,' by Y. Engeström, 2001, *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), p. 134, Figure. 1. (DOI: 10.1080/13639080020028747). CC BY.

Following Vygotsky, Sergey Rubinstein initially analysed human activity as a unit (Kuutti, 1994) while his student (Leontiev, 1981) created a three-level hierarchical model of activity aimed at examining systems at the community macro level, including activity, action, and operation (Figure 3.2). He is credited with founding CHAT as it stands today (Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014; Kuutti, 1996). He based it on how mediation links with other elements of an activity system. Despite individual participants not always being fully aware of the goal or object that the activity system aims to achieve, Leontiev (1981) contends that collective activity systems have a particular motive or object. An activity is a part of a larger system; certain ways of learning and teaching are parts of the activity system of classroom learning, which is a part of the institution's activity system and cultural life (Ellis et al., 2010; Engeström, 2008; Wilson, 2014).

**Figure 3.2**

*Model of Activity, Motives, and Operation*



*Note.* The Activity Hierarchy of Leontiev (1981). Adapted from ‘Activity Theory: Who is Doing What, Why and How’ by H. Hasan & A. Kazlauskas, 2014, in Faculty of Business - Papers (Archive), 403, p. 10, Figure 2. Source: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/buspapers/403>. CC BY.

To understand LTC, abstract concepts should relate to concrete examples. Expanding Leontiev’s (1981) hierarchical structure of activity, motives, and operations, ‘teaching’ is driven to improve EFL students’ AcLits knowledge and skills. This activity is carried out through teaching the four main elements of ESL: reading, writing, comprehension, and speaking. Various classroom practices, such as silent reading, comprehension questions, highlighting difficult words, creating a glossary, and using dictionaries, contribute to achieving the goal of improved competence. These practices are influenced by social norms, circumstances, and tools, including language, textbooks, whiteboards, and online platforms. However, Leontiev’s perspective in CHAT focuses mainly on collective aspects and does not consider the social elements within the activity itself, including motives, goals, operations, conditions, and tools. To address this limitation, Engeström (1999b) devised a more comprehensive model known as the cultural-historical activity theory or sociocultural model, which integrates both Vygotsky’s (1978) individualist complex activity system and Leontiev’s collectivist notion. Engeström (2008) defines activities as ‘systemic formations that gain durability by becoming institutionalised ...[and]... take shape and manifest themselves only through actions performed by individuals and groups’ (p. 204). While

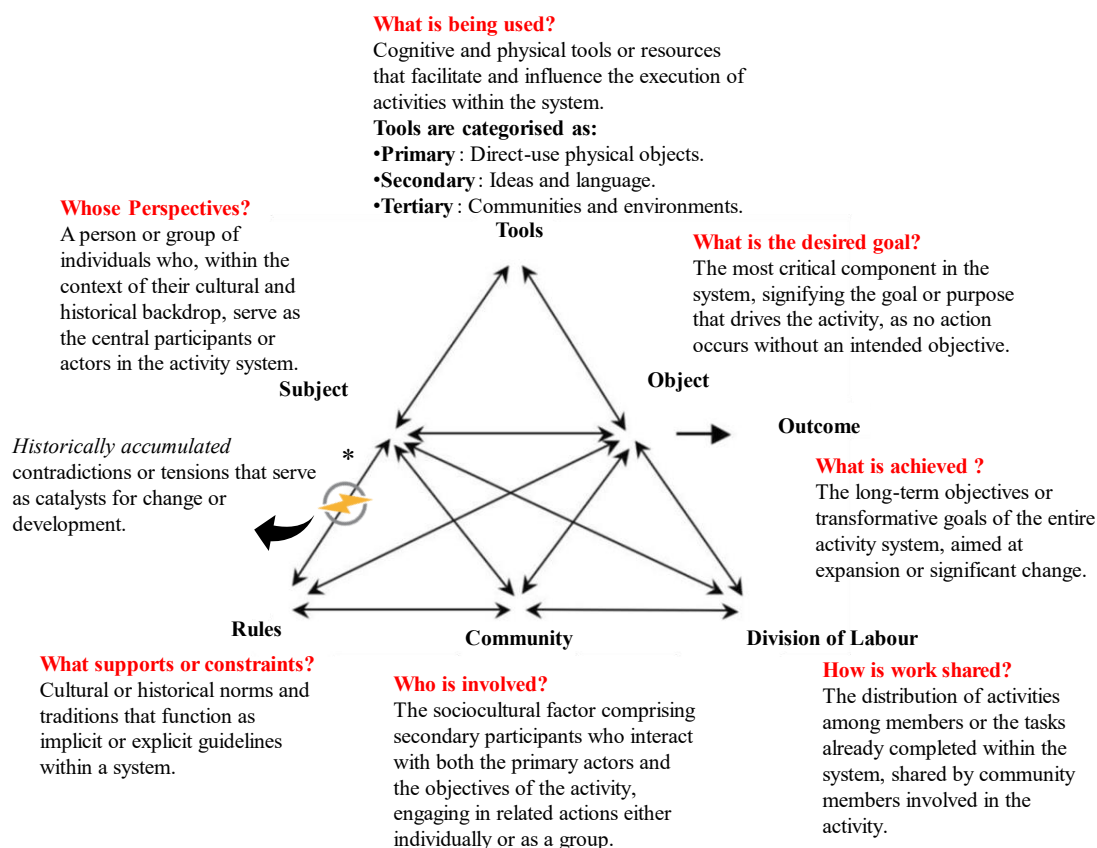
Vygotsky's work was mostly about how culture shapes the mind, Leontiev, and later Engeström, looked at *activities*, what they are used for and how culture shapes them (González et al., 2009).

CHAT, per Engeström, is a set of seven components forming a conceptual system to describe and analyse human activity by investigating mental functions and behaviour (Kizito, 2015).

Referring to Figure 3.3, the *subject* is the teacher, whose perspectives and actions are observed and analysed. These individuals are the primary participants in the activity system, operating within their specific cultural and historical contexts. The *object* is defined as the targeted activities aimed at enhancing integration of AcLits and English language competencies within the PYP system. This object is crucial as they represent the goals or purposes that drive the entire activity system, highlighting that no action takes place without a clear objective. *Tools* are mediating devices that facilitate actions (Wilson, 2014). Building on the theories of Vygotsky and Leontiev, Engeström (1999b) expanded the concept of tools to include both internal elements (rooted in inherited culture) and external ones (involving new creations and inventions). Tools comprise cognitive and physical resources that are essential for executing activities within a system. They are categorised into three types: primary (physical tools), secondary (involving language, ideas, and models), and tertiary (which include communities, contexts, or environments), as noted by Hasan and Kazlauskas (2014).

**Figure 3.3**

*Definitions of CHAT components*



*Note.* The Structure of a Human Activity System. From ‘Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity-theoretical reconceptualisation,’ by Y. Engeström, 2001, *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), p. 135, Figure 2. (<https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080020028747>). CC BY. Adapted from Y. Engeström, 1987, *Learning by Expanding: An Activity-Theoretical Approach to Developmental Research* (Helsinki, Orienta-Konsultit).

\*Contradictions can emerge at any interaction point in CHAT system

To document implicit activity more precisely from different perspectives, Engeström (2001) modified CHAT with two new components: *rules* and *division of labour*. *Rules* are condition sets that help explain the way people act and the rationale for it. These *rules* are governed by social conditioning. The *division of labour* is the distribution of individual actions and operations in a community; ‘rules and the division of labour define how participants are expected to behave and who is expected to do what in the achievement of the object of an

activity system' (Tsui & Law, 2007, p. 1291). Marxist theory of social relations uses the term 'division of labour,' which can mean either the hierarchical power structures within a system or the division of labour within that system (Wilson, 2014). These two components create a new reality plane known as a *community* that holds activities which can be measured and analysed (Hyland, 1998; Wilson, 2014).

Summing up, the key contributions of scholars to CHAT, Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the mediation of human activities by tools and their direction towards objects. Leontiev (1981) focused on the social nature of human activity, even when conducted by individuals.

Engeström (1987, 2015) introduced the concept of a dialectical relationship between human activity and its environment, encompassing various elements.

### **3.2 Challenges in Applying Cultural-Historical Activity Theory**

CHAT has been subject to extensive scholarly debate regarding its theoretical framework and practical utility. Bakhurst (2009) criticises CHAT's triangular models for their 'minimal predictive power' (p. 206), suggesting they are more schematic than theoretical and often fail to explain everyday activities adequately. Blunden (2010) echoes concerns about the model's complexity and the difficulty in justifying its seven interrelated concepts.

Critiques also point out terminological ambiguities and conceptual limitations within CHAT. Terms like 'object' can be confusing, potentially hindering the direction of sociocultural activities (Engeström, 2015; Kaptelinin, 2005). Additionally, reliance on dialectical materialism might overlook external influences and emotional factors affecting activities, potentially neglecting intricate psychological dynamics (Roth & Lee, 2007; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Hakkarainen (2004) outlines various theoretical, methodological, and practical challenges faced by CHAT, including integrating psychological theories and analysing

motivation. Developmental concerns and the need for coherence within CHAT's theoretical framework also arise.

Engeström (2015) defends CHAT's explanatory power, emphasising its detailed, concrete analysis of specific data rather than broad generalisations. He addresses concerns about the model's static nature by highlighting the dynamic nature of activity systems and the triangular diagram's role in analysing changes. Sannino (2011) supports this, stating that the model's analytical quality shines through its practical application in solving real-world problems. Despite challenges, CHAT continues to hold potential for enhancing sociocultural learning and promoting transformative actions focused on well-defined objectives within structured systems (Engeström, 2015).

### **3.3 Why CHAT and LTC Together?**

This study investigates the cognition and implementation of AcLits by Saudi EFL teachers, using CHAT and LTC frameworks to understand the sociocultural, historical, and cognitive dimensions influencing teaching practices.

CHAT, originating from the work of Vygotsky (1978) and further developed by Leontiev (1981) and Engeström (1987, 2015), emphasises that cognition is a systemic, social activity shaped by tools, rules, and labour divisions. This perspective allows for an in-depth examination of the socio-cultural and institutional factors impacting teachers' cognitive processes within their professional environments (Engeström, 1987, 2015; Cross, 2010). CHAT's focus on the dynamics of interacting within an activity system highlights the importance of understanding both the processes and outcomes of educational activities, providing insights into the collective actions and contradictions that could inform

improvements in teaching and learning (Ellis et al., 2010; Hasan, 1998, 1999; Roth & Lee, 2007; Waycott et al., 2005; Wilson, 2014).

On the other hand, LTC concentrates on the cognitive processes, pedagogical knowledge, beliefs, and decision-making of language teachers. It examines the connection between teachers' mental processes and classroom actions, offering a lens to explore the individual and collective aspects of teaching and learning (Borg, 2003, 2009; Golombek, 1998).

By integrating CHAT and LTC, the thesis aims to provide a holistic view of the cognitive activities of language teachers, acknowledging their agency to critique and adapt educational practices. This combined approach not only enhances understanding of the complex interactions within educational settings but also connects individual cognition with collective practices, making it particularly suitable for examining the implementation of AcLits in Saudi EFL classrooms (Cross, 2010; Lim, 2016; Woods, 1991).

### **3.4 Blending Concepts and Principles of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory with Language Teacher Cognition**

The principle from CHAT focuses on understanding activity systems holistically, while in Borg's (2015) LTC framework there is not a directly analogous principle laid out in a one-to-one correspondence with the CHAT principle, several elements are conceptually similar and can be mapped in terms of their emphasis on systems and context. There are several fundamental concepts and principles underpinning CHAT beyond those depicted in the triangular model (Figure 3.3). This section explores several principles from the perspective of LTC to narrow the focus. The principles of CHAT among others discussed include the primary unit of analysis, multi-voicedness, historicity, contradictions as drivers of change, expansive transformations, internalisation/externalisation, and everyday versus scientific

concepts. Understanding these principles is essential for examining how sociocultural interactions influence AcLits within the specific context of PYP.

### **3.4.1 Primary Unit of Analysis**

As stated earlier, Engeström (2001) notes the primary unit of analysis is a ‘collective, artefact-mediated, and objective-oriented activity system’ (p. 136), highlighting how individual actions are influenced by broader social and cultural contexts. Integrating CHAT into LTC, especially in the context of AcLits at tertiary ELC, underlines how teaching practices are influenced not only by individual teacher beliefs and experiences but also by institutional goals and cultural norms (Kuutti, 1994; Lave, 1988).

For instance, in the AcLits approach, teachers often navigate between their personal teaching methodologies and the broader requirements of the institution. This interplay requires them to adapt and employ various tools and artefacts, such as academic writing norms and critical thinking exercises, which are deeply embedded in the educational policies and cultural settings (Engeström & Middleton, 1996; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). This dynamic integration highlights the interconnectedness between individual teaching practices and the collective educational goals, enhancing the effectiveness of educational programmes by addressing the complexities of diverse educational environments and supporting the development of culturally and contextually appropriate teaching strategies (Engeström, 2001; Roth, 2003).

### **3.4.2 Multi-Voicedness**

CHAT also emphasises on the ‘multi-voicedness’ of activity systems, highlighting the diversity of viewpoints, traditions, and interests within a community (Engeström, 2001, p. 136). This principle reveals how the division of labour assigns different roles to participants, each influenced by their unique backgrounds and integrated into the system’s artifacts, rules,

and conventions (Engeström, 2001). For example, the division of labour within this system involves distributing tasks and responsibilities equitably among KSA community members, enhancing system efficiency and inclusivity. This distribution ensures that both teacher and student voices are acknowledged and respected, fostering a more empowered educational environment (Engeström, 2001; Lim, 2016). Classroom rules, both explicit and implicit, govern interactions and influence teaching methods by setting norms that can either restrict or enable educational practices (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). These rules are shaped by factors such as class sizes, exam formats, and available resources, as well as broader cultural capital influences like gender-based segregation and neoliberal policies. Multi-voicedness, especially in interconnected activity systems, can lead to conflicts but also fosters innovation through needed processes of translation and negotiation.

Integrating this principle into LTC offers profound insights, particularly in understanding the dynamic and complex nature of teaching contexts. LTC posits that teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practices are significantly influenced by their personal histories and the broader educational contexts in which they operate (Borg, 2015). Just as CHAT suggests, these beliefs and practices do not exist in isolation but are part of a larger, multi-voiced system where various educational and cultural narratives intersect.

For example, in the context of AcLits, KSA teachers may encounter multiple interpretations of what constitutes effective teaching and learning. These interpretations are influenced by the diverse educational backgrounds and cultural contexts of the teachers themselves, as well as the institutional policies and the specific needs of the students. This complexity requires teachers to engage in continuous negotiation and adaptation of their teaching practices, often translating and integrating different pedagogical approaches to meet the varied learning needs and expectations of their students (Lave, 1988).

### 3.4.3 Historicity

The principle of historicity in CHAT underlines the significance of understanding how historical development shapes each component within an activity system. Engeström (1987, 2001) argues for a thorough exploration of both the local history of the activity and its broader theoretical frameworks to grasp how past experiences, pedagogical tools, and practices evolve and influence current educational strategies. This historic analysis provides critical insights into how traditional practices and new innovations are adopted or resisted within the teaching community. Such a dynamic approach to studying LTC reveals that educational activities and the systems they operate within are continually evolving, influenced by their historical contexts and not static entities (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Kaptelinin, 1996; Kuutti, 1996). This understanding is essential for fully appreciating the nature and development of the KSA educational phenomena.

Borg's model of LTC closely aligns with CHAT, particularly emphasising the influence of historical and contextual factors on teacher cognition and classroom practice. Borg highlights how teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and pedagogical decisions are shaped by their schooling experiences, professional training, and the contexts within which they operate, including institutional culture and national educational policies (Borg, 2003, 2006; Borg, 2015). This perspective resonates with CHAT's principle of historicity, which stresses the significance of understanding participants' historical development within their activity systems, suggesting that the educational and professional background of teachers deeply impacts their teaching approaches. CHAT further elaborates on how artifacts, rules, and the division of labour in educational settings — historically developed and culturally embedded — affect individual actions and contribute to the dynamic nature of teaching practices.

In practical terms, when studying teachers' practices and cognitions, researchers and practitioners should consider not only the current educational climate but also the historical influences that have shaped these practices. Such an approach can reveal the underlying reasons behind resistance to change or the enthusiastic adoption of new methods, providing a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between past influences and present actions. This historical awareness is essential for designing professional development programs that are sensitive to the entrenched practices and beliefs within the teaching community, facilitating more effective and sustainable educational reforms. This integration allows teachers and researchers to trace the development of teaching strategies and ideologies, providing insight into how and why certain practices have evolved and how they continue to influence teaching.

#### **3.4.4 Contradictions as Change Drivers**

The concept of systemic contradictions, central to CHAT, serves as a dynamic force for change within activity systems. Engeström and Sannino (2011), Foot (2001), Yamazumi (2021), Wilson (2014), and Avis (2009) discuss how contradictions—distinguished from mere problems or conflicts — are historically accumulated structural tensions within and between activity systems. These contradictions are critical drivers of innovation and evolution, not merely disruptive elements.

Engeström (2015) and Ilyenkov (1982) approach these contradictions through dialectical logic, which views them as fundamental drivers of change and development within systems. This perspective contrasts with traditional logic, where contradictions are often seen negatively, as errors needing resolution. In dialectical logic, contradictions constitute key components that teach the dynamic evolution and transformation of concepts and systems.

They highlight the interaction between opposing forces within an entity, driving development through the resolution of these conflicts into new forms.

While Engeström (1987, 2015) identifies four levels of contradictions within the human activity system, the focus will primarily be on the contradictions themselves rather than their specific levels in this research. The study will particularly examine how these contradictions impact KSA language teachers' integration of AcLits within the SV2030 framework. Given the lack of research examining the contradictions between Saudi HE and the government's new policy, identifying these contradictions is both innovative and crucial.

This principle is especially relevant in educational settings facing the integration of AcLits under new governmental policies. Dialectical logic enables a view of the integration process as a complex interplay of various factors — including government policies, teacher preparedness, student diversity, and institutional support — which interact dynamically, often in conflicting ways, thereby influencing the outcomes of educational reforms. For example, governmental demands for rapid educational changes may not align with the current capabilities and readiness of teachers and institutions, creating tensions that affect the implementation process. Moreover, the diverse backgrounds and varying proficiency levels of students necessitate adaptations in teaching practices that might not have been initially considered.

### **3.4.5 Expansive Transformations**

The principle of expansive transformations occurs through extended cycles of qualitative change, which are driven by increasing contradictions within the system, as discussed by Engeström (2001, 2015). When certain contradictions become too significant to ignore, individual participants may begin to question and deviate from established norms. This process can accelerate into a collaborative effort to predict and implement collective changes,

leading to a re-conceptualisation of the system's objectives and motives. This transformation is described as a movement through the zone of proximal development (ZPD) for the activity system, where new forms of societal activities are collectively generated to resolve these contradictions (Engeström, 1987, 2015).

As teachers are central to both initiating and applying these changes, discrepancies arise between their pedagogical beliefs and the actual needs of their students or classroom realities, teachers are often driven to seek innovative or transformative pedagogical strategies. This process, aligned with Engeström's (2015) concept of expansive learning, involves a collective effort to redefine and broaden the educational goals and practices to better accommodate emerging challenges and opportunities. For example, if traditional literacy practices do not adequately prepare students for the complexities of a globalised and digitalised world, teachers may seek new approaches that encompass broader literacy skills such as digital literacy and intercultural communication.

### **3.4.6 Internalisation/Externalisation**

In exploring the concept of internal and external activities, CHAT distinguishes how internalisation and externalisation interrelate, where mental processes initiated by external stimuli can transform into each other, as illustrated by Vygotsky (1978) and further expounded by Engeström et al. (1999). Internalisation involves the transformation of external activities into internal cognitive functions, reflecting how individuals assimilate external experiences. In contrast, externalisation involves projecting internal mental processes into external actions, allowing for their examination and modification (Kaptelinin, 1996). This dynamic relationship is crucial in understanding how humans learn from and interact with their environment, continuously shaping and reshaping cultural practices through their activities.

The concept of ‘Different Degrees of Appropriation’ by Grossman et al. (1999, pp. 18-19) describes the varying levels at which teachers internalise and utilise pedagogical tools within their cultural and educational contexts, shedding light on discrepancies in teaching practices. This framework illustrates stages ranging from initial resistance or superficial recognition to a comprehensive grasp of theoretical underpinnings, emphasising the importance of extensive teacher development to overcome challenges in integrating diverse educational and cultural methodologies, particularly in EFL teaching.

The processes of internalisation and externalisation are pivotal in how teachers understand, adapt, and implement pedagogical tools within their specific cultural and educational contexts. This is particularly evident in how teachers engage with concepts like AcLits. For example, teachers might internalise theoretical concepts of AcLits during professional development and subsequently externalise these concepts in classroom practices, which students then internalise in their learning processes. This cycle not only facilitates the learning of language but also the development of pedagogical strategies that are culturally and contextually appropriate.

### **3.4.7 Everyday Scientific Concept**

Notions in scientific work provide a basis for everyday concepts to be enhanced (Vygotsky, 1987). Concept formation, according to Vygotsky, should be understood at two dialectically connected levels: the everyday and scientific. Scientific level is higher-order thinking and this means building more abstract concepts. Gibbons (2009) provides an example showing how this notion helps teachers to understand the link between smaller contexts (wind carries small pieces of rock away from the side of a mountain) to a broader conceptual theory (erosion). For the best learning settings, Hedegaard and Chaiklin (2005) recommend that professionals bear

in mind both ‘everyday notions’ and ‘scientific concepts’ while designing for learning. In teaching, Hedegaard and Chaiklin refer to this as the ‘double move’. Scientific notions need to be related to everyday concepts in order for them to be effectively introduced (Gibbons, 2009).

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter applies CHAT to explore LTC in English Language Teaching, focusing on AcLits. It discusses key CHAT concepts relevant to understanding how KSA teachers’ practices are shaped by personal experiences and institutional settings. Challenges in applying CHAT, such as complexity and terminological ambiguity, are addressed while emphasising its utility in offering a dynamic view of educational activities. Integrating CHAT with LTC reveals socio-cultural and cognitive factors influencing language teaching, highlighting how resolving systemic contradictions can drive educational transformation. The next chapter examines ELCs within the study’s context.

## 4 Situating the Study

This chapter explores the concepts of academic literacies (AcLits) within the Human Capability Development Program (HCDP) of Saudi Vision 2030 (SV2030) and provides a detailed overview of the structural organisation of the Preparatory Year Program (PYP) in the English Language Centres (ELCs) at the universities involved in the study. It also evaluates ELC programs at Universities A and B, analysing their approaches to teaching, program structure, accreditation, and alignment with AcLits in support of the goals of SV2030. The purpose of this analysis is to assess the alignment of educational theories and teaching practices with the proposed reforms. This scrutiny aids in monitoring developments, validating conclusions, and strengthening the research's validity by confirming evidence from various sources.

### 4.1 Academic Literacies Concepts in the *Saudi Vision 2030*

The HCDP, while not directly mentioning AcLits, highlights the importance of higher-order thinking skills, global citizenship, and future work readiness skills. These concepts, though not directly linked to English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction, hold significant relevance and potential for integration into EFL classrooms in Higher Education (HE).

In EFL contexts, higher-order thinking skills like critical analysis, problem solving, adaptability, and resilience can transform the learning experience. EFL curricula can be designed to go beyond basic language acquisition, encouraging students to engage in critical thinking (CT) and analysis of texts. Problem-solving activities in language learning, such as debates or essay writing on complex topics, can enhance students' analytical abilities in English. Additionally, adaptability and resilience are vital in language learning, as students navigate the challenges of understanding and using a new language.

The concept of global citizenship is inherently connected to EFL education, as learning English often serves as a bridge to global communication. Incorporating elements of global citizenship such as tolerance, cultural awareness, and effective communication can enrich EFL teaching. This can be achieved through multicultural content, discussions on global issues, and activities that foster understanding and respect for different cultures. EFL classrooms can become platforms for preparing students to engage competently and respectfully in a globalised world.

Basic skills like literacy and digital literacy are core to EFL learning. Advanced literacy skills developed through EFL can contribute significantly to academic and professional success. Digital literacy, particularly relevant in today's technology-driven educational landscape, can be integrated into EFL teaching through online learning resources and digital communication tools. Future skills, including social and emotional skills, are critical in collaborative and communicative aspects of language learning. Activities that promote teamwork, emotional intelligence, and effective communication can prepare students for future workplace environments where English is a key medium of communication.

The concepts highlighted in the HCDP can be integrated organically and/or innovatively into EFL instruction in HE. By embedding higher-order thinking skills, global citizenship values, and future work readiness skills into EFL curricula, KSA teachers can create a more dynamic, relevant, and comprehensive learning environment. This approach not only enhances language proficiency but also prepares students to be effective, adaptable, and globally aware individuals in their academic and professional pursuits.

Building on this brief reflection of the AcLits concept within the HCDP component of SV2030, the next section presents the findings of a document analysis conducted on the ELC materials of public universities Univ.A and Univ.B in KSA. The analysis focuses on course

syllabi, textbooks, assessment methods, and accreditation documents to examine the similarities and differences between the universities' English language programs. These insights shed light on their objectives, content coverage, and assessment practices, providing a foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of the programs in enhancing students' English language proficiency and AcLits, as highlighted in SV2030.

#### **4.2 English Language Centre Program at University A**

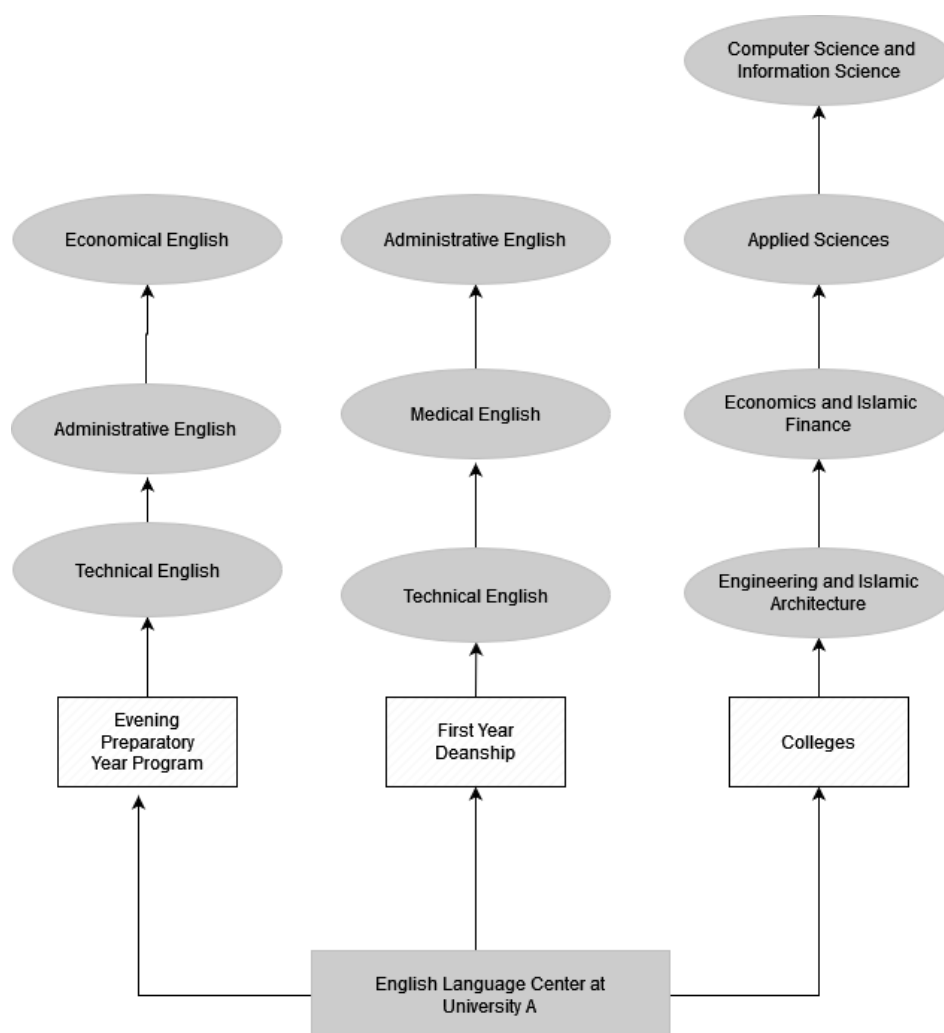
According to the official documents obtained from Univ.A, the vision of the ELC is to be a premier institution for teaching and learning in English. The ELC mandate is to theoretically ground and practically develop the teaching and learning environment so that a student can achieve his or her academic goals. Univ.A gained approval from its Council in 2014 to shift from being a 'Language Centre' to an 'English Language Institute.' The name changes not only signified a focused commitment to English language education but also likely led to an enhanced reputation, attracting a wider array of students and professionals seeking specialized English language instruction and opportunities for global engagement. This follows the University's success in achieving *International Academic Accreditation* as a centre for teaching English. In addition, Univ.A became a member of the *Quality Assurance Program* sponsored by Oxford University.

The ELC offers a one-year foundation course that includes both English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), divided into three sections. Despite the uniformity in content across these sections, the medium of instruction varies between Arabic and English. The first section, overseen by the First-Year Deanship, is tailored for students who have secured full-time admission based on their academic merits. In contrast, the evening PYP is specifically designed for male and female students whose weighted percentages fell short of the criteria for full-time admission. These students are required to pay their fees for

participation in the evening programs. The final component of the foundation course is aimed at students enrolled in the community college's diploma programs, including disciplines such as the College of Shari'a and Islamic Studies, College of Arabic Language, College of Applied Sciences, among others. To progress to full-time study in their chosen specialty, students must achieve a minimum GPA of 2 out of 4 and avoid receiving a Denied from final exam (DN) grade due to excessive absences (Figure 4.1). The program focuses on EGP for the first semester (four months). Students are categorised into three levels based on their performance on the Standardised Test of English Proficiency (STEP), which has a scale ranging from 52 to 100. Strong students, who score higher on the STEP, receive eight weeks of instruction, totalling 128 hours. Average students are provided with 16 weeks of instruction, amounting to 256 hours. Weaker students, who score lower on the STEP, require 20 weeks of instruction, which equates to 320 hours. Each level of EGP includes the four macro-skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and the micro-skills of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the placement test to classify students into the three levels was not administered in this study. Within the EGP, the centre requires teachers to cover three Oxford University books in four months: *Milestones in English* A1, A2, and B1.

**Figure 4.1**

*Overview of Structure of University A: English Language Centre*



The main objective of the EGP is for students to obtain a CEFR B1 level to bridge gaps in knowledge and communication between EGP and ESP. Students must demonstrate comprehension of a variety of texts gradually increasing in complexity utilising the skills of scanning, skimming, guessing from context, and recognising linking words. Learners also must produce sufficient skill sets regarding written texts such as brainstorming, composition, and revision. EGP students are expected to apply the foundations of listening, including recognition of keywords, stress, intonation, pauses, and connectors in fast speech. Speech proficiency is measured through oral presentations, group discussion, expressing opinions,

and short talks. Grammar level is tested by incorporating tenses, parts of speech, modal auxiliaries, and sentence structure, while vocabulary knowledge focuses on words, collocations, and derivatives, both in general and academic contexts. Assessment in the ELC allocates 30% to the midterm exam and 40% to the final exam; 30% is allocated equally across the listening midterm exam, listening final exam, continuous writing assessment, continuous speaking assessment, four quizzes, and the Oxford online practice.

In the second semester, lasting 16 weeks (256 hours), students study the ESP specific to their chosen major, encompassing the Scientific, Administrative, Medical, Economics and Islamic Finance, Engineering and Islamic Architecture, or Applied Sciences stream, for example. The ESP program builds on student knowledge, focusing on subject-specific terminologies. ESP course textbooks are employed to include the career path series for Nursing, Commerce, Science, Finance, and Information Technology (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1**

*English Language Centre at Univ.A Structure*

Semesters	Course name	Proficiency Levels	English exposure	Assigned textbook
<b>First semester</b>	English for General Purposes (EGP)	1	8 weeks (128 hours) Strong Students	Oxford Milestones in English (A1, A2, & B1)
		2	16 weeks (256 hours) Average Students	
		3	20 weeks (320 hours) Weak Students	
<b>Second semester</b>	English for Specific Purposes (ESP)		16 weeks (256 hours)	Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Express Press

### **4.3 English Language Centre Program at University B**

Univ.B has been accredited locally by the National Centre for Evaluation and Academic Accreditation (NCAAA). NCAAA provides the following key criteria to obtain accreditation: outline a clear mission and goals; program management and quality assurance; teaching and learning guidelines; adequate resources; facilities and equipment; fair and equitable student admission requirements; and program guidelines. The university must employ qualified teachers who are aware and informed of their responsibilities when delivering lessons (NCAAA, 2018). This accreditation is revised on an annual basis and granted to the university upon submitting a follow-up report showing the required criteria have been honoured.

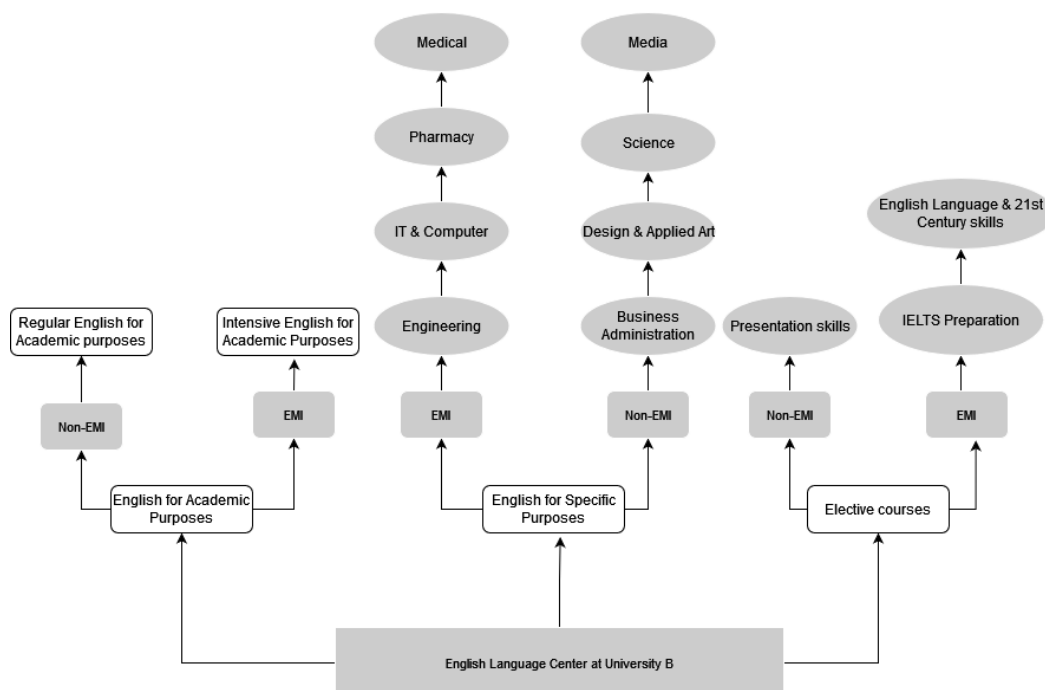
Univ.B has also gained international accreditation through partnership with the Commission of English Language Program Accreditation (CEA). The US-based regulation founded in 1999 established by English language teaching and administration professionals acts as a nonprofit institution. Univ.B must revise its accreditation every 10 years and to retain this accreditation it must achieve the following standards: a clearly written mission aligned with program goals; appropriate curriculum; qualified faculty staff aware of expectations upon them as facilitators of programs; facilities, equipment, and supplies easily accessible to students and teachers; consistent collaboration between teachers and administrators; access to social and recreational activities outside of the classroom.

The university must follow all ethical practices, provide explicit identification of the placement system, length and structures of the program, identify students' level of English proficiency, provide individual feedback and results, compile formal records of students' formal complaints, and provide appropriate solutions and regular written reports on program progress and evaluation (CEA, 2022). The vision of Univ.B is to encourage students to go beyond their limitations and reach their full potential in English in various fields. The mission

is to prepare students to be future English medium teachers in their relevant vocations so that they can nurture and communicate effectively in whatever field they undertake (Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2**

*An Overview Structure of Univ.B: English Language Centre*



The ELC at Univ.B offers three distinct English programs: English for EAP, ESP, and elective courses. The university divides these courses according to each student's medium of instruction after enrolling in the program. In the first semester, non-EMI which is Arabic, students take regular English for academic purposes (REAP), which has four levels and a total of 120 hours per semester, Arabic serves as the primary medium of instruction for these students, with no indication of other languages being used in this capacity. However, EMI students take intensive IEAP, attending 225 hours of class throughout the semester. The classes were divided into face-to-face and online courses in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic; to reduce contact, classes are now offered on campus and via digital learning systems. The textbook assigned is *English Unlimited Special Edition*, published for countries in the Middle East (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2***English for Academic Purposes Structure*

Program		Course Name	English exposure	Assigned textbook
English for Academic Purposes	Non-EMI colleges	Regular English for Academic Purposes 1	120 hours per semester 6 hours face- to-face 2 hours online	Cambridge Unlimited
		Regular English for Academic Purposes 2		
		Regular English for Academic Purposes 3		
		Regular English for Academic Purposes 4		
	EMI colleges	Intensive English for Academic Purposes 1	225 hours per semester 12 hours F2F 3 hours online Cambridge Evolve	
		Intensive English for Academic Purposes 2		

Like EAP, ESP classes are organised into different disciplines. For Business Administration, Design and Applied Arts, and Sciences, Arabic is the medium of instruction after their first year. However, for medicine, Pharmacy, Information technology and Computer (two levels) and Engineering, English is the medium of instructions after the first year. ESP programs have three class hours per week or a total of 45 hours per semester (Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3***English for Specific Purposes Structure*

Program	Course Name	Assigned textbook	Exposure
English for Specific Purposes	Non-EMI colleges	Business Administration	45 hours per semester: Face-to-face
		Business Vocabulary in Use: Elementary to Pre-intermediate (Cambridge)	
		Career Paths: Management (Book 1,2 & 3) (Express)	
		Career Path: Art & Design (Book 1 & 3) (Express)	
	EMI colleges	Design and Applied Arts	
		Sciences	
		Technology for Engineering and Applied Sciences (Oxford)	
		Media	
		Cambridge English for the Media (Cambridge)	
	EMI colleges	Medicine	
		Career Paths Medical (Express)	
		English for Medicine in Higher Education Studies (Garnet)	
		Pharmacy	
		English for the Pharmaceutical Industry (Oxford)	
	EMI colleges	IT and Computer 1	45 hours per semester: Face-to-face
		Cambridge: Professional English in Use for Computers and the Internet (Cambridge)	
	EMI colleges	IT and Computer 2	
		English for Information Computer Technology Studies in Higher Education Studies (Garnet Education)	
	EMI colleges	Engineering	45 hours per semester: Face-to-face
		Professional English in Use: Engineering (Cambridge)	

Elective courses teach further skills, including presentation skills for non-EMI students, as well as English for 21st Century and International English Language Testing System (IELTS) for EMI students. The elective courses require 60 hours per semester (Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4**

*Elective Course Structure*

Program		Course Name	English exposure	Assigned textbook
Elective Courses	Non-EMI colleges	Presentation Skills	21st Century Communication: Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking. (National Geographic Learning)	60 hours per semester 3 hours F2F 1 hour online
	EMI colleges	English for 21st Century IELTS	English for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Level 4 (Garnet Education) MINDSET for IELTS (Cambridge)	

Unlike Univ.A, teachers in Univ.B must abide by the detailed faculty handbook that outlines their expectations, roles, and responsibilities. Professional development is continuous at the university with teachers attending workshops to stay up-to-date with current research. The evaluation criteria, professional development policy, course specification for each course, and a sample of objectives are documented. In the faculty handbook, teachers are required to promote genuine motivation for EFL learning. This provides students with goals to achieve throughout the semester. Teachers asked to provide an immersive environment and avoid unnecessary use of Arabic to give students as much exposure as possible to English.

Teachers at Univ.B must attend consistent professional development workshops that enhance teachers' English language practice and aid the implementation of the global teaching pedagogy. Mandatory enrolment in Cambridge Train the Trainer is expected of all English faculty staff. Following workshops throughout the year, teachers are evaluated on professional knowledge and expertise, independent professional development, examination results, office hours, and professional demeanour. Additionally, Univ.B embeds a mentorship program that allows faculty personnel to learn and grow. Namely, the Special Interest Groups of trainers is

rather contemporary when considering Middle Eastern standards, allowing male and female teachers to collaboratively discuss, plan, and conduct training. This new insight on learning has been adapted at the student body level, seeing co-curricular writing, spelling competitions, and student support activities organised by the English Club. The university encourages attendance of one international conference annually relating to ELC for teachers. The university also motivates students to compete or participate in Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED) Talks to further their communication skills, removing inequalities, and enhancing excellence among staff. The final examination, including vocabulary, writing, and reading, is 60% of the final grade. The ELC requires teachers to administer three speaking and three listening quizzes conducted by the centre, which account for another 30% of the grade. The remaining 10% is allocated to the teachers for grading activities and assignments.

#### **4.4 Comparison of Academic Literacies Development at Universities A and B**

This analysis provides a comparison of ELC programs at two universities, focusing on program length, course objectives, accreditation efforts, and alignment with AcLits. It also examines how these programs have adapted to align with the goals of SV2030, highlighting the changes made to enhance language proficiency and academic preparation.

##### **(i) Program Length and Language Proficiency Levels**

Univ.A's program rapidly advances students from CEFR level A1 to B1 within a year, using a sequence from EGP to ESP. This fast-paced approach may suit students needing to quickly meet language prerequisites but risks overwhelming those less proficient in English. Univ.B, in contrast, spreads the progression over four semesters for non-English medium instruction students, offering a more gradual approach that includes separate tracks for EAP and ESP. This extended timeline allows for deeper language assimilation, which is beneficial for

building a solid academic foundation and effectively preparing students for professional and academic communication. From this comparison, Univ.B's approach is likely more effective in the long term, providing students with a more thorough and tailored educational experience that better supports the development of robust academic and professional language skills.

## **(ii) Accreditation Pursuits**

Univ.A's ELC has secured international accreditation and membership in the Quality Assurance program with support from Oxford University, emphasising its role as a leading institution in English language education. Its comprehensive assessment strategy includes a mix of midterm and final exams, continuous assessments in listening, writing, and speaking, alongside quizzes and online practices. This varied assessment approach is designed to holistically evaluate and enhance students' English proficiency. On the other hand, Univ.B holds both local accreditation by NCAAA and international recognition through CEA, focusing on delivering high-quality English language programs tailored to the students' instructional medium. The use of well-regarded textbooks and a structured faculty handbook indicates a robust framework for instruction and accountability. Furthermore, Univ.B places a stronger emphasis on continuous professional development than Univ.A, ensuring that their faculty remain updated on the latest educational research and methodologies.

Critically assessing both, Univ.B's commitment to professional development and structured teaching approach might provide a more sustainable and evolving educational environment that can adapt to changing academic needs and standards. This could potentially offer a richer and more consistent enhancement of AcLits compared to Univ.A, despite its prestigious affiliations and varied assessment methods.

## **(i) Course Objectives and Specifications**

Univ.A's EGP courses focus on developing comprehensive language skills, emphasising text comprehension strategies such as scanning, skimming, and guessing from context, along with writing processes like brainstorming, outlining, and revising. Additionally, they provide a strong foundation in grammar, covering aspects like tenses, modal auxiliaries, and sentence structure, aiming to equip students with the ability to recognise and use vocabulary and grammatical structures effectively in various contexts. In contrast, Univ.B's EGP courses aim to enhance practical language application, focusing on understanding and producing simple texts, handling everyday situations, and recognising vocabulary and grammar patterns in familiar settings. This practical orientation is tailored to immediate language use in English-speaking environments and personal or job-related topics.

Taking ESP courses as an example, particularly in the medical field, Univ.A prioritises higher-order cognitive skills and AcLits, integrating critical thinking, technical terminology, and active listening strategies to develop a deep understanding of medical English. This approach is geared towards comprehensive academic and professional proficiency.

Meanwhile, Univ.B's ESP medical course focuses more on basic communication skills pertinent to the medical field, emphasising vocabulary, reading, and writing about routine medical tasks and environments. This course is designed for immediate practical application rather than in-depth academic or professional preparation.

Comparatively, Univ.A's emphasis on both comprehensive language development in EGP and higher-order cognitive processes in ESP courses suggests a more robust approach to building academic literacies, potentially offering greater long-term benefits in academic and professional settings.

## **(ii) Objectives Aligned with AcLits**

At Universities A and B, the course objectives reflect differing emphases in the development of academic literacies and language proficiency. Univ.A focuses on cultivating a broad range of AcLits, such as analytical reading, coherent writing, and effective oral communication, which support critical thinking and comprehensive skill development within academic contexts. This approach is aligned with fostering higher-order cognitive processes essential for academic success. Conversely, Univ.B prioritises practical language skills and proficiency, targeting immediate communication needs rather than the broader AcLits. Their approach includes exam-focused instruction, which is evident from their assessment methods and a strong emphasis on preparing students for IELTS and other standardised tests. This is complemented by elective courses designed to enhance practical communication skills through varied mediums like TED Talks.

Both universities demonstrate a test-oriented approach to teaching and learning, emphasising the importance of assessments. However, there may be concerns that this focus on exam preparation overshadows the development of actual language proficiency needed in real-world academic and professional settings. In aligning with SV2030, both institutions aim to develop skills pertinent to the future demands of the Saudi economy and society. Univ.A's comprehensive approach aligns closely with the vision's emphasis on higher-order skills and academic literacies, while Univ.B focuses more on practical language application and proficiency.

Overall, while both universities aim to support the goals of SV2030 by developing a skilled workforce, the practical implementation of their programs reveals a stronger emphasis on achieving high exam scores rather than fostering the comprehensive language skills required for professional and academic success.

## 4.5 Summary

In comparing Univ.A and Univ.B regarding the integration of academic literacies, both institutions demonstrate strengths in disciplinary literacy, academic writing, and presentation skills. Courses at both universities provide field-specific vocabulary and contexts, helping students effectively communicate within their respective academic and professional domains. Univ.A, through courses like *Medical English* and *Technical English*, and Univ/B, in programmes like *ESP for IT & Computing*, ensure that students develop the necessary literacy to navigate their fields. Similarly, both universities emphasise presentation skills, with several courses integrating oral tasks and assessments. However, collaborative learning is implied but not fully structured in both institutions, with potential for deeper, sustained collaborative activities.

However, critical areas like critical reading, research skills, and ethical literacy are underdeveloped at both universities. While Univ.A touches on critical reading through skimming and scanning activities, it does not explicitly foster deeper analytical engagement with texts. Similarly, Univ.B's courses mention reading comprehension but lack a focus on evaluating or critically analysing information. Neither university provides strong emphasis on research skills or ethical literacy, with little instruction on research methodologies or academic integrity. Reflective practice is also minimally integrated, leaving students with fewer opportunities for self-assessment and critical reflection on their learning progress. Both institutions could benefit from expanding their focus on these literacies to enhance students' broader academic competencies.

This chapter assessed the alignment of AcLits with SV2030 at ELCs of Universities A and B. It reviewed their approaches to integrating higher-order thinking skills (and global citizenship) into their curricula. Univ.A focuses on rapid language advancement within a one-year frame,

supported by rigorous assessments and international accreditations. Conversely, Univ.B offers a structured, semester-based progression that caters to varied student needs with robust local and international accreditation support.

While both universities aim to equip students for future academic and professional success, Univ.B's methodical approach may better support comprehensive language development and academic readiness. The findings highlight the need for educational programs that not only focus on language proficiency but also integrate critical thinking and problem-solving to fully align with the objectives of SV2030. Chapter 5 brings together CHAT, the university context, and my research questions into a formal study.

## **5 Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter presents and justifies the research design and methodology employed in this thesis. It emphasises the importance of interpreting and understanding the meanings attributed by teacher-participants not only to their actions, decisions, and practices within their classrooms but also to how these elements interact with and influence broader educational ecosystems, policy making, and professional communities beyond the classroom walls. It recognises that individuals' experiences exist in a social context and are therefore socially constructed. The chapter commences with an overview of the research's methodological stance which is crucial in aligning the study with its theoretical underpinnings. Then, the rationale for selecting narrative case studies as the primary method of inquiry is explained. The next part covers an in-depth examination of the sampling strategies employed and the qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. The chapter concludes with a critical discussion on the quality and integrity of the research design and its inherent limitations.

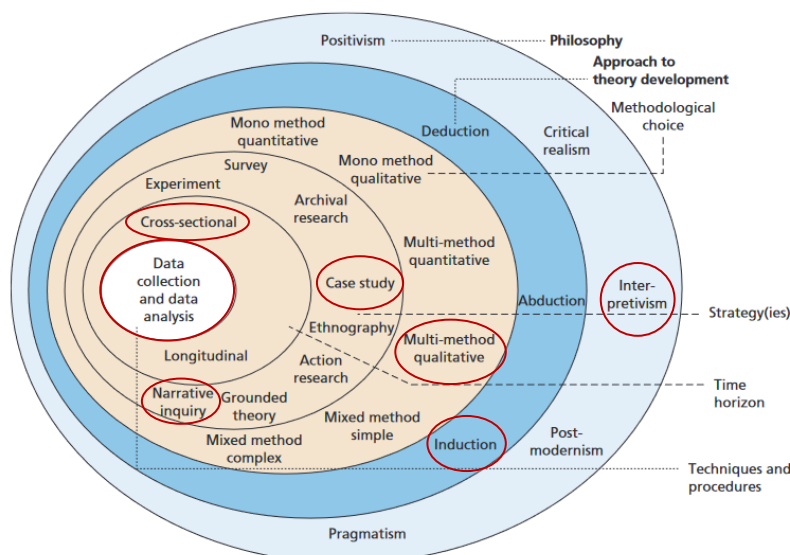
### **5.1 The Research Onion Model**

To rigorously develop methodological foundation for this study, the 'Research Onion' model is employed (Saunders et al., 2023). This model offers a structured, layered approach to research design, facilitating a thorough and systematic exploration of the methodological choices available to researchers. Beginning with the core philosophical underpinnings of the study and moving outward through successive layers to the practical execution of research, the model provides a coherent blueprint for the development of a well-founded methodological strategy. This chapter outlines the application of each layer in shaping the methodological direction of the study, ensuring a systematic alignment of the research philosophy, strategy, methods, and analytical techniques with the overarching research questions. A thorough examination of the model reveals six fundamental layers critical to the

research framework: (i) research philosophy; (ii) approaches to theory development; (iii) research strategy; (iv) methodological choice; (v) time horizons; (vi) techniques and procedures. The decision to use this model is reflective of its advocated layered approach, which emphasises the importance of systematically peeling back each layer — from philosophical commitments to strategy and methods — to build a coherent methodological strategy. In Figure 5.1, the red circles highlight the adaptation layers in my current research.

**Figure 5.1**

*Research Onion Adaptation in the Current Study*



*Note.* The Research Onion. From ‘Understanding research philosophy and approaches to theory development’ by M. Saunders, P. Lewis, A. Thornhill, & A. Bristow, 2023, 9th ed., in M. N. K. Saunders, P. Lewis, & A. Thornhill (Eds.), *Research Methods for Business Students*, Harlow: Pearson Education, pp. 122–161, Figure. 4.1, p. 124. Retrieved from (<https://www.pearson.com/store/p/research-methods-for-business-students/P200000010080/9781292402727>) CC BY.

### 5.1.1 Research philosophy—Understanding Teachers’ Cognition Through an Interpretivist Paradigm

The first layer is based on the interpretivist research philosophy, which posits that reality is shaped through social discourse and constructs, suggesting that understanding this reality

requires exploring consciousness and language. As Myers (2008) notes, this approach views reality as fluid and evolving, with knowledge and facts being subjective and context-dependent. It aligns with the exploration of complex and subjective phenomena such as teacher perspectives, classroom instruction practices, and policy implications for Academic Literacies (AcLits) development. It is relevant for answering the research questions, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the cognitive processes, beliefs, and attitudes of Saudi EFL teachers. Interpretivism, stressing the subjective meanings and experiences of teacher-participants, provides an important lens for examining the nuanced dynamics of teachers' perceptions and practices in the changing Saudi education context (Cohen et al., 2017; Crotty, 1998; Saunders et al., 2023). It delves into how they implement and align their teaching practices with the Saudi Vision 2030 (SV2030) education reforms, specifically by integrating the vision's focus on innovation, higher-order-thinking, and the development of a knowledge-based economy into their curriculum design and instructional methods (Figure 2.2).

The interpretivist philosophy examines the strategies teachers use to foster an educational environment that supports SV2030's objectives, including incorporating technology in the classroom, promoting English proficiency as a tool for global engagement, and encouraging student-centred learning approaches. Additionally, it aids this investigation in understanding how teachers navigate challenges and opportunities presented by the SV2030 agenda, adapting to new educational standards, materials, and expectations for student outcomes.

The participants' reflections on their learning journeys and educational backgrounds in AcLits highlight the necessity of employing an interpretivist approach to uncover the importance of cognition and perceptions of teachers regarding AcLits. This paradigm is appropriate for exploring the complex, subjective experiences of Saudi female teachers, as it prioritises understanding individuals' meanings and interpretations within their specific social contexts.

By adopting a narrative epistemology, this study aims to capture the lived experiences of these teachers, emphasising how they internalise, adapt, and apply AcLits principles in their teaching practices. Such a methodological stance allows for a rich, in-depth analysis of the interplay between teachers' educational backgrounds, their professional development in AcLits, and the broader sociocultural factors influencing their utilisation of these literacies and how these align with SV2030 goals. For instance, how the *Human Capability Development Program* (HCDP) 'focus[es] on the training and education journey that will help citizens to enhance their values, skills and knowledge necessary for them to become globally competitive' (HCDP, 2021, p. 17). The interpretivist philosophy also enables the identification of patterns, challenges, and opportunities within the context of Saudi female teachers' engagement with AcLits, thereby contributing valuable insights into the field of language education and literacy practices. Interpretivism acknowledges that teachers' perceptions and practices of AcLits are shaped by their individual and collective experiences within Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's (KSA) sociocultural realities, offering a more nuanced understanding than the objective reality envisaged by positivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Ontology questions the essence of human existence and the nature of reality, while epistemology examines the relationship between the researcher and the knowledge that he/she seeks. The ontological assumption of socially constructed multiple realities is key teacher cognition and practice. This assumption posits that reality is not a singular, objective entity but is shaped by collective human activity, communication, and social interactions (Gauthier, 2005; Sandu & Unguru, 2017). In other words, processes of communication and interaction form individual and collective understandings of reality.

As forementioned, epistemologically, interpretivism's subjective interpretation of knowledge is particularly relevant for examining how female teachers' cognition influences the development of AcLits as outlined in SV2030 (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Knowledge is not

merely an objective collection of facts but is shaped by the social and historical environments in which individuals and communities exist (Liu & Hilton, 2005). This epistemological stance recognises the pivotal role of social interactions, cultural norms, historical narratives, and collective experiences in constructing and interpreting knowledge. What is known and how it is understood can vary significantly across different sociocultural and historical settings and has ramifications for the study and practice of education and LTC.

### **5.1.2 Approaches to Theory Development—Inductively Reasoning into Teacher Cognitions**

In this second layer, the study adopts an inductive approach to explore teacher cognition regarding AcLits, in alignment with the frameworks suggested by Saunders et al. (2023) and Thomas (2006). This process begins with a clearly defined research topic, allowing theoretical constructs to evolve naturally as the data is analysed, a method described by Strauss and Corbin (2015). A notable aspect of inductive reasoning is the inferential leap from observed data to conclusions, where conclusions are deemed ‘supported’ by the data despite not being a straightforward deduction from them (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010).

This method emphasises the collection and analysis of qualitative data, particularly teacher narratives, to shed light on behaviours, actions, and motivations. Such an approach is consistent with the interpretivist paradigm, offering in-depth, contextual insights vital for grasping the nuances of SV2030 educational reforms. By employing inductive reasoning, the study ensures a comprehensive and authentic understanding of teachers’ experiences and perceptions, unconstrained by the confines of pre-established theories or hypotheses.

### **5.1.3 Methodological choice— Narrative Case Studies to Interpret Subjective Experiences**

Methodologically, multi-method qualitative techniques such as interviews and observations are crucial for documenting the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers in ELCs (Bryman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Furthermore, this research incorporates several sources, reflections, interviews, observations, and documents (Flick, 2016, 2018). This strategy captures the interplay between teacher cognition, education practices, and policy frameworks in the Saudi context. Consequently, within the interpretivist paradigm, meanings are constructed by humans interacting with their world (Crotty, 1998).

This research adopts a narrative case studies approach across two universities, exploring participants' past education and professional development, as well as their interpretations of AcLits and its classroom integration. It further delves into the implementation challenges and viewpoints regarding SV2030 (Barkhuizen, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2016). A combination of narrative inquiry and case study is suited to explore the complexities of teachers' experiences in the context of educational and language teaching/learning (Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Baron & McNeal, 2019; Sonday et al., 2020).

Central to this approach is narrative inquiry, which posits that individuals interpret and construct their identities through the narratives they create and share. The narrative offers insights into participants' inner worlds, revealing their perceptions, values, and attributed meanings. Narrative inquiry offers a powerful way to convey personal and collective experiences through storytelling, the most powerful form of human communication (Czarniawska, 2004; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Subsequently, the interaction, continuity, and situational dimensions of narrative inquiry are illuminated using a narrative inquiry framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thus, this provides insights into personal and

societal narratives shared and recounted among individuals, uncovering the details of teachers' and students' experiences, and capturing their voices and emotions when recalling previous events, especially women's lived experiences (Barkhuizen, 2014; Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hatchell & Aveling, 2008).

Narrative inquiry faces considerable critique due to its reliance on language to fully capture and represent lived experiences. St. Pierre (2017) argues that language is inherently unstable, with meaning often eluding the words used in narratives, which limits the method's ability to convey the complexity of human experiences accurately. Additionally, he critiques the rigid, formalised structures that narrative inquiry has developed over time, arguing that such structures can constrain the exploration of the non-linearity and complexity of participants' experiences. This formalisation risks limiting the emergence of new insights and hindering a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of human narratives. In response to these limitations, I adopted a more flexible and reflexive approach to narrative inquiry.

Combined with a narrative, this study incorporated an embedded multiple case studies approach (Yin, 2018). In examining ELCs with reference to the education goals of SV2030, case studies are invaluable and allow for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences, institutional practices, and situational dynamics, providing rich insights into how these aspects interact within broader KSA sociocultural and historical contexts (Duff, 2013). According to Tardi (2019), case studies are a 'methodological technique with an individual, group, program, event, or activity as the unit of analysis.' (p. 4). This approach is particularly suited for language education research, as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of language learning and teaching practices. Similarly, Yin (2014) defines the case study research as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon

and context may not be clearly evident.’ (p.16). This definition stresses the relevance of case studies in examining the intricate and subtle dynamics of language education within ELCs and to what extent they are guided by the education and language policy goals of SV2030 (Duff, 2013; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2018). Case studies can confirm, challenge, or expand upon existing knowledge in language education (Duff, 2013). The next section presents the ELCs in two Saudi universities.

#### **5.1.4 Data Collection and Process**

##### ***5.1.4.1 Recruitment Process and Participants***

The purpose of this study is to investigate the integration of AcLits into Saudi tertiary English language teaching. To achieve this, the experiences of EFL teachers were investigated. Each university became a case study. The participants at each university were three female teachers specifically teaching in the first and second semesters of undergraduate programs that are part of the Preparatory Year Program (PYP). After obtaining ethical permission from Quest Online Human Ethics at Victoria University, two universities in the Western region of KSA, selected due to their similar ideologies and socioeconomic environments were contacted. A three-month data collection in KSA was planned following the Confirmation of Candidature. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I shifted to online data collection instead of face-to-face interactions and classroom observations. Ethical permissions from the Saudi ELCs were also obtained and adapted for an online format.

To recruit teachers, an official email with *Information to Participants Involved in Research* (Appendix A) was sent to the Head of the ELCs to forward to potential participants. When responses were limited, assistance was sought to privately contact potential participants. A snowballing technique was used, where teachers contacted other teachers. Several teachers declined to take part due to their workloads. Those who agreed to take part in this study

received a *Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research* (Appendix B), general information questions (Appendix C) reflective accounts (Appendix D), and guiding interview questions (Appendix E) via email. The target was six to eight participants, a number based on the most efficient utilisation of available resources and generation of data. During the screening of participants, factors like age, teaching experience, and qualifications were considered to ensure diversity and relevance to SV2030 stipulation. Ten teachers expressed their interest in participating before the screening process commenced. Eventually, one participant decided to withdraw, and three participants did not complete the data set, resulting in six teacher participants. While this number may not be sufficient to achieve data saturation, it represents a reasonable cross-section of possible participants and three participants from each university involved (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1***Participant Information*

	Pseudonym*	Qualification	Age	Years of teaching experience	Where English was learned	Current teaching program
<b>University A</b>	Aisha	Bachelor of English Language, Master of English Literature	41–50	20 years	Saudi Arabia	ESP <sup>5</sup> Scientific stream/ Textbook: Technology 2: Oxford English for Career
	Nada	Bachelor of English Language with a minor degree in Education. Master and PhD in Applied Linguistics	31–40	10 years	Saudi Arabia and the UK	ESP Medical stream/ Textbook: Nursing 1: Oxford English for Career
	Asma	Bachelor of English Language with a Minor in Education. Master of Applied Linguistics	20–30	4 years	Saudi Arabia	ESP Economic Stream/ Textbook: Finance and Milestone in English (B1)
<b>University B</b>	Huda	Bachelor of English Language, Master of Applied Linguistics, incomplete teaching diploma. Currently studying her PhD.	31–40	7 years	Saudi Arabia, the UK, and the USA	English Language & 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills/ Textbook: English for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Level 4 ESP for English for Media/Textbook: Cambridge English for the Media
	Anwar	Bachelor of English Language, TESOL diploma, Master of Applied Linguistics, Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA)	31–40	3 years	Saudi Arabia	REAP <sup>6</sup> Textbook: English Unlimited A1 IEAP <sup>7</sup> Textbook: Unlock Level 2
	Nouran	Bachelor of English Language, currently studying Master	20–30	<i>Less than a year</i>	Saudi Arabia	ESP for Sciences/ Textbook: Technology for Engineering & Applied Science

<sup>5</sup> English for Specific Purposes<sup>6</sup> Regular English for Academic Purposes<sup>7</sup> Intensive English for Academic Purposes

### 5.1.5 Research Strategy

In conducting narrative case studies research, it is imperative to utilise a variety of sources and data collection techniques (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The credibility of the research is of paramount concern, and to this end, the study adheres to the principles set forth by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Guillemin and Gillam (2004), and Stake (1995). These involve an accurate representation of the participants' diverse experiences and viewpoints, the employment of robust data management practices including secure data storage, systematic data coding, and meticulous record-keeping, and the integration of methodologies such as triangulation, piloting, and reflexivity. Such a multidimensional approach reinforces the veracity of the findings and encapsulates the complex realities presented by the participants.

Triangulation is employed to capture the complexity and entirety of the case studies, providing an exhaustive examination of the topic within its historical and social contexts. This technique is widely lauded for enhancing the reliability and validity of findings (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). Aligning with this approach, the study incorporates four distinct methods of data collection: (i) reflective accounts (i.e. getting to know the participants before the interview and refreshing their past AcLits experiences); (ii) semi-structured interviews; and (iii) classroom observations (i.e. two recorded classroom video recording with chat for each teacher). The next section discusses the rationale for employing each approach, the merits, and limitations. Table 5.2 shows each strategy and its purpose in the current research.

**Table 5.2***Data collection strategies and its purpose*

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Reflective accounts</b>	To gather in-depth insights into participants' backgrounds and experiences before actual interviews and to trigger their memories
<b>Semi-structured interviews</b>	To collect personal narratives and experiences related to academic literacies from participants at the two universities
<b>Observations</b>	To draw conclusions about participants' perceptions and decision-making processes during classroom activities

#### **5.1.5.1 Reflective Accounts**

To establish a foundational understanding of participants' backgrounds and experiences, reflective accounts were collected at the onset of the study. This preparatory step was crucial for gaining insights into the participants' past experiences and educational histories, enabling a more informed and targeted approach to the subsequent interviews. By familiarising with the participants' perspectives and journeys beforehand, the interviews were strategically tailored to delve deeper into areas of interest identified through these initial accounts. All six participants were requested to provide a one-page written reflection or a ten-minute oral recording regarding their academic learning experiences as well as answering a general information question (Appendix C & D). The purpose here was to encourage participants to reflect on their journey as English teachers and share insights into the tools, methods, and practices they had encountered during their education, pre-service teaching, and ongoing professional development. In doing so, the researcher aimed to explore the participants' perspectives on how these experiences had contributed to their level of proficiency in English language academic skills. Participants were given the option to submit their reflective accounts in either English or Arabic, depending on their preference. Most of the accounts were submitted in English, except for Aisha, who preferred to record her account as an audio submission in Arabic. This flexibility allowed participants to use the language in which they felt most comfortable expressing their experiences. The question posed was:

*What tools, methods and practices were used (in school, university, pre-service teaching and ongoing professional development) to enhance your level of proficiency, in line with your understanding of the academic skills component of your English learning experience?*

Gibb's model (1988) was suggested to guide their responses where applicable. It includes descriptions, feelings, evaluations, analysis, a conclusion, and an action plan for their past AcLits. Reflection may also improve comprehension of the context investigated, shift views, and expand one's understanding (Glaze, 2001). However, a limitation is fluctuations in content and length between participants. Some reflected on their experiences and provided genuine details while others wrote it as a curriculum vitae so there was some variation here when detailing their past.

#### **5.1.5.2 *Semi-structured Interviews***

Conducting interviews is a well-recognised method for collecting narrative case studies from participants as during discussions teachers can express their points of view, beliefs, feelings, and identities. The researcher can pay attention to unsystematic and unrecordable behaviours, such as people's physical movements or subconscious expressions about the world around them (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). This study's interviews were designed to capture personal stories and experiences concerning academic literacies with participants from the two universities, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. This approach acknowledges the value of personal narratives in capturing the complexity and nuances of individuals' experiences, which may not be fully captured through more quantitative research methods. The teachers were asked to choose five of the most important AcLits from the list, provide a rationale for their choice, and provide an example of how such skills were implemented in their classroom. Lastly, the teachers were asked three questions about their understanding of

SV2030, principally about how the policy guided their teaching, their experience of this transition, and the challenges encountered (Appendix E for interview questions). Each interview was structured as follows:

Part 1: Teachers' experiences as language learners

Part 2: Teacher-training programs

Part 3: Academic literacies aspects in the objectives, curriculum, and syllabus

Part 4: Teachers' experiences as English teachers and their classroom practice

Part 5: Teachers' comfort with innovation

Part 6: Closure

The precise phrasing and sequence of questions differed from person to person. Open-ended questions allowed them to reply in ways that were not anticipated (Campbell et al., 2004). It was vital to use open-ended questions to allow teachers' comments to guide the path of the interview. Even though I had previously determined the range of themes to be examined such as their perspectives on AcLits from the past to the present, a researcher can never be sure which experiences are the most significant and meaningful (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Interviews encouraged participants to show how they acquire knowledge and view their realities (epistemology and ontology).

The interviews were conducted mostly in English although participants could respond in either Arabic or English. They all chose to speak in English, but several teachers employed Arabic terms and idioms (subsequently translated in the transcripts), particularly when discussing personal sentiments and responses. Each transcript was sent back to the participants to check for accuracy. It is possible that what was stated during the interviews may not accurately reflect classroom reality. In research such as mine, which investigates teachers' AcLits in relation to their classroom practices, relying only on interviews has

limitations. For instance, teachers may express claims about how and what they teach, but not what actually happens in the classroom (Borg, 2012).

#### ***5.1.5.3 Observations: Online Recorded Video of Classroom Practice***

Classroom observations complement semi-structured interviews in this type of research.

Observations are a powerful way to develop conclusions about participants' perception and decision-making processes during classroom activities (Kubanyiova, 2012). When paired with interviews, observations provide a tangible description of teachers' AcLits perceptions (Borg, 2006; Borg, 2012). Plans were made for observations to take place face-to-face in the classroom setting but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the observer asked the participants to provide two online classes of EGP/ESP with a copy of the accompanying chat text. While the students' names appeared in the chat, they were omitted for ethical reasons. I viewed and analysed two classroom recordings from each participant. Due to the culturally conservative nature of the two Saudi female-only universities, the researcher was aware that the teachers allowed none of their students to show their faces in the online class. Table 5.3 summarises the aspects of the observation classroom and duration.

**Table 5.3***Observation of EGP and ESP Online Classroom Teaching Approaches*

Pseudonym*	Recorded video	Textbook and Topic	Duration
Aisha	Two Scientific ESP Written Feedback	<b>Technology 1:</b> High Living Skyscraper	First: 1:28:47 Second: 1:33:06
Nada	Two Medical ESP Feedback video (presentation) (4:35)	<b>Nursing 1:</b> Nutrition and Obesity	First: 1:37:10 Second: 1:38:45
Asma	One Economic class One EGP class	<b>Finance 1:</b> Using Money <b>Milestone in English B1:</b> Living without the Internet	First: 1:18:38 Second: 43:13
Huda	One elective class One ESP class	<b>English for the 21<sup>st</sup> century Level 4:</b> What's the Best Way to learn language? <b>Cambridge English for the Media:</b> Practising interview skills	First: 1:40:49 Second: 1:59:38
Anwar	One Regular English for EAP One Intensive English for EAP	<b>English Unlimited A1:</b> Where and When? <b>Unlock level 2:</b> Lifestyle	First: 1:45:41 Second: 1:31:34
Nouran	Three Applied Sciences ESP One communication skill ESP	<b>Oxford: Technology for Engineering and Applied Science:</b> 1. Chemistry: Ecosystem and Habitats 2. Chemistry: State of Matter 3. Biology: Hypothesis 4. Wireless Technology	First: 1:33:17 Second: 00:21:08 Third: 00:32:23 Fourth: 00:30:20

After transcribing the observed online EGP/ESP lesson, a thorough review of the videos was conducted to ensure the transcriptions were entirely accurate. An analysis of classroom practice aimed to identify the teaching approach employed in relation to AcLits. Specifically, the focus was on discerning whether AcLits were taught explicitly, through direct instruction or explicit teaching strategies, or implicitly, through indirect or embedded methods. The researcher observer engaged in reflexive thematic analysis, acknowledging that their interpretations were shaped by their positionality and subjective insights. In line with Braun and Clarke's (2019) emphasis on reflexivity, the analysis was viewed as an active, interpretive process, with researcher subjectivity seen as a resource rather than a potential threat to

knowledge production. This approach aimed to account for the influence of both Western and Middle Eastern educational traditions on the observed classroom practices, recognising that different instructional frameworks and cultural values shape the ways AcLits are taught and learned. Western classrooms often emphasise structured discussions culminating in written work to teach AcLits (Lillis et al., 2016). However, in KSA, different instructional structures exist with less emphasis on written assessments. Oral-based practices are more prevalent, and the teacher's role as the primary speaker and 'deliverer of knowledge' remains prominent and is very different to the expectations of Western education where student-centred learning is preferred. In this research, observations were conducted without structured checklists but were guided by predetermined research questions. The focus was on noting teachers' and students' actions and speech, types of activities (e.g., lectures, independent tasks, pair, or group work), and the use of language, both Arabic and English, within the CHAT framework.

As an observer, a few aspects had to be considered. Firstly, the video recordings were unlike face-to-face observations in which the researcher's presence might skew the authenticity of the context since participants may act abnormally, either deliberately or subconsciously, when they are aware they are being watched (Patton, 2002). Despite the researcher not being present in the actual classroom, the teacher participants may still have modified their behaviour with students since they knew they would be sharing this lesson with the researcher. The Hawthorne effect is a term used to describe this phenomenon (Cook, 1962) of "pleasing" to suit expectations. In the recorded sessions, some teachers notified their adult students that the class would be monitored, while others did not.

My observations are classified as covert since participants were unaware of my identity. The lesson transcription process included capturing interactions in the classroom, whether it was

with students in the chat, utilising the whiteboard, viewing a video, giving a presentation, or using the speaker.

The physiological and physical barriers that teachers experienced throughout the multi-shift education setting owing to COVID-19 were not overlooked by the observer. In this study, the first half of the year encompassed typical pre-pandemic pedagogical practices. Then, the next one and a half years involved significant changes to accommodate the outbreak of the coronavirus and strategies to prevent its spread at both macro and micro levels. Students' interactions and performance were affected. According to Zhou et al. (2020), 'due to a lack of self-control and self-learning ability, a lack of face-to-face teacher or even parental supervision, online learning became a form, and the autonomous learning effect was not satisfactory' (p. 516).

For online education, there was a lack of timely feedback and error correction since there was no longer the possibility of incidental feedback, such as, looking over a student's shoulder and pointing out errors (Jan, 2020). This research concurred with Wang et al.'s (2020) assertion 'online education also suffers from a lack of discipline and ritual' (p. 5). Long-term online instructions may detrimentally affect students' mental and physical health. Due to the chain of events, this study's scope encompassed not only the implications of SV2030 but also the COVID-19-imposed shift to online teaching.

#### **5.1.6 Time Horizons**

The study is cross-sectional and primarily took place at a specific point in time, with data collection conducted between late 2020 and early 2021. WhatsApp, which is now very popular in KSA (Fattah, 2015; Fodah & Alajlan, 2015), was employed as a communication tool through which to follow up with the teachers and clarify certain issues raised by the interviews. I could engage in instant and effective communicative/messaging interactions with the participants. This allowed for effective synchronous interactions with the participants.

Additionally, WhatsApp made possible the seamless exchange of documents, streamlining the process of sharing important information so it was efficient, fostered trust and cooperation throughout the research process (Rahman et al., 2019).

### **5.1.7 Data Analysis and Procedure**

The study employed thematic analysis, a widely used method in narrative case studies, to systematically examine qualitative data. Following the six-step strategy proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), this approach was instrumental in identifying patterns and themes within the data, facilitating a nuanced interpretation of qualitative information relevant to various research fields. Specifically, the analysis focused on the cognitions of Saudi EFL teachers concerning the integration of AcLits in their classroom practices, in light of the recently introduced policy document SV2030. Their perceptions, experiences, and reflections were examined. This methodological choice ensured that a rigorous, data-driven exploration of factors influencing LTC was conducted, yielding empirically grounded insights and uncovering the underlying cognitive processes prevalent in educational settings.

#### **5.1.7.1 *Phase 1: Familiarisation with Collected Data***

The initial phase of data analysis involved an in-depth review of verbatim transcripts from semi-structured interviews, reflective accounts, and observations of virtual classrooms. This step was crucial for immersing in the data to grasp its depth and breadth comprehensively. Data sequences were rearranged and clarified through feedback from participants to ensure accurate representation of their AcLits experiences before proceeding with further analysis. Nada's narrative analysis was shared as an example due to her extensive experience and insightful responses (Appendix F). A brief excerpt from the transcript of Nada's classroom practice was presented in Appendix G, along with an overview of Nada's language teaching practices across different skills (Appendix H). To achieve this, the components of CHAT are reflected in the research design. This approach was used to shape the descriptive analysis of

activities within the study. According to J. Nuttall (personal communication, 22 June 2022), a set of questions was recommended for this analysis (Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2**

*Set of Questions for Descriptive Analysis Using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory*

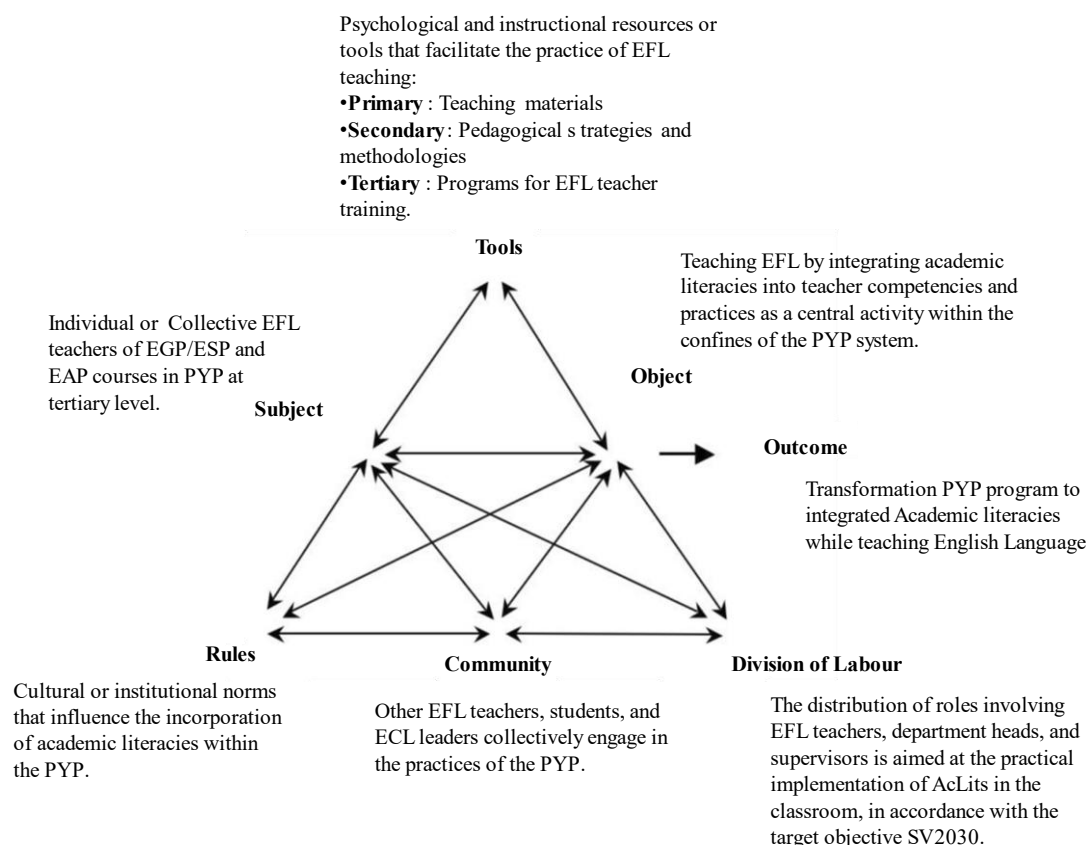
- Who are these people?
- What are they working on? Who determines what they are working on? Who sets the direction for collaborative activity?
- Why are they working on it? What is the history of the work?
- What is mediating the work (concepts, artefacts)? Who gets to design the artefacts?
- What meanings are expressed in relation to tools and artefacts? Which (and whose) meanings are dominant in practice?
- What tensions confound their work? Where are these tensions located in the system?
- What other systems impinge on the work? What are their effects? Are there 'travelling' artefacts?
- How is the work governed? Who governs the work? Through what modes of interaction?
- What is the role of values and norms? What rules apply? Whose values and norms predominate?
- What evidence is there of continuity and change? Who and how determines the direction of change?
- What is being learned? How is valued learning identified? By whom?
- Who is doing the learning? What practices facilitate or impede learning?

*Note.* Set of Questions for Descriptive Analysis Using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. From 'From theory to method in researching change in professional practice: Knowledge production through CHAT,' presentation by J. Nuttall at the AARE CHAR Winter School, 22 July 2022, Slide 27.

Answering the set of questions proposed by J. Nuttall, the activity system being studied was analysed and discussed through the various components defined within CHAT: *subject, tools, object, outcome, rules, community, and division of labour* (Figure 3.5).

**Figure 5.3**

*CHAT components in this study*



**Subjects** of this research included six full-time Saudi EFL teachers at two public universities within the context of SV2030. These teachers were influenced by their sociocultural contexts, encompassing personal history, values, religion, beliefs, economic status, political affiliations, and professional knowledge. This broader context was crucial in understanding the cognitive processes that shaped their teaching practices and their reception of AcLits, which they encountered first at the university level.

**Tools** used in this activity system consisted of mediated artifacts like textbooks, educational technologies, and pedagogical strategies developed and employed by the teachers. The

development and selection of these tools were informed by cultural and institutional contexts, thereby influencing how they were utilised in educational settings. The analysis categorised tools into three levels: primary (essential teaching materials), secondary (pedagogical strategies and methodologies), and tertiary (EFL teacher training programs). These tools served not only as instruments for delivering content but also as means of mediating instructional interactions.

The *object* of this activity system was to enhance the integration of AcLits within the English language teaching practices at these universities. The intended *outcome* was the transformation of PYP to effectively incorporate AcLits, aiming to improve English language proficiency from basic to more advanced levels as outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

*Rules* governing this activity system included both explicit and implicit norms that influence educational practices, such as class sizes, time allocations, assessment methods, and the broader educational policies under SV2030. These rules shaped how teaching and learning were structured within the universities and also affected the implementation of innovations in teaching.

The *community* component included not just the teachers but also students, department heads, other faculty members, and educational leaders involved in the PYP. This community was affected by various challenges such as low student motivation, plagiarism, and insufficient support from mentors, all of which impact the overall educational environment.

*Division of labour* within this system reflected how responsibilities and tasks was distributed among community members, including teaching responsibilities, administrative duties, and

the roles in implementing and supporting educational changes. This distribution influenced how effectively the system functions and how well it adapted to incorporate AcLits.

The dynamics within this activity system revealed various tensions, such as those between traditional teaching methods and the innovative approaches required for effective AcLits integration. These tensions were located within the interactions between the components of the system, such as conflicts between institutional norms and individual teaching practices or between the needs of the system and the resources available. Learning within this system occurred at multiple levels, including both the teachers, who refined their pedagogical strategies, and students, who developed their language competencies. The effectiveness of this learning was influenced by the practices, tools, and interactions defined by the community and rules of the system.

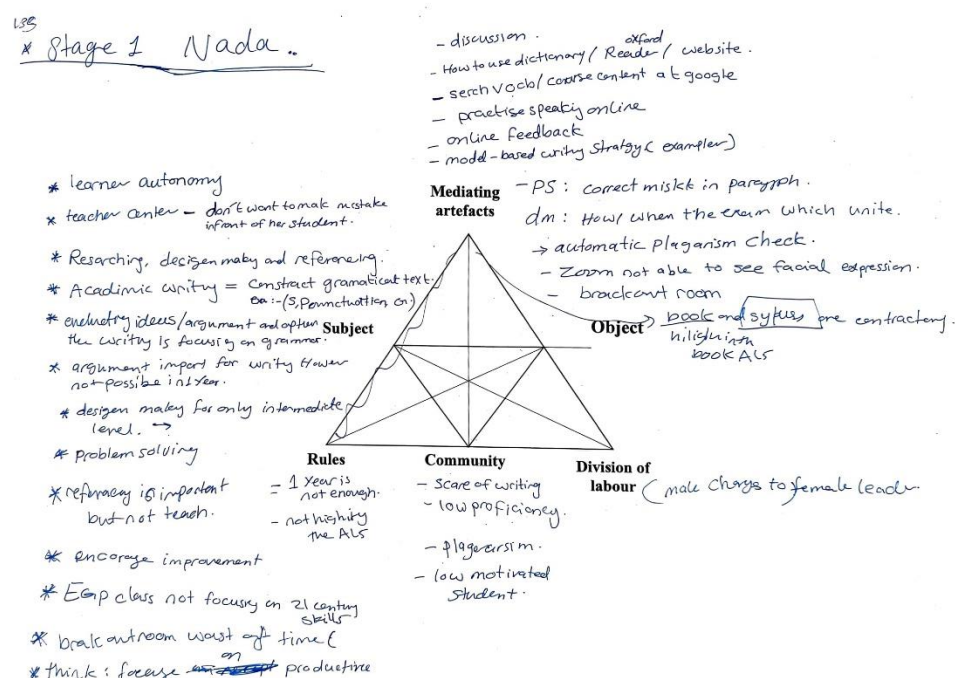
Through this analysis, it became clear how each component of the CHAT framework interacted to shape the activity system at these universities, revealing the complexities of integrating academic literacies within higher education in the context of SV2030. This structured analytical approach, grounded in thematic analysis and CHAT, not only enhanced the understanding of AcLits in EFL teaching but also aligned with the broader educational reforms under SV2030. The methodology provided a comprehensive framework for evaluating the integration of theoretical concepts into practical teaching scenarios, ensuring a transformative impact on educational practices.

After the written individual narrative, a manual, visual analysis of each participant's data was conducted, guided by CHAT, utilising a set of questions proposed by J. Nuttall (Figure 5.4). Using versions of these questions as a framework, the analysis of CHAT in this study identified three activity systems: (i) past educational stories, (ii) perspective, and (iii) actual practice. These systems provided insights into the alignment between teachers' cognition and

the SV2030 curriculum. Here the aim was to understand how teachers' AcLits development related to the CHAT components and how it influenced their implementation of the curriculum. I have devised additional questions that specifically addressed the use of CHAT components in examining teachers' AcLits development. These questions served as a guide to better understand the interplay between teachers' cognition, activity systems, and SV2030.

**Figure 5.4**

*Example of Initial Analysis of One Participant Using the CHAT Model*



### 5.1.7.2 Phase 2: Generation of initial codes

The second phase involved generating codes for both semantic and latent data (Table 5.4).

Semantic themes identified explicit surface meanings while latent themes revealed underlying ideas, assumptions, and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, data themes were guided by CHAT (Engeström, 1999b) and LTC (Borg, 2006). In this stage, various approaches were considered for organising the results chapter. Initially, the analysis was structured around different themes observed in the collected data. However, this led to

repetition between the themes and primarily descriptive presentation without critical representation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Another approach was to organise the themes according to the order of the research questions. However, this method posed challenges as the themes did not have equal importance, and addressing the sub-questions first was necessary to shed light on the overarching research question. Ultimately, the decision was made to generate themes and subthemes collectively using CHAT and LTC.

**Table 5.4**

*Coding Data*

Data extract	Coded for
So when I used to write something, I would give it to my mother for cross-checking, you know, for editing. If it's fine, that's fine. Do you think I should edit or correct something? So I think that helped me as well because you know, you have two levels of feedback, you have the feedback at home from your mother and then you have the feedback from the teacher in college. So I think with both of them I learned a lot. But if you asked me when I really felt that my writing ability improved, it was at the BA level when I took, I think it was Writing 3, if I'm not mistaken, either Writing 3 or Writing 4. This teacher was Pakistani British. She was a great teacher. She was interested in literature so she really wanted to teach us how to write; you know she was interested in writing herself and she gave us a lot of practice. And one thing that really helped me, although I hated it at that time, was that she asked us to write a diary twice a week. It was like a portfolio that we had to submit at the end of the semester (Nada, interview).	Family-Peers Influences Positive Role Model Scaffolding Autonomous Learning Writing Practice

Manual procedures were used to organise the data into categories and sub-categories This organisation facilitated a detailed analysis in three principal areas:

- (i) **Saudi Vision 2030 Alignment:** This segment explores the necessary adjustments and alignments in teaching practices to meet the objectives outlined in SV2030. It evaluates

what teachers need to incorporate or modify in their teaching approaches to align with these national educational and development goals.

**(ii) Teachers' Perspectives and Pedagogical Imagination:** This category delves into the aspirations and desires of teachers regarding their teaching methodologies. It seeks to understand the pedagogical goals they strive for and how they envision their ideal teaching practices.

**(iii) Actual Academic Literacies Teaching Classroom Practice:** Focusing on the practical aspect, this category examines the real-world teaching practices employed by teachers. It contrasts their aspirations with their actual methods, providing insights into the realities of classroom instruction.

This structured approach to data organisation manual categorisation facilitated a comprehensive analysis, enabling a deeper understanding of the nuances of teaching practices, aspirations, and the required alignment with national visions.

#### ***5.1.7.3 Phase 3: Search for Themes within Codes***

The focus was on searching for themes within the codes that had been identified and organised during the initial coding process. This phase involved a meticulous re-reading of the initial data, specifically focusing on elements related to AcLits to ensure a targeted analysis. Key areas of interest included the impact of past experiences on language teachers' cognition of AcLits, transitions and adaptations from high school to university EFL practices, as well as the influence of professional development and HE environment on teaching practices.

The analysis carefully assessed how teaching strategies aligned with both AcLits and the goals of SV2030. By examining how teachers perceived their classroom practices and analysing the actual teaching methods observed, the study categorised the themes based on

commonly observed approaches, core skills, sub-skills, and the integration of SV2030 and AcLits directives. This thorough examination led to the identification of four main themes:

- (i) the influence of past experiences on language teachers' cognition of AcLits,
- (ii) the impact of the higher education environment on teaching practices,
- (iii) teachers' expertise in applying AcLits, and
- (v) the influence of SV2030 on the evolving educational setting in KSA

The process of searching for these themes involved sorting the coded data extracts into potential themes and collating relevant extracts within these identified themes, as per the methodology described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This structured approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the integration of AcLits within the Saudi educational context, providing valuable insights into the professional lives and practices of EFL teachers working under the transformative agenda of SV2030.

#### ***5.1.7.4 Phase 4: Review Themes and Validation***

The themes identified in the earlier phase were rigorously reviewed and validated in two levels of analysis, as guided by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first level involved refining the themes by examining their coherence within the coded data extracts, ensuring that they accurately reflected AcLits integration within the SV2030 framework. Some themes were refined, combined, or discarded based on their alignment with the data.

The second level of review assessed the themes against the entire dataset to verify their validity and overall accuracy, ensuring they truly captured the experiences and practices of EFL teachers in the context of Saudi HE reforms. This involved re-reading the entire data set, adjusting themes to include overlooked data, and confirming that the thematic structure

accurately depicted the evolving educational landscape under SV2030. This thorough validation process ensured that the final thematic map provided a precise and relevant narrative, directly supporting the study's focus on the impact of AcLits within the Saudi educational reforms.

#### ***5.1.7.5 Phase 5: Definition of Themes***

The primary task was defining and refining the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data, with specific attention to how they relate to the integration of AcLits within the context of the SV2030 educational reforms. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), this phase involved detailed analysis to ensure each theme accurately captured and reflected specific elements of the data concerning EFL teaching practices.

The process included reevaluating the collated data for each theme, ensuring they formed a coherent pattern that meaningfully addressed the research questions. This involved identifying key insights within the themes and how they connected to form a comprehensive narrative about the evolving role of AcLits in Saudi HE. Sub-themes were delineated to add structure and depth to larger themes, clarifying the hierarchy within the data.

The final task in this phase was to precisely name each theme and sub-theme to succinctly convey their essence and relevance to the focus of the research. These names were crafted to be informative and concise, immediately giving the reader a clear understanding of the theme's content and its significance in relation to the broader educational reforms under SV2030. This careful naming ensured that the final presentation of the results would be both accessible and impactful, directly reflecting the study's core focus.

#### ***5.1.7.6 Phase 6: producing the report***

This was to produce a comprehensive final report that effectively synthesised the developed themes into a clear and compelling narrative, as guided by Braun and Clarke (2006). This

report aimed to be concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and engaging, accurately reflecting the integration of AcLits within the SV2030 educational framework.

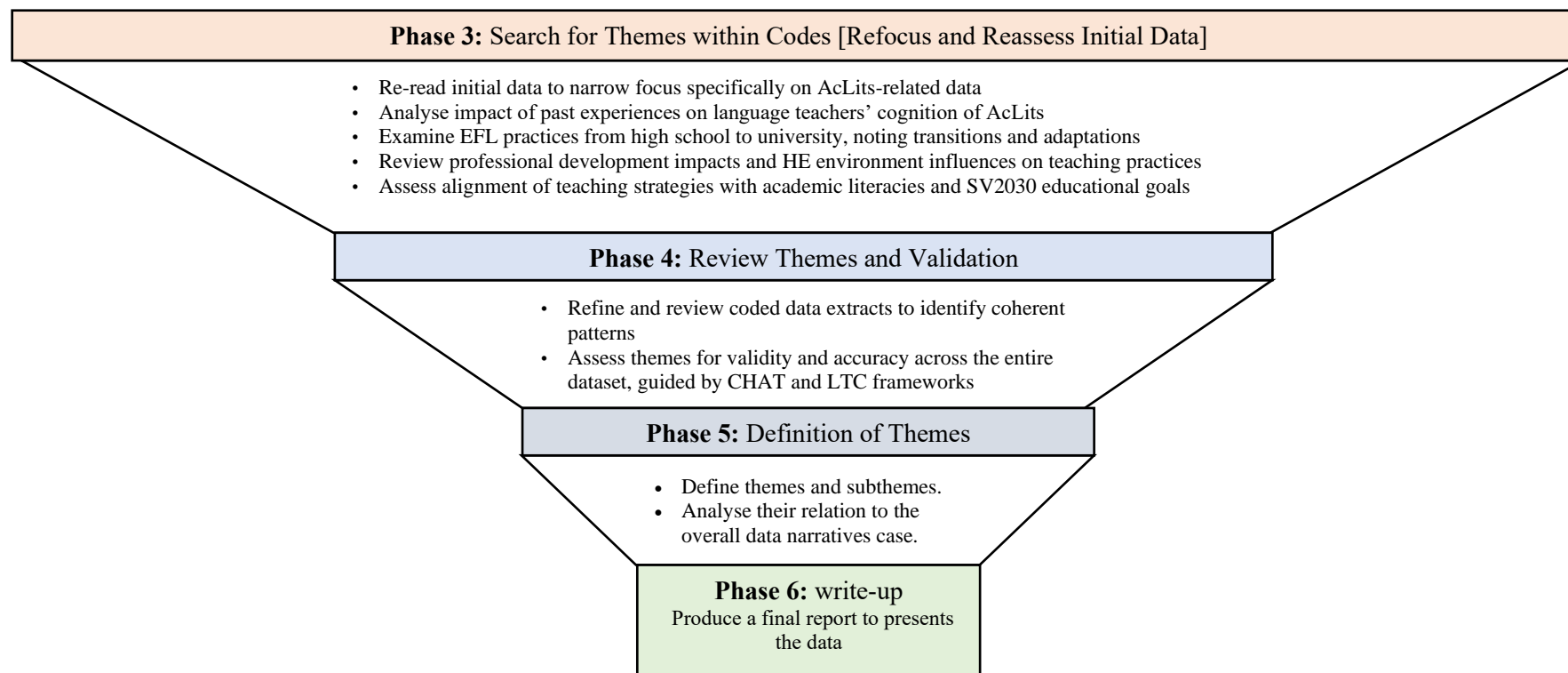
The report included carefully selected, vivid data extracts that demonstrated the themes' prevalence and highlighted their significance within the data. These extracts were integrated into an analytical narrative that went beyond mere description to make a persuasive argument in relation to the research question. This narrative illustrated how the themes connected to the broader educational reforms and challenges faced by EFL teachers in KSA.

The final document not only presented a detailed analysis of the findings but also argued their relevance to ongoing educational practices and policy implications, ensuring the report was a meaningful contribution to the field of educational research within the context of SV2030. A summary of the six phases of data analysis using thematic analysis is depicted in the flowchart below (Figure 5.5).

**Figure 5.5**

*Procedure for Analysing Data Using Thematic Analysis and Theoretical Frameworks*

Phase 1: Familiarisation with Collected Data		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and clarify verbatim transcripts from semi-structured interviews, reflections accounts, and virtual classroom observation.</li> <li>• Rearrange narratives as needed with participant input.</li> <li>• Conduct manual, visual analysis of each participant using CHAT, guided by Nuttall's questions.</li> </ul>		
Phase 2: Generation of initial codes		
<u>Main Code: Impact of SV2030</u>	<u>Main Code: Teachers' Imagined Self</u>	<u>Main Code: Actual Teacher' Practices</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Positive Attitudes</li> <li>○ Educational Improvement</li> <li>○ Critical Thinking Enhancement</li> <li>○ Economic Impact</li> <li>○ New Perspectives</li> <li>○ Supplementary Materials</li> <li>○ Business Skills Development</li> <li>○ Teacher Motivation</li> <li>○ Textbook Content Change</li> <li>○ 21st Century Skills</li> <li>○ COVID-19 Impact</li> <li>○ Teacher Development</li> <li>○ Technology Use</li> <li>○ Student Participation</li> <li>○ Gender Role Impact</li> <li>○ Independent Learning</li> <li>○ Cross-Generational Changes</li> <li>○ Global Awareness</li> <li>○ Faculty Development</li> <li>○ Transition Challenges</li> <li>○ Accreditation</li> <li>○ Online Teaching Effectiveness</li> <li>○ Rapid Reforms</li> <li>○ Professional Opportunities</li> <li>○ Teaching Practices Impact</li> <li>○ Resistance to Chang</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Critical Thinking</li> <li>○ Decision Making</li> <li>○ Problem Solving</li> <li>○ Research Skills</li> <li>○ Digital Literacy</li> <li>○ Group Work</li> <li>○ Scaffolding</li> <li>○ Differentiation - Variation</li> <li>○ Formative Assessment</li> <li>○ Feedback</li> <li>○ Confidence Building</li> <li>○ Building Rapport</li> <li>○ Autonomous Learning</li> <li>○ Lifelong Learning</li> <li>○ Social Responsibility</li> <li>○ Managed Self</li> <li>○ Taking Risks</li> <li>○ Textbook vs. Authentic Material</li> <li>○ Authentic Connection</li> <li>○ Jargon</li> <li>○ Colloquial Language</li> <li>○ Plagiarism</li> <li>○ Presentation</li> <li>○ Family-Peers Influences</li> <li>○ Role Models_ positive &amp; negative</li> <li>○ Teacher Philosophy</li> <li>○ Community of Practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Intercultural Awareness</li> <li>○ Intercultural Connections</li> <li>○ Confusion with AcLits</li> <li>○ Learning Gap</li> <li>○ Low Proficiency</li> <li>○ Technology Challenges</li> <li>○ Interaction</li> <li>○ Assessment</li> <li>○ Student Expectation</li> <li>○ Job Skills</li> <li>○ Demands High</li> <li>○ Teacher Control</li> <li>○ Age Influence</li> <li>○ Pre-Reading Questions</li> <li>○ Silent Reading Modes</li> <li>○ Jigsaw Reading</li> <li>○ Text Highlighting</li> <li>○ In-Class Reading Aloud</li> <li>○ Listening Assessment based on memory</li> <li>○ Model Answers Display</li> <li>○ Vocabulary Introduction</li> <li>○ Comprehension Questions Post-Reading</li> <li>○ Group Work in Reading</li> <li>○ Individual Assessment in Reading</li> <li>○ Use of Visual Aids in Reading</li> <li>○ Reading Assessment Techniques</li> <li>○ Encouragement of Student Participation</li> <li>○ Tech Use: Padlet &amp; display Videos</li> <li>○ Listening Pre-Task Instructions</li> <li>○ Listening While Reading Questions</li> <li>○ Post-Listening Discussion</li> <li>○ Plagiarism Awareness</li> <li>○ Adaptation of Textbook Activities due to COVID-19</li> <li>○ Speaking Through Reading</li> <li>○ Speaking Assessment and Feedback</li> <li>○ Role Play and Simulation in Speaking</li> <li>○ Use of L1 in Vocabulary Teaching</li> <li>○ Pronunciation Practice</li> <li>○ Cultural References in Vocabulary Teaching</li> <li>○ Vocabulary Revision Activities</li> <li>○ Grammar Instruction Techniques</li> <li>○ Grammar Practice and Assessment</li> <li>○ Interactive Grammar Exercises</li> <li>○ Grammar Explanations in L1</li> <li>○ Use of Technology in Grammar Teaching</li> </ul>



After synthesising findings from a broad range of sources and aligning them with theoretical insights from CHAT, this analysis argued that these contradictions were not merely operational glitches but reflected deep-seated structural tensions within the educational system. To answer the research question, the discussion was based on the identification of balanced perspectives and contradictory practices within the Saudi HE system regarding the integration of AcLits. This analytical approach helped in pinpointing major contradictions, for example, between the current teaching methodologies and the advanced literacies demanded by modern educational objectives, like those outlined in SV2030. The interviews showed significant variation in teachers' understanding of AcLits, shaped by their training and resources, which underscored a disconnect between educational policies and classroom realities. Additionally, the analysis of policies and teaching materials revealed mismatches between planned reforms and actual practices, emphasising systemic contradictions. This approach highlighted these issues within a broader sociocultural context, advocating for targeted reforms to better align AcLits implementation with the strategic goals of SV2030.

## **5.2 Ethical Considerations and Approval**

Ethical considerations are paramount for any research project. Human participants should not experience mental or physical harm. Their privacy should be respected, and their freedom of action should not be restricted (Oliver, 2010). In the early research stages, provisional decisions must be made about both the type of participants and the project design (Oliver, 2010), particularly when non-native English speakers are involved (Cacciattolo, 2015). For this research, I adhered to the ethical guidelines of Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia. The study commenced after ethics approval (Application ID: HRE20-081) was granted from Quest Online Human Ethics by Victoria University. Potential risks were nevertheless identified, given the need to respect issues of risk management, informed consent, usage of

pseudonyms, vulnerable participants, potential professional risk, participant privacy, and data confidentiality (Cacciattolo, 2015; National Health and Medical Research Council, 2018).

One must be mindful of maintaining respect for the culture under investigation. In the KSA, it is very inappropriate to in any way criticise politics or religion (Osman, 2015). For this thesis, the researcher is a representative of Saudi culture so no interference with a participant teacher's religious or political beliefs occurred.

This study is mindful of any sensitivity the teacher might have, such as examining teachers who expressed concerns about potential repercussions from their universities if they did not incorporate AcLits into their EGP/ESP classroom practice. Similarly, there were concerns that the teachers might perceive the research as an assessment of their English proficiency. To minimise these concerns, I informed teachers that to protect their privacy, all names were changed to pseudonyms and all third parties were disclosed in narratives (Oliver, 2010).

Another issue surrounding participants' privacy with collecting data occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. I was left with no choice but to collect data online, using Zoom, so I was mindful to 'lock' the Zoom room using my account at Victoria University.

Upon receiving participants' recorded online classes and chats for observation, the files were downloaded and stored on my computer. These files will be deleted five years after submission. Before recording, some teachers obtained verbal consent from their students, all of whom, as university students, were at least 18 years old and thus considered adults. Due to conservative culture in KSA, cameras were disabled to safeguard not only the students' identities but also the privacy of their families.

To manage confidentiality risks (Oliver, 2010), participants were informed that all information gathered would be stored in only two places: (i) on the researcher's laptop with a secure password; and (ii) on a Victoria University database R: Drive. These two locations are

accessible to only the researcher and her supervisors (Winton, 2013). In addition, the data collected would be deleted after five years. As a researcher, I transcribed all data, using Otter. A password was used to protect all files.

In the Saudi context, ethics approval was sought from both universities. I obtained a letter from the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission in Australia confirming approval to collect data in KSA from female-only university campuses. Then an official email was sent to the universities to contact the supervisors of each EGP/ESP program and meet any ethical requirements. I then sent the recruitment information and obtained the signed consent forms from the participants. The following section explains the limitations.

### **5.2.1 Positioning Myself**

Positionality in qualitative research necessitates the acknowledgment of the researcher's subjectivities and their relational stance to 'the other' (Chereni, 2014; Merriam et al., 2001; Sybing, 2022). As a Saudi-born female researcher, raised in a middle-class family in KSA that places a high value on education and holds moderate Islamic religious and political views, my background provides me with a deep understanding of the perspectives and experiences of my participants. This personal context enhanced my ability to understand and interpret their nuanced realities.

Having studied overseas in a Western country for seven years, I am able to navigate the complexities of Saudi culture both as an insider and an outsider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Being an 'insider' researcher entails undertaking a study with participants who share a common identity, language, and experiences that can influence qualitative research (Asselin, 2003; Chesney, 2000; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). My professional journey began after earning an undergraduate degree in linguistics and TESOL, which led me to spend five years teaching EFL across various educational levels in KSA. My background spans from teaching

primary education in an international school to private tutoring in EGP, EAP, and ESP. After transitioning to higher education, I briefly taught ESP for finance, which enhanced my understanding of the sector. Having also completed a Saudi university teacher-training course and worked as an EFL teacher in KSA, my experiences align closely with those of my participants.

My firsthand experience as an EFL teacher in KSA, particularly my exposure to the limited emphasis on AcLits, shapes my research focus. I aimed to explore how EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes influenced the incorporation or avoidance of AcLits in EGP/ESP teaching. Concentrating on female participants aligned with Saudi cultural norms and boundaries; however, gender divisions complicated communication across genders, posing challenges in recruiting male participants given my status as a female researcher.

Being an insider researcher was not without limitations. Participant bias and researcher bias can arise (Shah, 2019). Participant bias may occur when respondents provide agreeable yet inaccurate responses to gain the researcher's respect or trust, or when they offer consistent answers to similarly worded questions due to habituation bias. Researcher bias can manifest as confirmation bias, where a researcher selectively chooses ideal responses that align with their argument or presumptions, or as leading questions and wording bias that guide participants towards expected outcomes (Fanelli, 2010). To reduce researcher bias, the focus was not solely on reporting ideal responses but on thoroughly examining the entire dataset through narrative thematic analysis to provide a comprehensive account of EGP/ESP teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding AcLits and their teaching practices. Additionally, data triangulation methods were employed to minimise researcher bias. Participants were given the opportunity to review their stories for accuracy before analysis, and they also provided audio recordings of their classroom practice.

Further enriching my research orientation, particularly in data analysis, was the theoretical framework influenced by my participation in the Asia-Pacific Sociocultural, Cultural-historical & Activity Theory Summer School. This experience connected me with prominent scholars in CHAT theory. It confirmed my belief in CHAT as an effective framework for examining nuanced educational practices across different contexts, recognising that reality and knowledge are socially constructed.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

This study adopted an innovative research design, combining narrative case studies with CHAT theory. The first and obvious limitation was due to its qualitative nature. This was used in view of its usefulness in delving into the complexities of AcLits teacher cognition in the context of KSA's educational reforms. However, it is essential to consider the potential limitations arising from adopting a qualitative research design and an interpretative theoretical framework. This methodology continues to attract critiques based on the shortcomings identified by the literature, such as subjectivity, lack of generalisability, and potential bias. (Bell, 2002). To address these concerns and strengthen the research design, triangulation through observation and relevant document analysis were employed (Hartley, 2009).

The study's reliance on the narratives of only six female participants within the specific cultural context of KSA raised questions about the generalisability of the findings. While the narrative approach maintained emotional intensity, it made data summarisation challenging (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). This issue was addressed adopting a strong theoretical base that includes CHAT theory and LTC frameworks, thus contributing to the robustness of the research (Nicholl & Blake, 2013).

Despite the benefits of narrative inquiry, the shortcomings include the time commitment involved, the potential imposition of meaning on participants' experiences, and the subjective

nature of narratives (Bell, 2002; Josselson, 1996; Peshkin, 1988). Narrative inquiry has been criticised for its individual-focused approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 2000) and the absence of definitive criteria (Clandinin et al., 1999). The researcher's close association with the participants required awareness of potential influence and potential research bias. The researcher is aware of these challenges and took all steps to minimise potential faults including triangulation of data sources, seeking participant feedback and supervisors debriefing.

The study also acknowledges the limitation of a narrow sample size and type, with all participants being female (Borg, 2006). This choice is justified by the dominance of women in language education in KSA. Although diversity was ensured by including teachers at different career stages, future research should aim to include male participants and investigate other regions of the country (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Additionally, extending research to encompass secondary school settings and vocational and technical education sectors could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the application and impact of teaching methodologies across different educational contexts.

The global COVID-19 crisis led to adjustments having to be made to the chosen research strategy, resulting in a lack of face-to-face observations and field notes, which could have provided valuable contributions to the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Additionally, the time frame for the investigation was limited due to travel restrictions and program constraints, preventing further examination of different situations (Wilson, 2014). Initially, there were nine teachers who had accepted to take part in this study, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and not completing the task, this number was reduced to six.

Both frameworks CHAT and LTC have their limitations. CHAT analysis may marginalise social issues and overlook individual agency (Hartley, 2009; Nicholl & Blake, 2013).

CHAT's focus on specific social practices may limit its applicability in broader contexts (Wilson, 2014). LTC research faces challenges in interpreting findings due to terminology issues (Borg, 2006). Despite growth in LTC research, unanswered questions remain regarding meaningful learning environments and teacher education (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015; Lim, 2016). By combining these two theories, the study aimed to mitigate the shortcomings associated with each, providing a more comprehensive understanding of AcLits teacher cognition within the context of SV2030 in KSA.

#### **5.4 Summary**

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology of the study, grounded in an interpretive paradigm, and utilising a collective narrative case study approach. It detailed the use of multiple data collection methods to gather comprehensive data from six female Saudi teachers about their perceptions and practices in AcLits in English language teaching. The study focused on two Saudi universities during COVID-19 and addressed its impact on research methods. It discussed the application of CHAT framework for analysis, highlighting the study's credibility, dependability, and ethical considerations. Upcoming chapters will present the findings and analysis of the qualitative.

## 6 Findings: Academic Literacies Mediation at English Language Centres

This chapter reports on the findings of the empirical data collected from six English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in the two University's English Language Centres (ELC). The experiences of teachers were then considered to explore whether their beliefs and practices align with the requirements of current English language teaching outcomes in KSA. In particular, data were collected via reflective accounts (Section 5.1.5.1), semi-structured interviews (Section 5.1.5.2) and observations (Section 5.1.5.3). Data collected from teachers were analysed via thematic analysis, incorporating Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and Language Teacher Cognition (LTC), and four main themes were identified: 1) the influence of past experiences on Academic Literacies (AcLits) cognition, 2) the role of the Higher Education (HE) environment in teaching practice, 3) teachers' expertise in the development of AcLits, and 4) Saudi Vision 2030's (SV2030) effect on KSA's educational evolution.

The following section systematically delves into the thematic analysis of the data. This approach is crucial for understanding the nuanced experiences and perceptions of Saudi EFL teachers in AcLits, aiding in the comprehension of their challenges and the deeper meanings behind their experiences. As outlined in Table 6.1, the analysis synthesises various perspectives and enable the research findings to contribute to the discourse in Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE).

**Table 6.1**

*Summary of Themes and Sub-themes Identified in the Study*

Themes	Sub-themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High-School EFL Practices: Preconceptions and Transitional Shock</li> </ul>

Themes	Sub-themes
<b>Theme 1: Experiences Influencing Language Teachers' Cognition of Academic Literacies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Frustrating Academic Literacies Experiences and Adaptation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ From Limited Support to Self-Reliance</li> <li>○ From Exam-Driven Focus to High Score Obsession</li> <li>○ Reinforcement Enhancing Academic Literacies</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Teacher Professional Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ National Language Teacher Training</li> <li>○ External or International Language Teacher Training</li> <li>○ University In-Service Training</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Theme 2: The Impact of the Higher Education Environment on Teachers' Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Course Syllabus and Assessment Tasks</b></li> <li>• <b>Course Content, Time and Class Size</b></li> <li>• <b>Students' Motivation</b></li> <li>• <b>Students' Confidence in English</b></li> </ul>
<b>Theme 3: Expertise in the Application of Academic Literacies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Study Skills: Focus on Grammar, Vocabulary, Presentation Skills, and Exam Preparation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Grammar and Vocabulary as Central Aspects of Language Instruction</li> <li>○ Teaching Basic Presentation Skills</li> <li>○ Exam-Driven Teaching Practices</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Academic Socialisation: Efforts to Foster Academic Skills and Expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Arabic is Used to Teach English</li> <li>○ Student Plagiarism and Academic Integrity as Challenges Without Specific Strategies</li> <li>○ Classroom Interactions and Collaborative Learning Are Still Limited</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Developing Foundational Academic Literacies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Researching, Notetaking, and Summarising Are Recognised but Not Yet Implemented</li> <li>○ Critical Thinking Equates to Opinion Exchange</li> <li>○ Feedback is Considered Valuable</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Misalignment of Conceptual Understanding About Academic Literacies</b></li> </ul>
<b>Theme 4: Impact of Saudi Vision 2030 in Evolving Education Landscape in KSA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positive Outlook on Saudi Vision 2030</b></li> <li>• <b>Women's Participation in English Language Education Post-Vision 2030</b></li> <li>• <b>Institutional Focus on Language Skills Within Vision 2030's Education Goals</b></li> </ul>

One theme is the influence of past experiences on teachers' perceptions and implementations of AcLits. It incorporates the challenges and frustrations they face; alongside the strategies they employ for reinforcement and adaptation within the Saudi educational system. Another theme sheds light on both national and international professional development opportunities, enhancing the experiences of pre-service and in-service teachers. Furthermore, it unveils how

the ELC in HE settings affects teachers' practices. The study probes into the teachers' expertise in and understanding of AcLits, including any misconceptions they hold and the cultural mediation tools they use for improvement. Additionally, the section examines teachers' viewpoints on the relevance of SV2030 to their current roles in education. Finally, the analysis investigates the impact of the SV2030 initiative on educational practices, aiming to discern shifts in teaching methodologies across various universities.

## **6.1 Experiences Influencing Language Teachers' Cognition of Academic Literacies**

To understand the sociocultural aspects of AcLits in the evolving Saudi educational context, this theme presents teachers' experiences as a collective phenomenon, showed in a sequential manner. It acknowledges that all participants, despite variations in their demographics and universities of employment, illustrate similar experiences. It is evident that teachers often bypass discussions on the academic literacy stage in school, potentially due to its focus solely on the four main language skills and related subskills, or its reliance on memorisation techniques. Another possibility is that this stage has been inadvertently ignored due to teachers adjusting to other priorities like passing exams. However, it is important to recognise the significant impact that this stage has on their proficiency and the knowledge they have gained during their high-school education.

### **6.1.1 High-School EFL Practices: Preconceptions and Transitional Shock**

During high school, participants often encountered rigid, traditional methods of language teaching. The focus was typically on grammar, vocabulary, and rote learning, with less emphasis on creative or communicative aspects of language learning.

The experiences of teachers gave us a clear view of how AcLits were often missing in high-school education in KSA. Aisha straightforwardly said, 'I don't feel we learned much

[AcLits] in high school, so that's why I don't feel that it's that important' (interview). This thought is common among these teachers. Anwar, who did very well in English in high school, admitted the teaching was limited, she said, 'I used to have full marks at writing' because 'I used to write about topics that I already know, ideas that are related to my everyday life' (interview). Nouran pointed out that high school did not teach important skills like notetaking and summarising.

These skills became very important at university. When Aisha joined the English department, she was shocked and noted that 'there was a huge gap between the high-school English level and what they taught us at university, and we dove head-first into old texts such as the novels in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries' (reflection). Anwar also talked about how university was tougher, with more complex English writing tasks. She stated 'I have to write about topics that I didn't know anything about. I had to write essays and paragraphs about literature, about Shakespeare, things that I'm not used to... [it] required me to improve my language... ideas... knowledge.' (interview).

Similarly, Asma said she only started developing her academic skills in college, hinting that high school did not focus on 'Oral presentations, self-learning skills and critical thinking skills' (interview). Nada also reported a big difference between high school and college. She remembered, 'In high school, we are not taught writing in a proper way; we just memorise [a selected passage] and then [re]write what we have memorised' (interview). This approach in high school did not prepare her for academic writing in college.

All these stories show that high schools in KSA did not prepare these students sufficiently for tertiary education. The participants seem to be aware that they were not ready for the tough writing and thinking tasks they would face in college. As high-school curricula have changed

little (Al-Othmany & Mahmoud, 2021; Gong et al., 2022), it is unlikely this situation has changed; therefore, high schools could include better AcLits teaching in their programs.

## **6.1.2 Frustrating Academic Literacies Experiences and Adaptation**

The negative initial experiences led to frustration, which is the theme analysed in this section. The emphasis is on the reflections of these participants on their previous experiences and how these recollections connect to their discontent with the journey through AcLits and its perceived absence. It also examines their methods for adapting to the new educational system and developing their own strategies to overcome challenges, especially in the context of language acquisition.

### ***6.1.2.1 From Limited Support to Self-Reliance***

The Participant Student Teacher's (PST) experiences within the realm of AcLits revealed a landscape filled with complex challenges, characterised by a significant lack of support. This environment necessitated a shift towards self-reliance and critical personal development, as they navigated and adapted to an academic system often inadequate in fostering their AcLits effectively.

Central to these challenges was Aisha's journey in language acquisition, marked by a reliance on self-learning methods. Lacking modern tools like Google Translate, she turned to dictionaries as her primary resource 'and spent a lot of time working with them' (reflection). Consequently, she invested in an electronic dictionary, which provided word definitions in both English and Arabic, aiding significantly in her progress.

Aisha's challenges extended to academic writing, particularly in thesis composition, where she faced the hurdle of unclear instructions. She explained, 'When we started to write our thesis, we had no idea how to start. Nobody taught us what to do. Therefore, every student

was learning independently' (interview). Her experience highlighted the absence of structured guidance in her educational setting where 'every student took a thesis from the library and tried to imitate it' (interview).

As a student, in her English literature classes, Aisha faced a demanding and highly specific teaching style that required students to rely solely on their own efforts, with little external support. One vivid example of this strict approach was when the professor asked, 'How many horses were pulling the cart in a specific scene?' (reflection). This question exemplifies the level of detail expected from students, forcing them to recall precise information from the novel, rather than relying on summaries or external notes. In this challenging environment, Aisha and her classmates had no choice but to adopt self-reliance and intense preparation, as the memorisation of minor details was prioritised, leaving little room for broader comprehension or guidance. Further, during her MA, she experienced ineffective teaching methods, such as male professors, who taught via TV screens due to an all-female campus policy, telling anecdotes irrelevant to the class rather than focusing on the subject matter. Her recount illustrates the diverse challenges Aisha faced and how she adapted.

On the other hand, Nada questioned the originality of the speaking exercises in her classes, describing them as 'very artificial' and lacking in authenticity (interview). She criticised the exam-centric structure of her classes, with no guidance on improving skills like notetaking or critical reading, she said, 'It would have been really useful if I was taught like that, like with strategies of notetaking' (interview).

Asma highlighted a focus on developing oral presentation skills at the university, to the detriment of other academic skills, making students 'highly dependent on themselves' (reflection). She found her academic learning experience to be mostly theoretical and confined to the textbook (interview).

During her BA, Huda encountered a predominantly teacher-centred approach with minimal guidance on processing information. She described the experience as torturous, saying, ‘We cannot take all the notes they are saying for two or three hours’ (interview). Huda’s method involved recording lectures and then reviewing them at her own pace at home. She recalled the teachers’ approach, ‘Just opening the book and going through it step by step, commenting’ (interview). Without adequate guidance on how to handle the volume of information, Huda’s only viable strategy was to record and later rewrite the lectures for better understanding.

Anwar faced challenges in large classes, where opportunities to practice academic skills were limited, leading her to seek improvement outside the classroom without a mentor: ‘I had to find some ways and techniques to improve my language, outside classes’ (interview). Even in speaking courses, the assessment was paper based, limiting the practical application of speaking skills (interview).

Nouran’s experience further illustrates the necessity of becoming an independent learner due to the inadequacy of course delivery during her bachelor’s degree saying, ‘one thing that I learned was to become an independent learner’ (interview).

Collectively, these experiences underscore a challenging academic environment, where these teachers had to navigate traditional, often ineffective teaching methods and assessment strategies. This environment compelled them to develop independent learning strategies, adapt to the circumstances, and seek self-improvement in their pursuit of AcLits.

#### ***6.1.2.2 From Exam-Driven Focus to High Score Obsession***

The culture of the exam-driven approach was critical during the PSTs stage. The emphasis on testing shaped the teaching methods and learning experiences within these institutions.

Anwar’s encounter with paper-based exams in speaking courses is a telling example, where

she noted, ‘Even for speaking courses, we did paper-based exams for vocabulary, okay, information, yeah. Of course, there was a speaking part, but also, we did a paper based’ (interview). This approach highlights a disconnection between the intended learning objectives and the methods of assessment used.

Huda’s student experiences further reveal the exam-centric mindset of teachers, who often directed students to focus solely on material that will appear in tests: ‘study this is gonna be [on] the exam. If you understand this, this gonna be better for you next term’ (interview). Such a narrow focus on exams may limit PSTs’ broader understanding and engagement with the subject matter. Similarly, Nada’s reflections indicate a class structure strictly aligned with exam formats. She described a lack of guidance in developing essential skills, such as listening or notetaking, highlighting, ‘it would have been really useful if I was taught like that, like with strategies of notetaking’ (interview). She also pointed out the absence of critical reading in her curriculum, stating that ‘critical reading was not there, really’ as ‘it was basically about exams’ (reflection).

Aisha’s experiences during her master’s program highlight additional challenges in this exam-driven environment. She recalled a professor who devoted lecture time to personal stories rather than academic content, ‘from the time the lecture starts to the time it ends, this professor continuously blabbers about her personal life’ and attended only a fraction of the designated lecture time (reflection). The issue of segregation, as experienced by Aisha, further complicated the learning process, with lectures delivered via TV screens, leading students to seek alternative methods for exam preparation. She also recounted an episode where she and her eight classmates were tasked with summarising chapters of a book: Each student summarised a section, and they suggested basing the final exam on their summaries, and the professor agreed. During the exam, the students’ answers were remarkably similar, causing

astonishment to the professor. In response, the students reminded him that they had requested the assessment to be solely based on the provided summaries and that he had accepted. They all ended up passing the course (reflection).

These accounts collectively depict a scenario where the focus on passing exams overshadowed the development of knowledge, practical skills, and critical thinking and prevailing exam-oriented culture in Saudi universities. Later in this chapter, further evidence of the exam culture and achieving high scores is presented, illustrating its influence on teachers' current cognitions and practices.

### ***6.1.2.3 Reinforcement Enhancing Academic Literacies***

Positive learning experiences play a crucial role in shaping the teaching philosophies and methods of future teachers, highlighting a shift from traditional, exam-driven approaches to more interactive and reflective styles of learning on some fortunate occasions, which reinforce the teachers' AcLits. Their reflections inferred their understanding of the AcLits concepts.

Nada's educational journey was markedly enhanced through undergraduate Writing Lab sessions, contrasting sharply with her earlier schooling. She reflected on the traditional methods, noting, 'In high school, we are not taught writing in a proper way. We just memorise, and then we come, and we write whatever we have memorised' (interview). Her learning experience evolved significantly during her PhD, while engaging in critical analysis of articles under her supervisor's guidance. Nada's experience demonstrates the significant influence of a supportive academic environment and the role of a mentor in shaping her growth, particularly in developing her critical thinking. Initially hesitant to critique established scholars, she doubted her abilities and questioned if she was capable. However, her supervisor emphasised that no one is exempt from criticism, especially if their research is published. This encouragement instilled confidence in Nada's judgement. Her journey

highlighted a transformation saying, ‘So I think this confidence that you supervisor can give you can make a lot of a difference in how you develop’ (interview). Nada’s academic development was strongly influenced by her supportive academic community during her PhD studies. The inclusive atmosphere played a vital role in shaping her positive learning experience. Nada highlighted the importance of mutual respect and confidence instilled by her supervisor, particularly through unique practices like voting in sessions, She said ‘This voting, taught me that I need to respect others’ decisions... If the supervisor himself is there, and he respects our decisions and our thoughts, then for sure I need to be. I need to show the same level of respect’ (interview).

Asma recalled a positive experience when she had to interview native English speakers during her BA degree, marking her first direct interaction with a native speaker and significantly deviating from conventional learning methods. This practical task deeply engaged Asma, as she noted the care taken in preparing her questions:

If you asked me, just to write interview questions... but if you ask me that I’m really going to ask those questions to [...] someone new, I’m going to meet this person. First time I will truly care I will truly write my questions correctly and choose them. (interview). Her focus on the authenticity of the interaction led to a more careful consideration of language and communication, demonstrating the benefits of practical, real-world learning experiences.

Anwar’s learning, marked by diverse teaching methodologies that significantly enhanced her active participation in class debates, played a crucial role in developing her speaking skills. Anwar detailed this experience, saying, ‘We were listening to our professors. So, we were listening to English every day, in classes. For the speaking, we had two speaking classes... We did debate in English’ (interview). Reflecting on one specific debate, Anwar remembers how

her professor would engage the class in controversial topics, such as comparing American movies to Egyptian movies, dividing the class into two groups to argue for each side. She said, ‘This group will be for American movies, and this group will for Egyptian movies’ (interview). This method ensured that every student participated and contributed their viewpoints, fostering a highly interactive and communicative environment. Anwar recalled, ‘Everyone should have a point. About the side she [is on]. Yeah, so I remember everyone in that class was speaking’ (interview).

Similarly, in a debating course that Nouran took, the teacher assigned topics on love marriage and arranged marriage, challenging students to convince the opposing group. Nouran viewed this practice as valuable for honing skills in imagination, logic, reasoning, and group communication (interview). Reflecting on a linguistics professor, Nouran appreciated the personalised approach in teaching, incorporating real-life examples and experiences. Despite the scientific nature of the subject, the teacher successfully engaged students, encouraging questions, creativity, and active learning. Nouran found the teacher motivational, seeking her guidance when faced with challenges. Inspired by this mentor, Nouran aspired to become a professor who fostered trust and motivation in her future students, echoing the impact of a supportive and engaging educator.

Anwar recalled joining the Toastmasters club after completing her bachelor’s degree to stay connected to the English language. This aided her in maintaining and enhancing her English proficiency and made her realise the importance of self-initiative and utilising diverse resources beyond the classroom. It was her teacher who advised to seek additional resources, such as using a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) preparation book with accompanying CD. For Nouran, it was her experience of learning to critique literature with friends, using online resources to explore literary criticism, acknowledging the imperfections as part of the learning process that made her aware of the importance of learner autonomy and

independent information seeking, emphasising that it allowed individuals to go beyond relying solely on teachers for knowledge.

During her master's program, Aisha greatly admired a Sudanese lecturer who was described as 'very flexible, tender, and kind' and who 'helped us discover our abilities and talents' (reflection). Aisha recalled the teacher's approach of asking students to analyse characters, challenging their ideas, and encouraging independent thought to ensure they were not relying on online analysis materials. The lecturer affirmed students 'already possess the critical analysis skill as writers and analysts' and only lack 'knowledge of the technical terms and definitions' (reflection). Aisha credited this teacher with triggering creativity in students through her comfortable and flexible teaching style. Aisha explained that 'after I went back to teaching, I started to use more flexible teaching methods, and I gave my students more trust,' which she believed to be 'much better when dealing with students' (reflection).

Huda described her positive language learning experience when she developed her speaking and writing skills. For speaking, her favourite tasks were presentations, which progressively increased in length from 2 to 15 minutes. In writing, she initially learned sentence and paragraph structures before progressing to essays. Huda appreciated the step-by-step approach, believing it to be beneficial.

The experiences of these PSTs in the EFL context highlighted their understanding of AcLits as sociocultural tools, encompassing both conceptual and physical aspects. They transitioned from rote memorisation methods to engaging with more dynamic, interactive tools, such as critical analysis of academic articles and practical language use in real-world settings. One PST's shift to critical thinking in Writing Lab sessions illustrated moving beyond book-based learning. Engaging with native English speakers and participating in debates signified a practical application of language skills, emphasising the importance of real-world

engagement. The use of resources like TOEFL preparation materials and involvement in activities like Toastmasters further indicated the integration of physical tools in language development. This collective shift towards active learning and critical engagement with both conceptual understanding and practical application of language demonstrated a comprehensive approach to AcLits in the EFL context.

### **6.1.3 Teacher Professional Development**

This section reports the distinct approaches to teacher professional development adopted by both universities, focusing on their strategies and the experiences of their teachers. The subthemes are divided into National Language Teacher Training, External or International Language Teacher Training, and University In-Service Training.

#### ***6.1.3.1 National Language Teacher Training***

In the teacher-preparation phase, four teachers, Aisha, Nada, and Asma from Univ.A and Huda from Univ.B, were trained in the consecutive system, specifically through the Diploma of Education Program, attending the integrative option. Among these, only Aisha experienced the blended system during her college preparation. All the teachers underwent training in a school environment, teaching either at the intermediate or high-school level. Later, for them to continue their teaching careers at the university level, they were required to obtain a master's degree. This pathway and its requirements are detailed further in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.3.

Nada reflected on her pre-service preparation, stating that her pre-service preparation, was not that useful. She said, 'No, and I was unlucky, because... the educational diploma is mainly about... courses in Arabic related to psychology, educational leadership, ... and these were not useful at all I would say now when it comes to my teaching' (interview). She continued, 'the

only two courses that were taught in English, about English language teaching... were very theoretical... too much theoretical and there was no... application part to it' (interview). Nada expressed her dissatisfaction with the practical component of her training, explaining, 'The other course, which was more practical... wasn't that useful because... the teacher... wasn't very honest in teaching. She [would come] unprepared, and ... as a supervisor... she wouldn't give good feedback, just sitting in the back, not observing carefully' (interview).

Nada's pre-service education primarily focused on educational psychology and leadership, with limited emphasis on English teaching, which was split between theoretical and school-based practice. However, she found that neither component was as effective as she had hoped. Based on Asma's experience, the pre-service training for teaching language skills had significant gaps, focusing more on general education than specific language teaching methods. Asma reflected, 'The program wasn't mainly focusing on how to teach the four language skills' (interview). This lack of targeted training in language instruction left her feeling underprepared. However, her master's degree program provided more useful strategies, such as cooperative learning, self-learning, and e-learning, significantly shaping her teaching approach (interview). She acknowledged that her academic skills, like researching and digital literacy, were not developed until her master's studies (reflection), and she continued to enhance these skills through development webinars and workshops (reflection).

Asma's development as a teacher was heavily influenced by practical experience rather than formal training. She admitted, 'The first time I was teaching, I wasn't a good teacher' (interview). Her skills have since improved through real-world classroom experiences and understanding her student needs. Over time, Asma learned to integrate academic skills into her teaching, balancing the course objectives with the practical needs of her students. She

stated, ‘I learned to implement some of those academic skills, where I feel that this is a necessity’(interview). This approach highlights the importance of experience in teacher development and the limitations of pre-service training programs.

Huda’s experience underscores the significance of practical experience in teacher development while highlighting the limitations of her pre-service training program. The program primarily utilised role-playing for instruction, focusing on practical aspects, such as classroom behaviour and time management. However, a significant gap existed as the program did not specifically address how to develop academic skills, leaving Huda without training in teaching reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Although there was preparation for real classroom scenarios, including lesson planning and presentations, there was a noticeable absence of training in teaching study skills like notetaking. This points to a disconnect between the content of her bachelor’s degree and the practical teaching training she later underwent.

Reflecting on her pre-service teaching experience, Anwar emphasised the transformative impact of understanding various teaching methodologies on her approach to education. She highlighted the shift in perspective from merely delivering knowledge to actively training students in practical language use. Anwar specifically values CLT approach, emphasising the importance of using language for learning. Contrasting with traditional methods like grammar-translation, CLT encourages authentic language use and interaction, aligning with current best practices in language education. Anwar’s experience illustrates a move towards more interactive and communicative methods in language teaching.

#### ***6.1.3.2 External or International Language Teacher Training***

Teachers like Nada, Huda, Anwar, and Nouran also chose to pursue external and international opportunities, demonstrating their strong desire to learn alternative English language teaching

methods. Nada pursued her master's degree in the UK under a university scholarship, with a focus on enhancing her academic literacy skills. She engaged in in-session courses<sup>8</sup> designed to improve her academic writing and research abilities, essential for success in the UK educational system. Reflecting on her experience, Nada highlighted a basic course on library usage. However, she encountered significant challenges due to differences between the academic systems in Saudi Arabia and the UK. The UK's emphasis on writing assignments over exams posed a difficulty for Nada, who was accustomed to a system with less emphasis on academic writing in Saudi Arabia. Facing the expectation to submit four different assignments within three months, Nada discussed the difficulty of this transition, saying 'Can you imagine somebody coming from the system in Saudi where we don't write academically a lot, and then you throw me into the library, and then you expect me in three months to submit four different assignments' (interview). She was especially concerned about adapting to specific academic writing styles, which were unfamiliar to her noting, 'I was scared to death, I don't know how to do academic writing, there is a specific style that they have to follow but they don't know what the style is exactly' (interview). This experience highlights the significant gap in academic writing and research skills between different educational systems, and the challenges faced by international students in adapting to these new requirements. Nada's proactive approach in taking in-session courses reflected her commitment to overcoming these challenges and succeeding in her master's program.

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<sup>8</sup> In-session courses are tailored to assist international students in improving their English academic abilities, encompassing areas such as writing, reading, speaking, and listening. These courses are offered by experts in English for Academic Purposes, typically from departments like the International Foundation Courses and English Language Studies, well-versed in delivering academic English programs that focus on both skills and academic subject matter. Unlike pre-session courses that occur before the academic year, in-session courses are conducted during the term time, usually starting in the second week of the first term, once students are fully enrolled.

After completing her master's, Anwar continued to enhance her academic skills. She joined several courses and workshops, including 'Writing and Editing: Word Choice and Word Order' and 'Writing and Editing: Revising' from the University of Michigan, which ultimately contributed to her achieving a 7 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) writing test.

Nouran's international teacher preparation involved the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) course, significantly enhancing her English teaching skills. She found the course particularly beneficial as it focused more on language teaching than her previous training. The diverse classroom environment, teaching students from various countries, challenged her to use English exclusively for communication. Nouran valued the virtual teaching aspect, and the mentorship received during the course, emphasising the constructive feedback from her mentor as instrumental in improving her teaching techniques. Despite the enriching experience, Nouran faced challenges in motivating her Saudi students to speak English confidently, noting a contrast in the willingness to communicate compared to her international students. Today, Nouran strives to motivate her students, saying, 'I try to tell my students every day... speak English. It's fine if you make mistakes' (interview). Overall, the CELTA course provided Nouran with practical learning experiences, introducing new teaching methods and offering a fresh perspective on language instruction.

During her time in the US and UK, Huda attended various workshops and conferences that significantly enriched her teaching methods, despite not formally studying English courses there. These experiences exposed her to hands-on techniques, innovative teaching strategies, and insights into classroom management. Huda cited examples of engaging large classrooms and incorporating new technology and apps into teaching. These experiences had a profound impact on her teaching style. Huda recounted that here she learned, 'how to make your

classroom active' (interview). However, she also expressed the challenges of implementing these methods due to constraints like limited time and extensive curricula, 'and when we have a limited time, and we have a long textbook we have to follow, then it's gonna again be a teacher-centred approach. And I don't like this' (interview). Huda's reflections highlight the contrast between the innovative methods she learned abroad and the practical limitations she faces in her teaching context.

### **6.1.3.3 University In-Service Training**

Both universities encouraged teachers to participate in in-service training to advance the quality of their teaching. Univ.A exhibited a preference for national language teacher-training programs, while Univ.B leaned more towards international language teacher training. Both universities emphasised in-service training, although it appeared that there was not a systematic structure in place for these programs. The effectiveness and implementation of in-service training varied, with Univ.B seemingly adopting a more proactive approach. Particularly noteworthy is Univ.B's emphasis on mentor support and a systematic peer observation program.

Univ.A provided optional professional development workshops for teachers to attend. Teachers showed varied attitudes towards these activities. Aisha commented that 'I leave it because it is very boring. It was optional' and that 'I attended twice or three times when it was obligatory, and they said it will teach us, but it was nothing' (interview). She said that the workshops were on topics of 'teaching methods,' but 'it was theoretical' (interview). She explained that 'a lot of people talk about this but do not apply anything. These are two different things' and that 'I don't like to attend courses like this' (interview).

Asma, on the other hand, held contrasting views on workshops, acknowledging the support and usefulness of professional development sessions provided by Univ.A. She stated, 'Most

of the time, yes, they are useful. They are beneficial. Yes, you can apply them in your classroom' (interview). She appreciated the academic skills and alignment with SV2030 in these workshops, finding them interesting and beneficial for classroom application. However, Asma expressed doubt about the effectiveness of some techniques taught in the workshops for her students. As a specialist in teaching strategies for English language, she emphasised, 'I have to be convinced about what those workshops, saying the content, I have to be convinced because this is, this is my area of specialty, so I have to be convinced with that' (interview). Asma provided an example saying that once 'the presenter is talking about this reading and this teaching strategy, but I'm not convinced with that, or I don't think that this yeah this strategy is really good this teaching strategy' (interview). She noted, 'It's good to teach critical thinking, but it's not suitable for my students' (interview).

Nada acknowledged the significant improvement in Univ.A's professional development over the past two years, attributing it to the influence of their new female dean, who is dedicated to enhancing professional development practices. She contrasted this positive trend with the past, noting that professional development from Oxford University Press (OUP) was once traditional and repetitive. However, in the last year, Nada observed a shift in OUP's approach, acknowledging competition from other publishers. Now, OUP seeks input from teachers to tailor professional development content, creating a more interactive and collaborative process. Nada anticipates further strengthening of the professional development unit at Univ.A.

Aisha and Nada expressed their concerns regarding the quality of certain teachers at Univ.A. Aisha said, 'It is unfortunate that there are teachers, and I do not blame them. This is their English level. I mean that the teachers in the WhatsApp group write with a lot of grammar mistakes' (interview). She believed that 'teachers have to work a bit on themselves' (interview). She argued that 'they should watch lots of videos on grammar, how to teach grammar' (interview). Nada, too, was also asked to observe 'some of the classes with some of

the teachers because of students' complaints about the teacher not explaining that well' (interview). She witnessed a teaching approach where teachers meticulously read word by word, paragraph by paragraph, and expressed doubt about the effectiveness of this method.

At Univ.B., Huda expressed a positive attitude towards the professional development workshops, emphasising the continuous learning for teachers. She believed in refreshing teaching practices and considers professional development workshops and training sessions, particularly those offered by Cambridge University, as reliable sources of knowledge and practice. Huda noted that Univ.B has a contract with Cambridge University, allowing teaching staff to register for their courses freely. These workshops covered various topics throughout the semester, focusing on new trends in teaching English and fostering student independence and responsibility. She explained that 'all the staff members are requested to join these sessions' (interview) and that they are expected to incorporate what they had learned from the workshops into their teaching. Huda mentioned that, alongside workshops from Cambridge University, teachers at Univ.B were provided opportunities to participate in international language conferences, a practice she believed ensures the enhancement of academic skills.

University B implemented a classroom observation policy, where Huda explained that the institution assigns another teacher to confidentially assess and report on each class. While her observer praised her creativity, out-of-the-box thinking, and student engagement, they also raised concerns about giving students too much freedom. This included allowing them to move around, choose their classmates for tasks, and drink during lessons, which was viewed as not fitting with the ideal academic environment.

Anwar took steps to enhance her teaching by completing a Cambridge 'Train the Trainer' course and a TESOL diploma, and before joining her current job, she participated in a three-month training program where she was mentored by a teacher trainer. The mentorship

focused on communicative approach and task-based learning, encouraging Anwar to empower students to take responsibility for their learning. The mentorship program involved observations, meetings, and discussions on teaching points.

## **6.2 The Impact of the Higher Education Environment on Teachers' Practice**

Participants also provided their perspectives on working at university and described the several challenges they face. The main themes identified were the prescribed course syllabi and assessment tasks, class size, as well as students' motivation and confidence in English.

### **6.2.1 Course Syllabus and Assessment Tasks**

The teachers express positive views on the course specifications, curriculum, and objectives, with Aisha praising Univ.A's curriculum as excellent, and Nada noting that their program follows a textbook from Oxford University Press, emphasising the practical skills needed for specific fields. Nada highlights the curriculum's effective integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, with activities built upon each other. Aisha believes this approach enhances students' listening, grammar, reading, vocabulary, and presentation skills. However, Asma points out a lack of objectives regarding academic skills beyond the core English skills in the curriculum.

At Univ.A, exams primarily consist of multiple-choice questions, focusing on reading, listening, vocabulary, and grammar, with Aisha and Asma noting the absence of assessment for academic skills. Aisha criticises teachers who prioritise presentations and celebrations, deeming it unethical as students need guidance for exam success, emphasising the importance of developing skills for the preparatory year. Nada acknowledges the challenges of balancing content and skills due to time limitations in content-based exams, emphasising 'the test is the content, and the time is extremely limited. Then, you need to focus on the content. You don't

have any other option' (interview). Serving in the curriculum committee, Nada expresses: 'Speaking was much ignored in the, in the past' (interview). However, they have begun to work 'on implementation of writing and speaking assessment,' trialling it as a 'continuous assessment' that is administered by the teacher during the course.

Efforts to introduce diverse assessment methods face resistance from teachers, primarily due to time constraints and concerns about students' readiness. Nada discloses, 'There was a lot of, you know, fighting from some of the teachers. We cannot do that. This is too much. The students are not used to it. It's very difficult. We don't have time' (interview). Aisha discusses challenges in implementing a writing exam, emphasising issues like students writing in class, potential cheating, time-consuming corrections, and concerns about inconsistent grading among teachers. However, 'The thing ELC focus on is the fairness because these marks going to qualify students for their next level' (interview).

Despite the controversies among teachers, Nada and the curriculum committee have plans to introduce a final writing exam. She believes that they are 'moving forward, we are trying to involve all the different skills in the assessment, and they think it makes a big difference' (interview). She promotes this because 'whatever you are going to focus on in the exam is what the students are going to focus on when learning' and 'whatever is not there in assessment and the exams, the students are not going to look at when they are studying' (interview). Nada understands, 'It'll take time. There's going to be some resistance in the beginning, but it will surely, we will sure, we, we aim to surely finished with an established writing exam' (interview).

At Univ.B, the focus of English courses, especially ESP classes, is on providing students with the minimum level of English for practical use. Teachers, including Huda and Anwar, emphasise that students should be able to express themselves albeit with some hesitation and

mistakes, and highlight the importance of terminology relevant to their future workplaces.

ESP courses primarily concentrate on reading comprehension, vocabulary, and technical passages related to students' specific fields, aiming to equip them with the necessary language skills for their careers and higher education.

While the course specifications set a basic level of English, teachers like Huda and Nouran feel the need to go beyond these minimum requirements. Huda prepares her students for practical language use, encouraging them to recognise the main points in the listening exercises. Nouran, deeming the current curriculum to be quite basic, believes students 'should be taught in depth in not only just like a couple of grammar rules that students know, but rather to focus not only on core skills like listening, reading, writing and speaking, but also on more complex skills' (interview). She aims to encourage research and hopes for future updates to the curriculum. She stated, 'For now, teachers have to do whatever it takes to just implement them' and 'do whatever we can for now, until the curriculum is updated with the, with the right terminologies for students to learn' (interview).

Teachers at Univ.B describe the assessment methods, consisting of exams and assignments outside the textbook. Nouran mentions that students need to review and study for exams to achieve higher grades. Anwar acknowledges the limitations imposed by the course specifications and assessment criteria, leading to a focus on reading techniques in preparation for midterm and final exams. She claims that although 'I try my best to apply a number of techniques, and to apply a number of 21st century skills in my classes [...] at the end of the day, I'm restricted to the textbook I'm teaching to the course specification' (interview).

Analysing the course specification documents of each university, fortuitous integration at Univ.A is evident in the lack of deliberate emphasis on critical literacies like critical reading and research skills. These areas were not purposefully structured, indicating that their

inclusion was somewhat incidental. In contrast, Univ.B's updates show purpose, with clear revisions aligning with accreditation standards, particularly in areas like presentation skills and academic writing, suggesting intentional efforts to meet external requirements.

### **6.2.2 Course Content, Time and Class Size**

Teachers at both universities express challenges related to large class sizes and the pressure to cover a substantial amount of content within limited time frames. Aisha from Univ.A highlights concerns about the extensive curriculum and the demand to complete it quickly, emphasising the quantity-over-quality focus. Nada echoes similar sentiments, repeatedly emphasising time constraints and how they impact teaching, particularly in developing academic literacy skills. Both teachers express the difficulty of managing the curriculum within the given time limitations. In the interview, Nada addressed the problem of 'time' 25 times, saying 'because of the time limitation', 'given the time limits,' 'depending on the time,' 'if I have time,' and 'I don't have time' (interview). She admits that developing AcLits 'takes time, and time for me is always a problem' (interview).

At Univ.B, the issue of limited time allocated for teaching is also raised by Huda and Nouran. Huda emphasises the constraints of covering a lengthy textbook within the allocated three hours a week, making it difficult to dedicate time to developing AcLits. Nouran echoes these concerns for ESP students, noting that their three hours a week are primarily focused on prescribed material and assignments. Huda further details the assessment structure, indicating a reliance on traditional quizzes and final assessments for various language skills, with an additional emphasis on ongoing speaking assessments. The uncertainty of exam materials adds complexity to teaching, compelling Huda to cover every detail of the textbook.

At Univ.A, Aisha and Nada note challenges in grading writing exams due to the increased class sizes, with the current limit being 40 students, expanded from the previous 25 students.

Univ.B faces similar issues, as Anwar reports having 106 students in business classes and 83 in religious studies, and Huda expresses difficulties in planning activities due to the large numbers, hindering the use of interactive tools like Kahoot. Anwar further mentions instances of the university not adhering to class size policies.

### **6.2.3 Students' Motivation**

At both Univ.A and Univ.B, teachers encounter challenges related to student motivation. At Univ.A, Asma highlights the varied motivation levels among students, with some prioritising obtaining the minimum passing grade and others genuinely caring about their English studies. Nada emphasises the importance of maintaining motivation, especially after exams, by encouraging students to view low scores as opportunities for improvement. She explains that for these students 'although the English is not bad, ... for some reason or another they didn't get a high score' (interview). Despite expecting to get a higher grade, she argues that 'maybe they couldn't study that well, maybe they were too nervous when they came to the exam, so they couldn't answer' (interview). She uses continuous assessment scores to incentivise hard work, fostering a positive attitude towards learning.

At Univ.B, Nouran observes different levels of motivation, attributing challenges to cultural differences and irrelevant textbook content. Nouran uses the example of environmental issues, explaining that 'in our culture, we don't really focus on those kind of environmental issues, like global warming' and that she doesn't 'see a lot of people here talk about it' (interview). She advances that although 'not everyone is interested in learning a language ... if you make it interesting enough, I believe a lot of students would, would cooperate and just get involved with you' (interview).

#### **6.2.4 Students' Confidence in English**

Teachers at both Univ.A and Univ.B address the issue of student confidence. At Univ.A, Asma notes that students tend to agree with the teachers' opinions, so to boost their confidence, she adopts a neutral stance, encouraging them to express their own views without fear of judgement. At Univ.B, teachers observe a lack of confidence, particularly in English speaking, among students. Nouran and Huda actively work to increase confidence by motivating students to speak English without fear of making mistakes. The shift to online classes due to COVID-19 provided a unique advantage, as students are more active in participating through chat functions, fostering a friendlier atmosphere for interaction and allowing shy students more space to express themselves. Anwar also highlights the benefits of online teaching in overcoming students' shyness and encouraging participation through chat and, in some cases, microphones.

#### **6.3 Expertise in the Application of Academic Literacies**

Based on data analysis, teachers faced several challenges in implementing AcLits in their EFL classrooms, largely due to the course structure and exam-focused environment. Observations revealed that traditional methodologies dominate, with an emphasis on academic vocabulary and grammar taught in isolation, likely due to class size, time constraints and minimal motivation by students. While teachers viewed reading, listening, writing, and speaking as crucial, they spent most time on receptive skills.

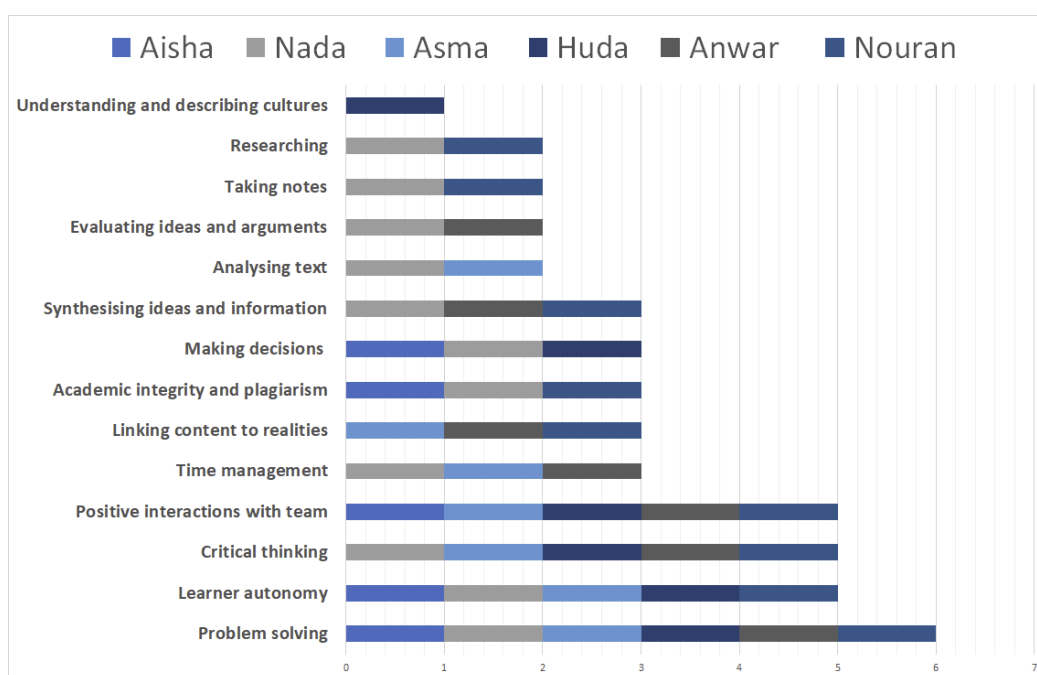
Teachers acknowledged their responsibility to develop AcLits, including critical thinking, independent learning, note-taking, synthesising, text analysis, plagiarism awareness, and public speaking, but faced challenges such as limited time, content coverage pressure, and exam preparation. Despite recognising the importance of these skills for students' future

education and careers, their integration remained difficult within the current constraints. This section explores teachers' understanding and experiences in promoting AcLits.

Below illustrates (Figure 6.1) how participants rated the importance of AcLits including discipline terminology, grammar rules, critical thinking, academic integrity and plagiarism, public speaking, notetaking, researching, summarising, text analysis, learner autonomy, collaborative learning, study skills, and exam preparation. Other skills mentioned, such as synthesising, time management, linking content to realities, and making decisions, were considered to be of crucial importance, but there was limited understanding of how these appear in the EFL classroom.

**Figure 6.1**

*Academic Literacies Selected by Participants*



Concepts such as intercultural awareness, time management, linking content to authentic situations, and decision-making were mentioned by some teachers but were observed to be

minimally implemented. Only Huda highlighted intercultural awareness, stating she enjoyed discussing ‘cultural shock and conflict,’ adding, ‘there is no one right and wrong on culture. We have to respect it’ (interview). Time management was viewed as crucial by Asma, who described it as ‘key to being successful,’ (interview) while Anwar noted its importance as students grew older and had to organise their own time for developing their AcLits (interview).

Asma stressed the need to ‘link what you have studied to your life and to your reality,’ questioning the purpose of learning without this connection (interview). Aisha and Nada acknowledged the importance of decision-making, with Aisha allowing students to choose their writing and presentation topics. However, both teachers found it challenging to teach decision-making to beginners, suggesting it might be more appropriate for intermediate-level students.

### **6.3.1 Study Skills: Focus on Grammar and Vocabulary, Presentation skills and Exam Preparation**

Most teachers’ experiences and current practices reflect the Study Skills stage of AcLits model, focusing on surface-level academic skills like grammar, vocabulary, presentation techniques, and exam preparation. Their teaching largely centred on equipping students with the technical abilities needed to succeed in exams, prioritising accuracy and correctness. This approach emphasises rote learning, with limited engagement in deeper critical thinking or broader academic discourse. Although some independent learning strategies were introduced, the focus remained on building foundational skills rather than fostering more transformative learning processes.

### ***6.3.1.1 Grammar and Vocabulary as Central Aspects of Language Instruction***

The emphasis on teaching linguistic elements such as grammar and vocabulary, especially within the context of ESP and EGP, reveals a surface-level approach to AcLits development. This approach prioritised technical correctness over deeper critical engagement with language and academic practices. The teachers placed significant importance on grammar and vocabulary, driven by syllabus requirements and exam preparation. For example, Aisha at Univ.A highlighted the importance of grammar by mentioning it 34 times in her reflections and interviews, advocating for explicit grammar instruction. She integrated grammar into reading lessons by asking students to change pronouns and verb forms, which highlighted a strong focus on correctness rather than deeper comprehension of the text. She said, 'Instead of adding this pronoun 'I,' let's use 'he,' and of course if we add 'he,' everything will change and we are going to add 's' to verbs, doesn't instead of don't' (interview).

Similarly, at University B, Anwar's uses formulas for forming wh-questions, such as "When does she work?" (observation), the use of the virtual whiteboard to form different sentence structures (Figure 6.4). The focus here is on the mechanical aspects of grammar, taught in isolation, rather than integrated into broader language use. These approaches aligned with the Study Skills stage, which focused on acquiring the basic skills needed for academic tasks without encouraging deeper analytical or critical thinking.

#### **Figure 6.2**

*Anwar's EAP Class: Using the Virtual Whiteboard to Form Different Sentence Forms*



# She works everyday

She does not work everyday

When does she work ?

Does she work every day?

In terms of vocabulary teaching, the teachers largely followed traditional methods that focused on memorisation and understanding of words in isolation. Teachers like Nada and Anwar prioritised vocabulary acquisition for exams, often using deductive, teacher-centred methods that involved minimal engagement with students' real-world experiences. For example, Nada guided students through textbook vocabulary exercises without encouraging practical application, telling them that only tested vocabulary mattered. She said, 'They only needed to focus on learning the new vocabulary' (observation). She also stated, 'It's very important for the exam ladies. These new vocabulary items are very important. Make sure that you know the spelling, and you know the meaning' (observation). This demonstrated once again alignment with the Study Skills model.

The influence of exams on teaching practices further supports the Study Skills approach. Teachers were constrained by the need to prepare students for assessments, which led them to prioritise linguistic accuracy over more complex AcLits. Huda similarly acknowledged the limitations imposed by the English Language Centre's quiz formats, which restricted her autonomy in teaching more meaningful, context-driven language skills. She advised students to 'not worry too much about grammar and spelling' and to trust that 'improvement would come with time' (interview), highlighting the mechanical nature of the instruction. This exam-

focused, skills-based approach reduced the opportunities for students to engage with AcLits at a deeper level.

Overall, the focus was on grammar, vocabulary, and exam preparation, prioritising technical accuracy and surface-level proficiency, which limited opportunities for critical thinking, independent analysis, and broader academic engagement. This approach met immediate academic demands but restricted deeper learning essential for HE.

#### ***6.3.1.2 Teaching Basic Presentation Skills***

The teachers' focus on teaching surface-level presentation techniques, such as structuring slides and managing questions, prioritised technical proficiency over deeper engagement with the academic context or broader communication skills. For example, Aisha's reliance on the textbook for presentation structures, including expressions like 'That's a good question, let me think,' and her emphasis on visual aids and body language, aligns with the traditional focus on accuracy and correctness (interview).

Similarly, Nada's emphasis on direct observation during presentations highlighted the priority given to immediate, visible improvements in students' performance. She contrasted this with written assignments, where assessing student engagement is less straightforward, stating that it's 'clear who was working and who was not working, who's improving and who's not improving' during presentations' (interview). This again highlighted the technical, skills-based focus prevalent in the teaching approach.

Asma's view that developing public speaking skills is essential for future success showed a broader recognition of the value of these skills beyond exams. However, her feedback focused more on engagement tactics, such as encouraging students to 'try to engage your classmates, try to engage other people listening to you,' rather than deeper critical thinking or content

analysis (interview). This maintains the focus on surface-level performance rather than fostering deeper academic discourse.

The impact of the shift to online learning due to COVID-19 further exacerbated the challenges of teaching speaking skills. Teachers such as Aisha and Asma expressed frustration with the limitations of the online environment, particularly the inability to observe key elements like eye contact and self-confidence due to students' cameras being off. This highlighted how the emphasis on surface features of presentations continued even in the virtual classroom.

At Univ.B, Huda integrated class participation and informal speaking into her assessment, asking students about their opinions and considering these interactions part of their speaking assessment. While this approach suggested a potential move towards more interactive engagement, it remained largely focused on surface-level skills and participation. Her flexible approach to assessments, allowing students to design videos or be creative, provided some scope for autonomy but still operated within the constraints of skills acquisition.

Nouran's preference for written over spoken contributions, even in speaking activities, further illustrated this focus on technical skills rather than communicative or critical engagement. She noted the difficulty of implementing public speaking in class, opting to have students write their responses instead, which minimised the opportunity for real-time interaction and oral communication practice. Anwar echoed this challenge, observing that most students shared their ideas in the chat rather than speaking aloud, reducing the opportunity for meaningful oral discourse.

In sum, while presentation skills have been integrated into the curriculum, the teaching practices reflect a focus on superficial proficiency. The broader academic socialisation

necessary for deeper critical engagement and academic discourse remains largely underdeveloped.

### ***6.3.1.3 Exam-Driven Teaching Practices***

The emphasis on exam preparation, text analysis, and even independent learning strategies—primarily aimed at improving exam performance—reflected a narrow approach to developing AcLits, where technical accuracy was prioritised over deeper engagement with critical thinking or broader academic discourse. At Univ.A, both Aisha and Nada placed significant emphasis on preparing students for exams by familiarising them with specific passages that often appear in assessments. Aisha highlighted key passages from previous exams, while Nada consistently reminded students that the material in midterms and finals would be taken from the textbook. This approach encouraged students to focus on comprehension and reading speed for success, demonstrating a strong link between exam preparation and instructional methods.

The teachers loosely integrated AcLits into their lessons by encouraging students to justify their answers and engage in text analysis, though the focus remained on preparing for exams. For instance, Nada reminded students not to be overwhelmed by details and to concentrate on key aspects of the text, advising that students ‘are looking for something specific, or maybe the general’ when reading (interview). Asma acknowledged the value of text analysis, calling it an ‘important academic skill’ because most knowledge comes from written text (interview), but overall, these exercises were designed to support exam performance.

Writing tasks were undervalued unless directly connected to assessments. Aisha noted that writing was not part of the summative exams and thus regarded assigning writing tasks as a ‘waste of time’ (interview). This reflected a limited perspective on writing development,

which was treated as non-essential unless it contributed directly to students' exam scores. Teachers like Nada and Asma did offer writing instruction, but the focus was on teaching formulaic structures. Nada, for example, introduced model writing templates for students to follow, guiding them step by step in constructing essays. She believed that this approach was necessary, particularly for weaker students who were 'scared to death of the word writing' (interview). Although students were encouraged to submit drafts for feedback, the emphasis remained on reproducing correct structures, with limited exploration of writing as a process of self-expression or critical thinking.

The promotion of learner autonomy was also framed within exam preparation. Aisha and Huda encouraged independent learning by sending students materials in advance to prepare for class, with Aisha noting that this helped students develop 'some kind of independent learning' (interview). However, the emphasis remained on building exam-related skills rather than fostering broader independent learning strategies. While teachers such as Asma and Nada introduced tools like dictionaries and online resources to support independent learning, these tools were presented as ways to improve exam performance.

Some innovative teaching methods, such as the use of Padlet by Anwar and Nouran to encourage student interaction and feedback, did reflect an attempt to move beyond the Study Skills model. By having students share their writing on an interactive platform and vote for ideas, these teachers created opportunities for more peer-to-peer learning. However, these practices were still linked to the goal of preparing students for assessments.

In conclusion, while teachers introduced elements of independent learning and feedback, their approaches were predominantly exam oriented. As a result, while students were equipped with the tools to pass exams, their engagement with more complex academic discourses and practices essential for higher education remained limited.

### **6.3.2 Academic Socialisation: Efforts to Foster Academic Skills and Expectations**

The use of Arabic in teaching, addressing academic dishonesty, and fostering teamwork in the EFL classroom demonstrated initial steps toward enhancing academic socialisation. These efforts helped students transition into academic norms and develop essential skills. However, the focus remained on foundational proficiency and technical aspects, limiting more advanced engagement with academic literacies and critical thinking. While progress was being made, the development of deeper academic socialisation remained constrained.

#### ***6.3.2.1 Arabic is Used to Teach English***

Utilising the Arabic language in teaching English can represent steps toward Academic Socialisation, but these steps were somewhat limited. When teachers use Arabic to compare English and Arabic language structures, they were helping students transition into the academic norms of English, fostering an understanding of how English operates within a broader academic framework. This comparative approach allowed students to connect new concepts with their existing linguistic knowledge, which is an important aspect of academic socialisation.

While these practices aided students in understanding academic norms and conventions, the overall focus still leaned more toward technical skills — such as grammar rules and vocabulary memorisation — which are characteristics of the Study Skills model. Hence, while using Arabic can be a bridge, its use in these classrooms appeared to facilitate only initial steps toward academic socialisation, rather than fully engaging students in critical thinking or the more complex AcLits required for HE.

Teachers at both universities employed a comparative approach between English and Arabic grammar rules as a bridge to learning. During classroom observations, it appeared that some teachers relied heavily on translation for communicating the desired meaning into Arabic,

while others only reverted to translation as a last resort. Aisha and Asma, from Univ.A, use Arabic to explain English grammar rules. Aisha affirms:

Using Arabic in teaching English can be the bridge that leads us to learning English...I like to use Arabic in explaining the grammar rules because it makes students focus on the information. We have the example of adjective phrases. in Arabic, we say (هي فتاة جميلة); the noun comes before the adjective. (reflection)

She translated key words during ESP class. An example is when she said, 'In skyscrapers, اللي هي ناطحات السحاب [that means skyscraper] and in very big buildings' they build foundations (observation). She also questioned the effectiveness of common practices that avoid translating new vocabulary. She said:

We used to supervise pre-service students (English teachers). I, too, supervised many over the years, for both secondary and high school. Whenever the pre-service student comes across a word, she starts to act it out, draw or doing anything to convey the meaning of the English word. However, in the end, she would mostly fail to convey the meaning accurately. (reflection)

Besides the direct use of Arabic in assisting students' understanding of vocabulary, most teachers also asked their students simple close-ended questions. Huda asks her students, 'يعني ، كم عقد من الزمان؟' [How many decades is 20 years?], 'كم سنة عشرين سنة؟' [How many years is 20 years?]? to explain the word 'decade' (observation). Huda answers a student with the difference between the words 'prime minister' and 'chairman.' She said, 'It's a political name. So, when you say "prime minister" معناها رئيس بعض الدول رئيس الوزراء له صلاحيات الحاكم [this means the prime minister. In some countries, the prime minister has the same power and function as the ruler]' (observation). She further explained in Arabic how the British political system works, saying, 'Prime Minister زي مثلا بريطانيا العائلة الملكية منفصلة تماما

عن الحكم الحكم رئيس الوزراء اللي هو ال [For example, the British royal family is separated completely from the prime minister], chairman, يعني معناها زي المسؤول زي ال [it means similar to responsible]' (observation).

Nada also highlighted the importance of explicitly identifying the difference between English and Arabic grammar for students. She said that 'if nobody told [them] that all the sentences in English should have a verb, how would they know? I would think that English is just like Arabic' (interview).

In summary, the use of Arabic did support movement toward academic socialisation by making academic concepts more accessible, but it largely remained within the framework of helping students master basic skills, with fewer opportunities for deeper engagement with academic practices in English.

#### ***6.3.2.2 Student Plagiarism and Academic Integrity as Challenges Without Specific Strategies***

The issue of plagiarism and academic dishonesty at both universities reflected a marginal engagement with academic conventions. The university policy at both centres stated that actions such as copying, cheating, and not citing a source constitute a violation of academic conduct and may result in consequences<sup>9</sup>; however, teachers often did not spend much time on this aspect, despite its importance to academic integrity, because it was not explicitly

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<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that the universities under investigation did not implement software for online exam security. In this context, students are likely to prioritise their immediate advantage in passing exams over adhering to cultural norms that emphasise academic honesty and integrity, as stated by university policy. This prioritisation could be influenced by various cultural factors, including societal attitudes towards education and success, the perceived importance of academic achievements, and the level of emphasis placed on individual accomplishment versus collective ethics. However, alongside these cultural considerations, issues of privacy and security still exist, highlighting a complex interplay between technological safeguards, cultural influences, and ethical academic practices.

detailed in the curriculum, which they were pressured to cover. Teachers at Univ.A highlighted the challenge of transitioning students from high-school writing, where memorisation and copying were common, to university-level writing that demanded originality, critical thinking, and proper referencing. This gap was exemplified by Nada's observation that students 'don't know what writing is. For them, writing is memorising' (interview). Such practices reflected a broader issue in students' unfamiliarity with academic integrity, especially when transitioning to HE.

The teachers' responses to plagiarism focused primarily on addressing the technical aspects, such as using plagiarism detection tools and providing direct feedback on copied work. Nada, for instance, reported that she had to 'convince them that this is plagiarism' when students submitted work directly copied from sources like Wikipedia" (interview). Aisha similarly provided direct feedback (Figure 6.8) on plagiarised assignments, telling students, 'It is very obvious that you took this paragraph from the internet, and you have not changed anything, so please depend on yourself and avoid plagiarism' (assignment). These approaches, while addressing the immediate issue of plagiarism, tended to focus on policing academic dishonesty rather than developing a deeper understanding of the ethical use of sources, proper citation, and critical analysis.

**Figure 6.3**

*Aisha's Feedback on Writing Assignment*

Riyadh city

*capital new sentence*

Riyadh is the capital of the kingdom of saudi arabia, its largest city and the third largest

*use adjective*

arab capital by population. Riyadh is located in the center of the Arabian Peninsula in the

Najd Plateau, at an altitude of 600 meters above sea level. It is the headquarters of the

emirate of Riyadh region, according to the administrative division of the Saudi regions. The

city of Riyadh is inhabited by about 6 million people, according to the statistics of 2018, it

*It is one of*

commercial authority, the fastest expanding cities in the world. During half a century of its

inception, the area of the small city has expanded to 1800 square kilometers, up to 3.115

*مركزية*

km2. a at the present time. *داخلياً هذا انك أخذت نقطة من النص والمثلث*

*علي أي تغييرات -*

Content	Grammar / Vocabulary	Mechanics	Coherence	Development	Final score
...../ 3	...../ 3	...../ 3	...../ 3	...../ 3	...../ 15

*ماريت تعتمد على فصل في الكتابة وتجنبه*

*النسخ من النص*

The absence of comprehensive instruction on key academic skills, such as researching paraphrasing, summarising, and referencing, was noted in this context. These skills were important for students in academic writing but were often not prioritised due to the pressure on teachers to cover the curriculum. Consequently, students continued practices such as copying or translating, which have been part of their previous educational experiences. Aisha and Nada both highlighted this challenge, with Nada mentioning that she ‘doesn’t blame them’ for using these methods, given their previous background (interview).

Aisha's reflection on teaching writing online highlighted the challenges in maintaining academic integrity without direct supervision. She expressed concerns that students might seek external help or plagiarise more easily due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, stating, 'Since it's online, we cannot see the students; unlike in face-to-face settings, we don't have the ability to observe them writing in front of us' (interview). This was further complicated by the difficulties in providing detailed feedback necessary for understanding academic integrity.

At Univ.B, academic dishonesty was addressed to a lesser extent. Anwar noted a student answering before the question was introduced, possibly indicating prior access to answers, but this issue was not formally addressed, highlighting the need for a more structured approach to academic integrity.

AcLits involve more than just avoiding plagiarism — they require understanding critical thinking, analysis, and ethical writing. However, the focus observed remained on surface-level concerns, such as detecting plagiarism, rather than fostering deeper academic practices. Additionally, the national goals of SV2030, which promote global citizenship and competitiveness, were not fully aligned with current academic practices. Nada's focus on teaching test-taking strategies, like identifying 'clues' in sentences (observation), underscored this gap, as students are equipped for exams but not necessarily for the broader demands of AcLits.

In conclusion, the approach to plagiarism and academic dishonesty at these universities aligned with the Study Skills model, focusing on surface features of academic writing rather than fostering a deeper understanding of academic conventions. While teachers addressed dishonesty through direct feedback and plagiarism detection, essential academic skills like critical thinking, synthesis, and ethical writing remained underdeveloped.

### **6.3.2.3 *Classroom Interactions and Collaborative Learning Are Still Limited***

While the teachers aimed to foster teamwork and collaboration in the classroom, their approaches largely remained within the Study Skills stage. However it is directed to Academic Socialisation stage. These stages focused on skill acquisition and adaptation to established norms, rather than encouraging deeper classroom interaction and collaborative learning within academic discourses.

Five teachers emphasised teamwork as a crucial skill for both academic and professional settings. Asma and Nouran specifically highlighted its relevance to the workplace, with Asma noting the importance of understanding different personalities and navigating both leadership and membership roles in teams. Asma also encouraged discussions to develop students' interpersonal skills, including the ability to ask questions, share ideas, and engage in dialogue. She used discussions, role-play, and speaking exercises from the EGP textbook to teach these skills. Nouran, on the other hand, used breakout rooms in online classes to facilitate group discussions, allowing students to collaborate and answer questions together.

The focus on teamwork reflected an attempt to move towards Academic Socialisation by preparing students to participate in collaborative environments. However, this was done through activities that focused more on participation and following instructions rather than engaging in deeper critical thinking or problem-solving, which were hallmarks of the AcLits stage.

Teachers, like Huda and Anwar, used group activities to promote cooperation and social responsibility, and Asma explicitly mentioned teaching body language and interaction skills for both university and the workplace. These strategies aligned with CLT approaches, which encouraged interaction and active participation. However, while these methods were

beneficial for developing social and communicative competence, they may not fully immerse students in the broader academic practices that require more critical engagement with content.

Anwar's use of the jigsaw method, group writing activities on Padlet, and timed reading exercises aimed to increase interaction and collaboration. Similarly, Nouran integrated multimedia tools, such as YouTube videos, to expose students to different perspectives and foster discussion. These methods encouraged students to work together, but the activities often focused on surface-level participation, where students were primarily tasked with completing assignments rather than critically engaging with or challenging the material. In conclusion, while the teachers' efforts to promote teamwork and collaboration were steps toward fostering academic socialisation, the focus remained on surface-level participation and skill acquisition.

### **6.3.3 Developing Foundational Academic Literacies**

This section explores how teachers recognise essential academic literacies, such as researching, notetaking, summarising, and critical thinking, but struggle to integrate them meaningfully in practice. Although teachers aim to foster academic engagement, their methods primarily reflect the Study Skills model, with a focus on technical accuracy over deeper analytical skills. Emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and presentation techniques remains exam-oriented, while critical thinking is often limited to opinion sharing. Multi-draft writing tasks and feedback show potential for advancing academic socialisation, yet feedback still prioritises technical correctness, limiting students' engagement with broader academic practices essential for higher education.

### ***6.3.3.1 Researching, Notetaking, and Summarising Are Recognised but Not Yet Implemented***

In examining the development of key AcLits such as researching, notetaking, summarising, critical thinking, and multi-draft writing, it was evident that while the teachers acknowledged their importance, practical application in the classroom was somewhat restricted. However, these efforts towards academic socialisation remain within the framework of the Study Skills model, where technical skills are emphasised over deeper engagement with academic practices. The teachers recognised the importance of these skills and discussed methods for integrating them into their teaching, but genuine application within the classroom was constrained.

For instance, in Huda's and Anwar's classes, instead of encouraging students to actively engage in notetaking or summarising, the teachers provided transcripts and explained the answers, which hindered the development of independent listening and summarising skills. During listening exercises, Huda paused the audio, used her cursor to show where the answers were in the transcript, and explained the material herself (observation). Anwar followed a similar approach by providing transcripts while playing the listening tracks, reinforcing the idea that students were passive receivers of information rather than active participants in synthesising content (observation) (see Figure 6.11). These methods, while supporting comprehension, did not promote independent learning or critical engagement with the material.

**Figure 6.4**

*Anwar's EAP Class: Showing the Transcript While Listening Using Ebook*



Nada, from Univ.A, recognised the value of notetaking and summarising, understanding that the textbook provided strategies for notetaking as a means to enhance listening skills. She stressed the importance of summarising, stating that students need to grasp the essence of what they read and hear, as well as synthesise information from multiple sources. Asma similarly discussed teaching students skimming, scanning, and summarising through mid-reading questions. However, despite these recognitions, the actual classroom practices observed did not fully align with the teachers' aspirations for promoting independent academic skills.

At Univ.B, Nouran acknowledged the critical role of notetaking, stating, 'If we were to rely only on our memory, that would go to waste' (interview). She encouraged students to take notes, underline, and highlight important information, promoting a habit that is key to academic success. Huda also emphasised summarising as a skill beyond aesthetics, focusing on the ability to distil complex information effectively. Yet, while the teachers recognised these skills as essential for academic success, their classroom approaches remained rooted in the transmission of information rather than active student engagement.

The challenge of teaching research skills, especially in an EFL context, was highlighted by several teachers. Nada pointed out the difficulty of introducing research skills to students who come from educational backgrounds where writing was equated with memorisation. She noted that teaching research skills was a complex task involving multiple subskills, which was constrained by the short classroom time and students' prior experiences (interview). Anwar and Nouran viewed presentations as a way to integrate research skills with language learning. Anwar argued that before the final product (the presentation), students must engage in research, evaluation, synthesis, and organisation of their thoughts (interview). Nouran echoed this, adding that students research topics they were interested in, which helped them develop multiple academic skills (interview). Hence, while these approaches showed potential for moving beyond surface-level skills, they were not yet fully realised in classroom practice.

Huda actively encouraged her students to engage in research, praising their efforts in writing and research tasks. She fostered curiosity by encouraging students to investigate topics, such as notable scientists, and shared their findings with peers. This approach promoted a collaborative learning environment where students learned from one another's research (observation). Similarly, Nouran engaged students in researching modern technological devices to supplement outdated textbook content, requiring them to create presentations or videos based on their findings. These practices highlighted an emerging emphasis on independent research, yet they remained constrained by the time pressures and curriculum demands that restrict deeper academic engagement.

In summary, while the teachers recognised the importance of researching, notetaking, and summarising in academic contexts, their classroom practices remained focused on transmitting information rather than fostering independent learning and critical thinking. The emphasis on technical skills, such as providing transcripts and guiding students through

exercises, reflected the Study Skills stage of Lea and Street's (year) model, with minimal progression toward deeper academic socialisation.

### ***6.3.3.2 Critical Thinking Equates to Opinion Exchange***

Some focus on critical thinking (CT) within the EFL classrooms at both universities highlighted an attempt to move beyond traditional language instruction towards more complex academic practices. However, this effort remained largely within the realm of the Study Skills model, with teachers acknowledging the importance of CT but struggling to implement it effectively in classroom settings. The gap between theoretical commitment to CT and its practical application reflected the challenges in integrating deeper AcLits practices into the curriculum.

At Univ.A, Asma stressed the importance of CT for both higher education and the workplace, emphasising that students 'have to have an opinion... be creative... to suggest some ideas... to learn that to think out of the box' (interview). Her understanding of CT as a crucial academic skill had evolved over time, from focusing primarily on language skills to incorporating broader academic skills. She highlighted the importance of neutrality, encouraging students to express their own opinions rather than simply agreeing with the teacher, stating, 'By time and by experience, I learned to be neutral. Do not give the student your opinion... push them to give their own opinions' (interview).

Classroom observations revealed a more teacher-centred approach. In a discussion on social media, Asma led the conversation, sharing her own experiences, which limited the opportunity for students to engage critically. For example, when a student shared a similar experience, Asma responded with, 'Now, we're gonna give you an award... Yeah, it's really an achievement' (observation), guiding the conversation rather than fostering student-led

dialogue. This teacher-driven approach contrasted with her stated philosophy of encouraging independent thought and critical analysis.

Aisha, also from Univ.A, acknowledged the need for integrating CT into the curriculum but admitted to finding it challenging to implement. When asked about CT in English teaching, she described the question as ‘a very difficult question’ (interview), reflecting uncertainty about how to apply CT in a practical classroom context. In her observed lessons, there was little evidence of CT, as the sessions primarily involved reading and answering textbook exercises, with minimal interaction or critical engagement.

Nada similarly recognised the importance of CT, calling it ‘one very important skill of the 21st century’ (interview), but her classroom practices largely focused on completing textbook exercises. The focus remained on vocabulary and language mechanics, with limited opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking tasks. This aligned with the broader trend observed in other teachers, where CT was theoretically valued but inadequately addressed in practice.

At Univ.B, Nouran and Anwar expressed a commitment to fostering CT. Nouran described the challenge of teaching CT, as it was ‘not really something that our students are familiar with, even whether it was in English or even in their native language’ (interview). She integrated CT into assignments and classroom discussions, encouraging students to critique and question the material. For example, she asked students to ‘tell me your opinion. What do you think about this? How can you criticise it in your own words or in your own way?’ (interview). Despite this intention, classroom observations showed little critical engagement, with most interaction happening through chat and focused on answering exercise questions rather than deeper critical analysis.

Anwar emphasised her desire to integrate CT skills, despite feeling constrained by the textbook and course specifications. She acknowledged that the curriculum included tasks labelled as ‘critical thinking,’ but these were often reduced to completing exercises without further discussion. Anwar noted, ‘I’m restricted to the textbook I’m teaching [and] to the course specification’ (interview), which limited her ability to fully engage students in CT. She, nonetheless, encouraged her students to ‘go and do some research, analyse that information’ (interview), aiming to incorporate more CT elements within the boundaries of the existing curriculum.

Huda’s approach to CT involved using authentic media sources, such as broadcasts, to encourage students to share their opinions and analyse content. She asked questions like, ‘Do you like it? Say something about it. Do you agree with it?’ (interview), aiming to develop students’ analytical and decision-making skills. However, the classroom interactions focused more on personal opinion sharing than on deeper critical evaluation or exploration of ideas.

In summary, while the teachers expressed a strong theoretical understanding of the importance of CT in language learning, the practical application of these skills in the classroom remained limited. The focus on language mechanics, textbook exercises, and teacher-led discussions constrained the development of CT, aligning more closely with the Study Skills model. This reflected a gap between the intention to promote academic socialisation through CT and the actual classroom practices, which often do not fully engage students in the deeper, more reflective aspects of AcLits.

#### ***6.3.3.3 Feedback is Considered Valuable***

The multi-draft approach to writing tasks employed by Nada, Huda, and Nouran reflected steps toward Academic Socialisation, as it encouraged students to engage with writing as a process of development rather than a one-time task. This method aligned with concepts of

AcLits, where the focus extended beyond surface-level accuracy and engaged students in deeper practices of drafting, revising, and critical reflection.

Nada expressed satisfaction with students submitting first drafts, emphasising the correlation between effort and high achievement. She noted the importance of students understanding that writing is not just about producing a final product but also about revision and improvement. She said, ‘I was super glad that the students would come with first drafts to ask for feedback’ (interview). This approach fostered a developmental view of writing, in line with academic socialisation, as students learned to view writing as iterative and reflective rather than merely a mechanical skill.

Huda, while preferring to provide feedback to the entire class, allowed for individualised feedback via email. This practice reflected an attempt to balance efficiency with personalisation, although the focus in her feedback remained primarily on language issues rather than deeper aspects of academic writing. Her feedback, such as, ‘I appreciate how thoughtful you were when you wrote the story, despite the writing issues,’ (assignment) suggested an acknowledgment of content but still placed significant emphasis on language mechanics. This approach, while helpful for technical skills, did not fully engage students in the broader academic practices of critical reflection and content development.

Nouran took a more comprehensive approach, providing feedback at various levels—whole class, small groups, and individual students. She encouraged students to reflect on their writing by revising multiple drafts and engaging in peer review before seeking her feedback. By telling students to revisit their writing after some time, Nouran promoted self-evaluation. She said, ‘If you’re writing, don’t just write one piece... get back to it and then read it again’ (interview). This reflective practice aligned with the AcLits model, where writing was seen not just as a technical skill but as a complex, iterative process that involved critical thinking

and self-assessment. Nouran's use of voice notes for feedback further personalised the process, allowing her to provide nuanced commentary on students' work in a way that encouraged them to engage with feedback on a more useful level.

In other examples, Aisha and Asma assigned descriptive writing tasks but focused primarily on micro-level feedback, such as spelling and grammar corrections, as seen in Figures 6.18 and 6.19. While Asma did provide some comments on paragraph structure and encouraged students to think about sentence length, the feedback remained rooted in technical accuracy rather than engaging with the content or broader academic skills. This focus on mechanics was more aligned with the Study Skills model, as it prioritised correctness over the development of independent, critical writing skills.

Figure 6.5

Aisha's Feedback on Writing Assignment.

Dear [REDACTED]

Your writing is full of mistakes and it lacks consistency. You need to rewrite it.

**Tokyo is in japan**

*new sentence*

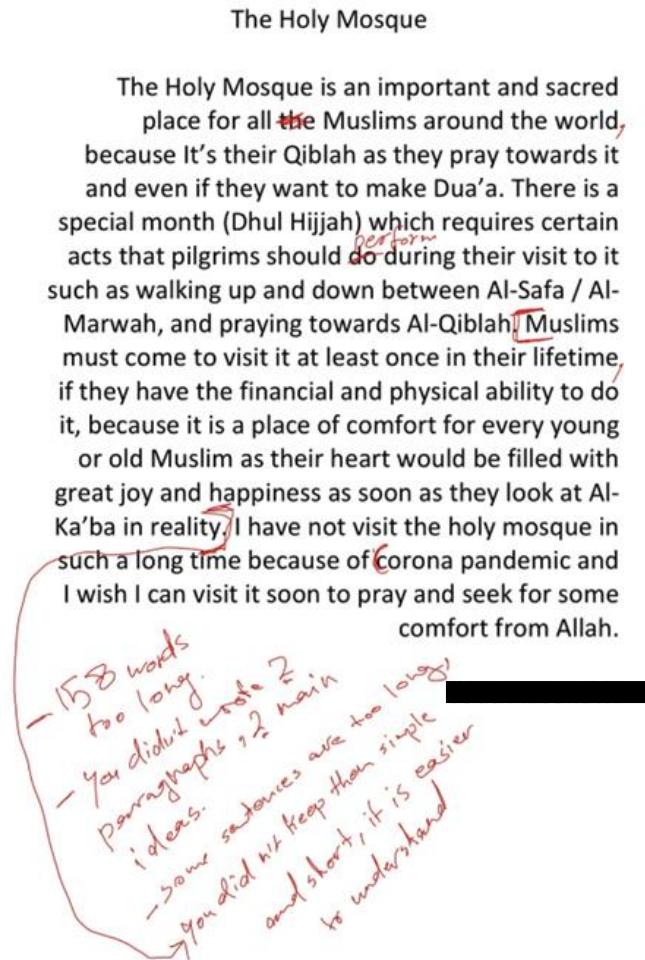
The capital city of Japan is Tokyo. *THIS city* is very important in Japan because *it* is a developed *city* and modern. *Also*, Japan is the biggest country in the world for *economic*. Therefore, there are many *industry* in Tokyo, which bring many people for tourism from all the world and that make it very famous city between other cities in Japan. *As well*, there are many hardware *factory*. Such as, mobile, *sweeper* and other industrial like Toyota and Mazda. That was only Tokyo city, and there are many other cities are manufacturing and creating a new technology and raw materials.

[REDACTED]

Content	Grammar/vocabulary	Mechanics	Coherence	Development	Final Score
.../3	.../3	.../3	.../3	.../3	.../15

Figure 6.6

Asma's Feedback on Writing Assignment



When assessing presentations, Asma took a more holistic approach, providing detailed feedback on aspects such as organisation, content, audience engagement, and language proficiency. She stressed the importance of content and presentation delivery, advising students on how to engage their audience through questions or tone variation. However, the focus remained on structuring the presentation and correcting language, rather than fostering critical engagement with the material itself. Similarly, Huda praised the content and suspense in a student's story but emphasised summarisation skills and language issues, again reflecting a focus on form over deeper engagement with ideas.

In conclusion, the practices of the teachers showed steps toward academic socialisation, particularly in the multi-draft approach and the emphasis on feedback as a developmental tool. However, the primary focus remained on language accuracy and technical skills, reflecting a Study Skills approach. The deeper engagement with critical thinking, revision, and synthesis of ideas, which was essential for full academic socialisation, was less evident, indicating that the move toward more comprehensive academic literacies remained substantial in these classrooms.

#### **6.3.4 Misalignment of Conceptual Understanding About Academic Literacies**

The teachers described how they embedded and taught AcLits throughout their classes; however, certain examples that were given seem to indicate that perhaps the teachers misunderstood or do not fully recognise the nuances of AcLits skills. In fact, during the interviews, the teachers admitted that ‘I don’t know how to teach problem solving’ (Aisha’s interview) and ‘I’m not sure if I’m doing this right or not’ (Asma’s interview).

When aiming to teach students the skills of problem solving, Aisha provided an example of how the school deals with problems of exam arrangements. She said:

Yeah, okay, I’ll tell you. Now we have the problems of exams. Let’s say, okay, that they have to take exams on campus, because they want to stop students from cheating. So how are we going to give these exams with this virus? Okay, so we have to have ideas how to solve this problem. Yep, exactly where to put them, which hall to choose, how far [apart] students are supposed to sit. (interview)

Nada, on the other hand, associated a grammar correction activity with problem solving. She said:

I have a short paragraph, which is full of mistakes. And these mistakes, actually, we're done by them [the students]. And then I would ask them to find their mistakes and correct them. This for me is a kind of problem solving, and it helps them a lot to notice their mistakes, and not to [make] them again. (interview)

Anwar linked problem solving with two activities. In the first example, she asked her students to fix her projector. She said, 'For example, to use my projector, and it didn't work, so I used to ask my student, okay, students, you are, you're engineers, you're technicians. Tells me, how to fix this' (interview). The second example was to solve the issue of low participation in her class. She said:

For example, when I asked them a question, and no one participates with me, I asked them, okay, intelligent girls, so we have a problem here. No one is it as participant, no one wants to answer. What do you think? How can I solve this? (interview)

Huda presented an example of how writing a narrative was considered integrating critical thinking, problem solving, and time management skills in one activity. She said:

A good example may be presented in narrating a story or writing a paragraph about what did you do last holiday. Students will outline the events then work with their team as active learners to develop the actions, then come to the climax and solve the problem in a limited time frame for that task. (reflection)

When she intended to teach students critical thinking, Anwar illustrated how she asked her students to draw a picture based on the description of a reading passage. She said, 'For example, the passage was about a screen, which is 13 inches, and talking about the dimensions and everything, so I told my students to draw the screen they are reading the description of' (interview).

To teach decision-making to their students, the teachers tended to relate it to exam and assignment decisions. Aisha allowed her students to decide when they would like to take the test. She said, 'They can decide when do you want your quiz. They can make a decision, discuss with each other. I respect their decisions' (interview). Similarly, Nada also associated making decisions with exams. Although she contended that 'we don't make decisions. These decisions are not much related, you know, to writing or to reading it' and that 'I don't think it's doable at this level' (interview), she did provide her view of what decision-making is. She said, 'decisions is more related like to how, when, to take the exam, which units the exam is going to be and things like that' (interview). Likewise, Huda granted her students the freedom to choose the type of the assignment. She said the students can 'decide what project or what assignment you are going to do,' asking her students 'are you able to do it? What come after it?' (interview). She said,, 'For example, for decision-making on choose a phone for example, and write a review on this film about ESP in media. Okay, you will decide this film, okay. Is it your decision now?' (interview).

Asma employed a traditional, behaviourist approach in her teaching, with a strong emphasis on classroom management and indirectly promoting students' time management skills. She was punctual, stating in an interview, 'If the class starts at ten, so I'm gonna start ten sharp, not a minute before, not a minute after. If the class ends this time, so I'm gonna end the class at the same time' (interview). Asma also admitted to getting 'angry with late students,' as she believed 'they should know that the class started this time, so you can't be a minute late. She has to come[at] this time' (interview). She enforced strict deadlines, explaining, 'I always give [them] a deadline for everything, so they have, they always have to care about the time' (interview). Moreover, Asma encouraged her students to apply these skills outside the classroom. When teaching about organisation for presentations, she advised, 'When you speak to your sister, your friends, to a member of your family, try to make [yourself]

organised, try to make [yourself] understandable, try to make yourself easy to follow, logical' (interview).

## **6.4 Impact of *Saudi Vision 2030* in Evolving Education Landscape in KSA**

This section critiques the perspectives of female teachers about the critical changes and challenges in the educational system brought about by SV2030. First, I will focus on the impact the policy had on teachers' practice and what the implications were for language teaching in KSA. Then I will explore the significant progress and evolving dynamics of women's participation in English language education post-SV2030. Finally, I will offer insights to policymakers.

### **6.4.1 Positive Outlook on Saudi Vision 2030**

All six teachers from both universities demonstrated a positive engagement with SV2030, noting its innovative approach. They all acknowledged that the policy had an impact.

At Univ.A, Aisha stated that 'they always talk about it [SV2030] but I never understood what it is' (interview). However, she noted a significant shift in the education system, confirming that KSA 'focuses a lot on [English] language.' (source) Since she started teaching at the English Language Centre, 'I noticed that there's a big difference. Maybe it's because of the books themselves ... You feel that the students don't just graduate with English [Language]; they graduate with knowledge. They know more about the world' (interview).

In contrast, Asma knew and understood the importance of the policy, believing in the necessity of change and improvement in Saudi education. She saw a direct link between developing critical thinking skills, fostering creativity, and boosting the economy through a more skilled workforce. Asma contended that increased investment in research in teaching will result in the realisation of SV2030's aspirations. She believed, 'Every faculty member,

every teacher, teacher, and Saudi university are going to keep those academic skills in their mind' (interview). Asma believed, 'If they [academic skills] are in their mind, they're [the teachers] always going to figure out how to apply them and how to develop them in their classrooms' (interview). Asma supported the objectives of SV2030, convinced of its instrumental benefits and the positive impact it could have on educational outcomes.

Nada recognised that the current textbooks at Univ.A 'have some aspects of, you know, independent learning, problem solving, dealing with online resources, you know, things like that. They are there, but they are not the main focus of the book' (interview). Nada said that although 'until now I wouldn't say there's a big effect', 'the administration is working on changing the books' so that it 'is focusing on the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the skills that Vision focuses on' (interview). She said, 'This couldn't be done this year, but surely it will be done, I would say, next year' due to COVID-19 (interview). While aware of the need for change, Nada was also cognisant of the difficulties it presented for teachers, particularly in terms of top-down versus bottom-up approaches.

Significantly, Nada recommended that to 'improve the situation of language teaching,' teachers 'need to focus more on the productive skills' (interview). She expressed that 'this is one area where I hope to see a lot of change in the future' (interview). Nada asserted, 'Things are becoming different' since 'the people who have just finished their PhDs and hosts are coming back to Saudi' (interview). Nada knew that 'the future is going to be better than the past,' and 'supervisors in the future are going to be different than supervisors in the past, I think, in the Saudi system' (interview).

At Univ.B, Huda and Nouran shared a positive outlook on SV2030. Huda believed 'it's like a new perspective [...] in everything, in economy, in socially aspect of, even in educational aspect' (interview). Nouran, although she had just started teaching, perceived the influence of

the policy, stating that ‘you can see like, the, the amazing improvement and development in not just like, with students and teaching, but everything as a whole. We do need this Vision’ (interview). Nouran argued that due to SV2030, Saudi is ‘just like opening up to the world you know with like, let’s say social networking sites,’ which has made ‘the language teaching has become a lot easier’ (interview). She argued that ‘a couple of years ago, students weren’t really into English’ (interview).

Anwar observed a positive impact on students’ confidence and critical thinking abilities. She stated, ‘They [students] have the ability to speak out their opinions’ (interview). She perceived that ‘being able to speak out their opinions mean; means they have critical thinking. They can evaluate information’ (interview). This was unlike the past where students ‘did have these skills,’ but ‘were shy to speak out’ or ‘were waiting for permission’ from authorities (interview).

Despite the overall positive outlook on SV2030, the teachers were aware of the challenges arising from the implementation of this policy. Aisha recognised the positive integration of SV2030 in higher education, particularly thanks to the new textbook. However, she recommended that the school, especially the assessment, should ‘focus more on the quality than on the quantity’ (interview). While the current textbook provided ‘plenty of exercises which are very excellent, which will help the students a lot’ (interview), she believed ‘they are not used in an effective way’ due to the amount of content she needed to cover and the amount of time that she had (interview). Aisha also expressed uncertainty in teaching problem-solving skills, indicating a gap in her ability to guide students through exercises effectively.

Throughout the interview, Asma positively expressed how SV2030 has been integrated into the Saudi HE. She mentioned the new textbook Univ.A was currently using included ‘so

many language and learning skills' and she said, 'I depend on that because I like it. I find it helpful, useful' since it is 'related to 2030 Vision Saudi division' (interview). However, she contended that a challenge of implementing the policy in HE was whether 'the teacher is applying those skills, or those activities correctly or not' (interview).

Nouran, who started work after SV2030 was already announced and believed 'the transition is quite smooth, because as we've seen with Saudi Arabia in general. Like, they moved from, like real-life classes to 100% online classes' a consequence of COVID-19 lockdowns (interview). She argued despite that 'there are so many difficulties and people are quite struggling, especially at the beginning, like students sometimes, teachers as well as. Teachers aren't quite as familiar with using technology', 'if you look now everyone is using technology very smoothly' (interview). Nouran believed that Univ.B had managed to adapt to the SV2030 and COVID-19, and 'Saudi Arabia in general, managed to move into align teaching with great steps, like steady, but great steps' (interview).

Despite holding a positive attitude towards SV2030, Huda and Nada described the difficulties that they face. Huda argued that the transition 'is a rapid, not the smoothest' but 'not difficult' (interview). She explained that 'just a few years ago, we experienced a different situation and different administration, a different... everything is different' (interview). Nonetheless, she expressed that 'we can feel it. We can know that there are rapid changes, especially that the English Language Centre at [Univ.B]' (interview). The university now has 'global accreditation, and that's make a big change for all of us, even for the teacher professional development courses' (interview). She asserted that the implementation of SV2030 into HE 'takes time, but it is rapid thing' (interview).

#### **6.4.2 Women's Participation in English Language Education Post-Vision 2030**

This section explores the significant progress and dynamic nature of women's participation in English language education post-SV2030. Insights of teachers (Nada and Huda) at Universities A and B highlight the transformative impact of SV2030 on the increased empowerment, changing roles, and the shift towards a more inclusive and goal-oriented educational environment.

Nada, reflecting on the positive changes at Univ.A., believed that a direct impact of SV2030 is the new female dean at the ELC and that 'we are dominant now, the female staff is. That is very true by the way we are provoking. In the past, was always to be in the background, you know, but now changing completely' (interview). She argued that 'now it's only about the hardworking individual. If you have, you, if you are hardworking, there is a place for you' (interview).

Huda, drawing from her master's thesis on education for sustainable development, saw female participation as a priority in SV2030. She encouraged her students to connect their classroom learning with real-life experiences. Huda said that she was 'surprised that a lot of my students already tried it some odd personal shoppers,' which was related to the media they majored in (interview). She also said that she was surprised by her nutritionist student for 'making WhatsApp of groups, and they practise this with some of their friends and relatives. They are making a diet for them. They are following the exercises' (interview). She was impressed that the students were 'starting their own businesses from now, not depending on a graduation or till graduation and what is the limited job opportunities they have' (interview). She believed that the students' mindsets were different from past generations since current students are 'more passionate, ambitious' and determined for success compared to previous generations" (WhatsApp personal communication).

Huda said that unlike female students in the past who relied on marriage and family support, “We are done with the traditional way of viewing things... We need a new perspective economically, socially, and educationally. The transition is rapid... Those returning from scholarships are at the forefront of this change... seeking a new perspective.” (interview). Huda believed that there needs to be ‘more opportunities ... more collaboration’ and that ‘it’s not about what is the chair, what is the position, what is the title. It’s about what is your production, what is the outcome, did you achieve it’ (interview).

Overall, the narratives of Nada and Huda showed an advancement in women’s roles, and the proactive shift in educational practices post-SV2030 reflected notable progress towards greater inclusivity and empowerment in KSA’s academic landscape.

#### **6.4.3 Institutional Focus on Language Skills Within Vision 2030’s Education Goals**

It is evident that the ELC prioritised language proficiency over AcLits. The study also found that AcLits held less significance both in the actual teaching practices of the teachers and in the educational objectives outlined in the universities ELC course specifications. In the context of HE in KSA, a comparative analysis of the ELCs at both universities revealed a pronounced emphasis on language proficiency objectives, with varying degrees of integration into AcLits. This focus became evident when examining the objectives related to the four language skills.

At Univ.A, the ELC demonstrated a more integrated approach, blending language proficiency with academic practices. The ESP course for Applied Sciences, for example, aimed to ‘develop students’ skills in reading technical texts and writing technical descriptions, explanations, and instructions’ (Applied Sciences ESP Course). This objective not only addressed language proficiency but also embedded it within a specific academic context, illustrating the AcLits model’s emphasis on contextualised language learning. Similarly, the

EGP course for economy aims to enhance students' abilities to 'demonstrate comprehension of a variety of texts by understanding the main ideas, identifying the supporting details, recognising the writer's purpose, and making predictions' (Economy EGP Course), showcasing a commitment to developing critical reading skills.

In contrast, Univ.B's objectives predominantly focused on basic communicative competencies. For instance, the ESP course for Media set goals such as being able to 'understand a range of short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary' and 'write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need' (ESP English for Media Course Specifications). This approach indicates a prioritisation of functional language use over complex academic literacy skills. Similar patterns were observed in other courses, such as the ESP for Sciences, which emphasised understanding 'short, simple texts on familiar matters' and communicating in 'simple and routine tasks' (ESP for Sciences Course Specifications).

The contrast in objectives between the two Universities highlighted a broader trend within Saudi ELCs. While language proficiency was undoubtedly a crucial component of English language education, there appeared to be a predominant inclination towards developing basic communication skills, potentially at the expense of fostering comprehensive AcLits that include critical thinking and analytical skills. Univ.A's balanced approach stood out in this context, demonstrating a commitment to integrating language skills within academic practices, as reflected in the objectives of their ESP and EGP courses.

Univ.A's approach seemed more closely aligned with the objectives of SV2030, which emphasises higher-order thinking skills and effective communication in English. This alignment was evident in their emphasis on comprehensive educational development, critical thinking, contextualised language learning, and holistic language education. In contrast,

Univ.B's focus on practical language application and test preparation, along with a less pronounced emphasis on critical and analytical skills, may not align as closely with SV2030's broader educational objectives.

The focus on language proficiency over AcLits in Saudi ELCs is pronounced, with Univ.A making notable strides in integrating these elements. Nevertheless, there remains a need for a more balanced approach that not only enhances language proficiency but also nurtures the holistic development of academic literacies, crucial for students to navigate complex academic and professional landscapes effectively and align with the nation's educational aspirations under SV2030.

## **6.5 Summary**

This chapter outlined the findings from six EFL teachers at two Saudi universities. It covered their understanding of the AcLits concept and the challenges they faced in implementing it within the EFL context. Additionally, the influence of the SV2030 policy was explored. The subsequent chapter will discuss the results and highlight the contradictions within the AcLits.

Table 6.2 summarises key EFL teaching practices observed in the two Saudi universities, highlighting strategies used to support students' academic literacies development. It outlines challenges associated with each practice and categorises them under Lea and Street's (1998, 2006) Academic Literacies model, focusing on Study Skills, Academic Socialisation, or Academic Literacies. The practices cover areas such as classroom interaction, research skills, public speaking, exam preparation, and academic integrity, offering insights into current approaches and potential improvements for fostering deeper critical engagement.

**Table 6.2**

*Summary of Teacher Practices in EFL Classrooms*

Teacher Practice	Explanation	Challenges	Academic Literacies Model
<b>Focus on Grammar &amp; Vocabulary Mastery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers emphasised grammar rules and vocabulary acquisition through explicit instruction, often at the expense of broader language use or critical engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over-emphasis on surface-level skills without deeper academic application. Limited students' engagement with complex texts</li> </ul>	<b>Study Skills:</b> Focused on surface-level skills
<b>Developing Critical Thinking Through Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers attempted to foster critical thinking, but often through opinion-sharing activities rather than deeper engagement with academic texts or ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited time, large classes, and a focus on exams prevented deeper implementation</li> </ul>	<b>Academic Socialisation:</b> Early stages of critical engagement
<b>Exam-Centric Text Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers focused heavily on preparing students for exams, often limiting engagement to surface-level text comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exam-driven culture restricted critical engagement with texts. Focused only on skills that will be tested, neglecting broader academic literacy skills.</li> </ul>	<b>Study Skills:</b> Primarily exam-focused
<b>Presentations Without Deep Academic Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The students gave presentations, but the focus was on correct structure and terminology rather than developing critical thinking, argumentation, or academic discourse skills.</li> <li>Presentations were a key part of the curriculum, but the focus was more on content rather than on developing effective public speaking skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of feedback on content and communication skills. Presentations were often isolated tasks disconnected from broader academic practices.</li> </ul>	<b>Academic Socialisation:</b> Potential for deeper engagement
<b>Use of Arabic to Explain English Concepts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers used Arabic to explain complex grammar or vocabulary concepts, helping students bridge understanding, but sometimes limiting English immersion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over-reliance on Arabic may restrict students' ability to engage fully in English discourse.</li> </ul>	<b>Academic Socialisation:</b> Aided understanding but lacked full AcLits integration.

Teacher Practice	Explanation	Challenges	Academic Literacies Model
<b>Promoting Autonomous Learning &amp; Research Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers acknowledged the importance of independent learning and research but faced challenges in implementing it due to curriculum demands and time constraints.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited time for research-based tasks. The students were rarely given opportunities to develop independent research and critical analysis skills.</li> </ul>	<b>Academic Literacies:</b> Moved towards critical engagement and autonomy but was underdeveloped.
<b>Professional Development Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers engaged in professional development (e.g., CELTA, workshops), but the impact on classroom practices was inconsistent, with some programmes focusing too much on theory over practical application.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time constraints and heavy workloads limited the application of new strategies learned through professional development.</li> </ul>	<b>Moving Towards AcLits:</b> Potential for deeper integration, currently mixed
<b>Addressing Course Syllabi &amp; Assessment Limits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers followed prescribed syllabi that prioritised exam success. Assessment methods (e.g., multiple choice) often focused on language skills without assessing critical thinking, research, or deeper academic engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Syllabus limitations restricted teachers from introducing deeper academic skills. Assessment was focused on content recall rather than critical thinking or synthesis of ideas.</li> </ul>	<b>Study Skills:</b> Primarily focused on passing exams rather than engaging in academic discourse
<b>Giving Feedback on Student Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers provided feedback on student presentations, writing, and language use, often focusing on grammar, spelling, and pronunciation. Feedback was mainly corrective and sometimes lacked depth in addressing higher-order academic skills like argumentation and critical thinking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback was often focused on surface-level language issues (e.g., grammar, spelling), missing opportunities to engage with students on deeper content, structure, or critical thinking. Large class sizes can limit individualised feedback.</li> </ul>	<b>Academic Socialisation &amp; Literacies:</b> Can move from surface-level correction towards fostering critical thinking and academic discourse
<b>Dealing with Large Class Sizes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers faced difficulties managing large classes, which limited their ability to provide personalised feedback, facilitate active learning, or engage students in deep critical thinking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large classes and time pressures prevented interactive learning and personalised instruction.</li> </ul>	<b>Study Skills:</b> Affected by logistical constraints, limiting deeper academic engagement
<b>Motivating Students in an Exam-Oriented Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers struggled with student motivation, especially when the curriculum was perceived as disconnected from students' real-world interests. Many students focused</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of intrinsic motivation among students, especially when the focus was on exams rather than meaningful language use</li> </ul>	<b>Academic Socialisation:</b> Opportunities to build engagement but often exam-focused

Teacher Practice	Explanation	Challenges	Academic Literacies Model
<b>Classroom Interaction &amp; Collaborative Learning</b>	<p>on passing exams rather than genuinely improving their English skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers used group discussions and collaborative activities but often reverted to teacher-led interaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large class sizes limited collaborative learning; teacher-centred approaches reduced peer interaction.</li> </ul>	<b>Academic Socialisation</b> , evolving towards <b>AcLits</b>
<b>Research &amp; Independent Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research skills like summarising and synthesising were mentioned but rarely practised in class; the students were often given transcripts instead of practising notetaking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited time to focus on research skills and lack of emphasis on independent learning</li> </ul>	<b>Study Skills</b> could evolve into <b>AcLits</b>
<b>Plagiarism &amp; Academic Integrity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers acknowledged the need for academic integrity but lacked structured lessons on plagiarism, referencing, and paraphrasing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of explicit curriculum focus; the students often resorted to copying or translating due to insufficient guidance.</li> </ul>	<b>Academic Socialisation</b> , moving towards <b>AcLits</b>

## 7 Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the study within the broader context of the academic literature previously reviewed. It emphasises the suitability of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and Language Teacher Cognition (LTC) as frameworks for analysing teachers' academic literacies (AcLits) within the specific context of the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) at each university. This discussion sheds light on the personal meanings teachers attribute to their experiences and the broader social, cultural, and institutional narratives that influence their professional lives. Additionally, the chapter examines the implications of these findings for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and for Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) programs. The purpose of the study is to investigate how LTC and AcLits are integrated to achieve the Saudi Vision 2030 (SV2030) educational reforms. To reiterate, focusing on teacher preparedness and educational practices, the study began with the key question:

- **What is the connection between LTC and the evolving focus on AcLits in Saudi universities?**

To answer this, the following sub-questions were presented:

1. What are the teachers' interpretations of AcLits?
2. To what extent does female teachers' current cognition promote the development of AcLits required to achieve SV2030?
3. How has the development of AcLits in English Language Centers classrooms in Saudi Higher Education (HE) been mediated by the SV2030?

4. What are the educational implications of SV2030 in relation to the purpose, implementation, and contradictions of developing AcLits?

This study posits that LTC operates within a broad personal and professional context of social practices combining a range of internal and external factors and contradictions that influence teachers' professional choices. The connection between LTC and AcLits in the two Saudi universities analysed through CHAT demonstrated that LTC is a complex phenomenon as it delved into how teachers perceive, understand, and implement AcLits in their teaching practices. It also highlighted the complex interplay of social beliefs, historical legacies, past policy directives and the present ones, notably driven by SV2030. The decision to use CHAT was justified by the need to examine teachers' decisions to gain a nuanced understanding of the multiple factors at play. This concurs with Cross's (2010) and Lim's (2016) approach, advocating that understanding of language teaching requires a broader sociocultural perspective. My analysis offers insights into improving EFL education by navigating and resolving the systemic contradictions identified.

Moreover, the chapter shows how the use of CHAT allows for identification of major contradictions that exist in KSA's Higher Education (HE) system. By examining the systemic contradictions, it is possible to identify specific, relevant solutions that could be implemented to achieve the AcLits goals central to SV2030. The challenge faced by KSA's HE system in developing AcLits is significant and while teachers play a large role in this, the findings demonstrated that the teachers faced many barriers to their ability to meet the demand for improved AcLits, including training and development, resources, and agency.

By raising these contradictions and tensions, it is possible to effect positive change within Saudi EFL institutions, focusing on AcLits (Engeström, 1993; Yamazumi, 2021). Most importantly, through such identification the changes were validated by evidence. Although the

term *contradictions* might carry a negative connotation, Yamazumi (2021) and Foot (2001) clarify that these are not mere problems or conflicts of motives. Instead, contradictions represent historically accumulated, deep-seated structural tensions within or between activity systems. They emphasise that recognising these contradictions is crucial, as they offer pivotal opportunities to unlock new perspectives and enhance our understanding.

This study adopts *the Human Capability Development Program* (HCDP) theoretical framework and the umbrella concept of AcLits, which emphasises the dynamic and context-specific ways in which students create meaning and knowledge through texts within educational foreign language contexts, especially in classes conducted in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). Therefore, EFL/English as Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers' approaches should extend beyond mere basic academic reading and writing skills to encompass a broader spectrum of AcLits. This includes critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluation of information, comprehension, and application of conventions specific to various academic genres and disciplines, engagement with and production of complex texts, participation in academic discourse, and navigation of the sociocultural norms and expectations prevalent in the academic community (Gibbons, 2009; Green, 2020; Wingate, 2015; Wingate & Dreiss, 2009). This conceptualisation is also informed by the seminal works of Lea (1998, 2004, 2008, 2016), who regards literacies as a social practice.

The lack of a unified definition of AcLits, as argued in chapter one by scholars such as Green (2020), Jefferies et al. (2018), Lillis and Scott (2007), and Street (2004), contributes to multiple ways of interpreting the concept by language teachers. This absence of consensus among teachers presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Although this allows teachers the flexibility to adapt their teaching to the specific needs and contexts of their students, it may lead to inconsistencies in how AcLits are taught and assessed across different programs

and institutions. In this study, the significant lack of internalised AcLits cognition among teachers impacted their attempts to implement AcLits in the classroom.

As shown in Figure 7.1 below, EFL teachers (*Subjects*) worked individually and collectively towards the central activity of integrating AcLits into the EFL classroom (*Object*). They utilised tools such as EFL teaching materials, pedagogical strategies and methodologies, and knowledge and skills gained from teacher training programmes. These tools impacted other EFL teachers, students, and ELC leaders who were all engaged in the practices of the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) (*Community*). Their efforts were guided by sociocultural norms and institutional policies (*Rules*). Department heads oversaw and provided leadership, while EFL teachers were tasked with implementing AcLits in their classrooms, focusing on AcLits (*Division of Labour*), which was shaped by the goals of SV2030. The aim was to transform the PYP to fully incorporate AcLits into the English language curriculum, enhancing broader educational and professional competencies (*Outcome*). Note that the black dashed line in the CHAT figure means no contradictions have been identified between those elements in the activity system.

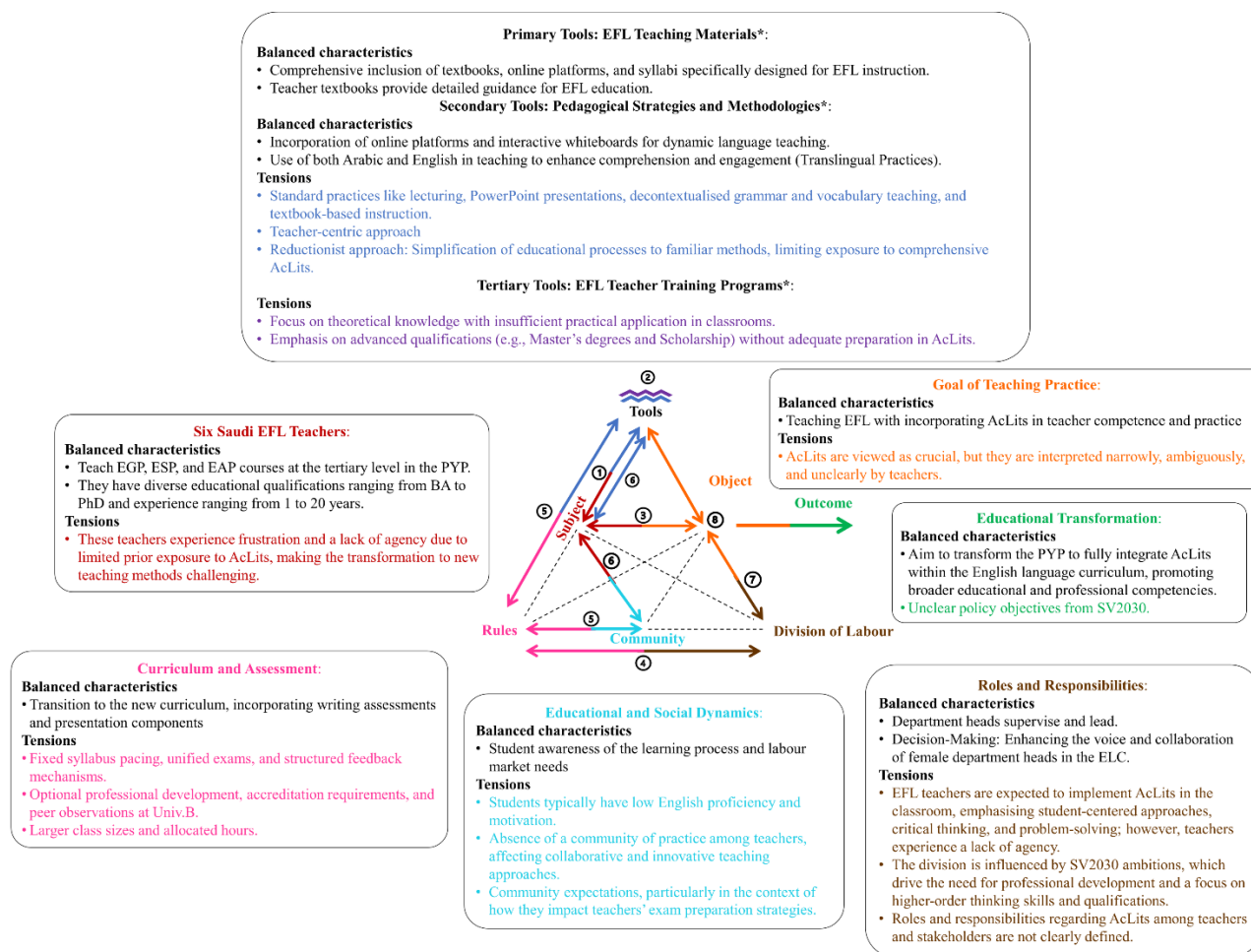
The LTC model by Borg (2015) is instrumental in understanding the factors that shape teachers' cognitions — their thoughts and practices — and influences: schooling, professional coursework, and contextual factors. Schooling refers to the teachers' prior educational experiences, which shaped their initial and ongoing teaching cognitions. Professional coursework, including formal education and professional development, moulded their current beliefs and teaching practices. Contextual factors, such as the settings of educational institutions and prevailing educational policies, influenced how well the teachers' cognitions aligned with their actual classroom practices. Furthermore, the interaction between the

teachers' cognitions and their teaching practices was dynamic, with classroom experiences potentially modifying teachers' cognitions through reflective activities.

Using the LTC model, this study identifies three factors that highlight contradictions within the CHAT framework as AcLits are integrated into it. These are: (i) teachers' Schooling and Professional Experience, which influence how teachers interpret and embrace AcLits; (ii) the Highly Structured and Prescriptive Learning Environment, which affects the flexibility and adaptability of teaching methods; and (iii) the challenges of Translating SV2030 Objectives within English Language Centres, which impact the implementation of educational reforms. The following three sections will systematically explore the multiple contradictions inherent in the teachers' interpretations of AcLits, the cognition processes of female teachers, and how AcLits development in ELC settings within Saudi HE is mediated by SV2030 policy. Each of the three sections builds upon the previous one, highlighting how these contradictions influence each other.

**Figure 7.1**

*AcLits Activity in PYP: The Contradiction System Identified*



\*For reviewing definitions of primary, secondary, and tertiary tools, see Section 3.1.

## **7.1 Main Factor 1: Teachers' Schooling and Professional Experience: Interpreting and Embracing Academic Literacies**

For the first question (What are the teachers' interpretations of AcLits?), the teachers expressed that AcLits were crucial for students, not only in English subjects but across all academic disciplines, as well as in their everyday lives and future careers. However, the findings indicated diverse, ambiguous, and subtle interpretations among teachers. This variation likely stemmed from differences in educational backgrounds and limited teacher preparation programs and professional development on AcLits. The teachers often viewed AcLits through the narrow scope of basic literacy skills, neglecting broader aspects like communicative and critical thinking skills crucial for academic contexts. This echoes a study by Homateni et al. (2023), which found that English proficiency courses at three Namibian universities focus excessively on grammar and vocabulary, neglecting crucial discipline-specific academic practices. According to their findings, this emphasis stems from misconceptions that equate language proficiency with academic readiness, alongside institutional pressures for measurable language outcomes. These issues are compounded by curricular structures and a lack of interdisciplinary training that prioritise generic language skills over integrated AcLits.

This diversity enables a disconnect between AcLits' holistic theoretical framework and its practical implementation in classrooms. The ambiguity in the teachers' interpretations often resulted from insufficient professional development focused on AcLits, limiting their ability to effectively incorporate elements like genre awareness and discourse community integration. Additionally, subtleties in their understanding suggested challenges in integrating these literacies into teaching practices, possibly due to curriculum constraints, assessment practices that fail to prioritise these skills, or a lack of targeted support materials. This study

also revealed that there was no distinction in the practice of English for General Purposes (EGP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and ESP concerning AcLits across both universities. This occurs even though AcLits often blended literacy practices with disciplinary knowledge structures, which can obscure the foundational structures that generate more sophisticated practices (Clarence & McKenna, 2017). These highlight the complexity of AcLits as a concept.

This complexity was reflected in the differing levels of understanding and engagement among the teachers, which directly contributes to the contradictions observed between the teachers' learning experiences and the current requirements informed by the SV2030 initiative to integrate AcLits. These contradictions—*Subjects* versus *Secondary Tools*; *Secondary Tools* versus *Tertiary Tools*; and *Subjects* versus *Object*—underline the challenges in aligning teacher competencies with new educational mandates.

All contradictions identified above were correlated with the importance of understanding the teachers' past learning and professional experiences, as these influenced their current practices and approach to teaching AcLits (Borg, 2001; 2003; 2005; 2015; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019). When considering teachers and their past experiences in comparison to the current educational changes, it became evident that these teachers who studied according to certain standards are now expected to teach not only using different teaching methods, but also to entirely rethink the nature of language learning, to involve AcLits. This misalignment suggests that while teachers may recognise the importance of broader AcLits, there is a significant gap in how these skills are integrated and practised within the educational framework, thus impacting the effectiveness of the SV2030 initiative.

### 7.1.1 Sub- Contradiction 1: Subjects versus Secondary Tools

A dichotomy emerges between the *Subjects* (teachers) and the *Secondary Tools* (pedagogical strategies and methodologies) due to the teachers' limited prior exposure to AcLits. This lack of exposure hindered their ability to integrate AcLits into their teaching, creating a misalignment with current pedagogical requirements.

The teachers' frustration due to limited exposure to AcLits highlights a significant issue. The pedagogical strategies and methodologies for enhancing AcLits, which include critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluation of information, comprehension (Gibbons, 2009; Green, 2020; Wingate, 2015; Wingate & Dreiss, 2009), were largely absent from the EFL teachers' previous experience as learners which suggests their past learning experiences were impacting their current practices. The teachers often replicated the instructional styles, like lecturing and decontextualised instruction, they experienced as students, especially when supported by educational systems that favour standardised content delivery and large class sizes. This cycle was further perpetuated by a lack of institutional support for innovative practices, leaving teachers ill-equipped to adopt newer, interactive methods that promoted critical thinking and problem-solving essential for AcLits. While some teachers took the initiative to develop AcLits skills through self-directed learning, relying on personal experience to bridge these gaps demonstrated the shortcomings of existing educational support structures. Such autodidactic approaches can lead to tension in teaching methods and potentially impact student learning outcomes. Although self-learning can empower teachers and foster innovative practices, it is not a sustainable substitute for formal professional development. Educational institutions need to provide systematic, comprehensive training to ensure all teachers are equipped to effectively integrate AcLits into their teaching, reducing frustration and enhancing educational outcomes.

The transition from traditional teacher-centred educational paradigms to methodologies that prioritise holistic language teaching presents another challenge for the teachers, especially those accustomed to environments characterised by rote learning, minimal discussion, and a focus on achieving high marks. In this study, the teacher-centric approach reflected a lack of trust in students' abilities to learn independently, resulting in uniform information delivery without differentiation to accommodate diverse learning needs. As McLeod (2024) discussed, constructivism in education emphasises guiding students to form their own opinions, rather than simply imparting established facts. This approach requires teachers to have faith in their students' ability to independently reason and generate innovative concepts.

This reluctance often stemmed from the teachers' previous experiences or beliefs that direct instruction is most effective, coupled with a potential lack of knowledge about how to implement differentiated learning strategies. Without adequate training and support, the teachers may feel unprepared to manage a diverse classroom dynamically, where students actively engage and take ownership of their learning. Research into KSA pedagogy in HE identified that up until the time of the current study teachers predominantly employed teacher-centred pedagogies (Al-menqash, 2019; Albarakati & Jendli, 2021; Alghamdi, 2021; Jamal & Aldaifallah, 2020; Yusuf & Albanawi, 2018).

Findings revealed a discrepancy between the academic skills developed during bachelor's degree programs and those required at master's level; neither highlighted a hierarchical progression of content and skills. This gap not only affected the teachers' confidence but also their ability to effectively implement AcLits in their teaching practices. The contradiction noted herein aligns with previous studies (Alkhannani, 2021; Alzhrani & Alkubaidi, 2020; Le Ha & Barnawi, 2015), which show that despite having access to advanced tools and methodologies, Saudi female teachers have not integrated these resources into their teaching

practices. This is simply because the changes are too rapid to implement them effectively in the classroom, naturally causing resistance from teachers.

Furthermore, without extensive focus on teacher education programs that address the contradictions within the education system wholistically, widespread change is unlikely. The teaching observations conducted for this study supported this contention and identified a disconnect between the way educational reforms were carried out and the actual needs of teachers in classrooms. It is well known that the broader educational setting in KSA places a disproportionate emphasis on content knowledge rather than AcLits (Al-Seghayer, 2014a). This focus on test content and information acquisition manifests in a test-oriented learning environment (Section 5.2). As a result, these teachers often placed a high priority on obtaining good grades during their own early years of education. Their main motivation was often driven by incentives such as extra credit for participating in class or completing additional assignments. Once again, past experiences that focussed on grades and incentives was also evident in their current teaching approaches.

The selection and use of these *Tools* — whether observed directly in practice or imagined as part of ideal teaching strategies — reflects the evolving nature of language teaching, which is shaped by cultural, contextual, and technological factors. The *Primary Tools* included textbook-based activities complemented by the explicit instruction in grammar, vocabulary, and other language skills, often using students' first language for clearer explanations. Presentations were emphasised, with students being guided on various aspects including structure, content delivery, and the effective use of visual aids. Writing skills were cultivated through assignments that encouraged drafting and incorporated feedback mechanisms that focused on micro-level details in paragraphs and target specific aspects like grammar and punctuation, rather than broader skills such as argument structure or coherence. While this

approach helped refine writing skills through actionable insights, it is important to balance it with macro-level feedback, which addresses overall flow and argumentation, ensuring comprehensive writing development. Additionally, technology and online resources, such as dictionaries and collaborative platforms like Padlet, were utilised. Exam preparation was a significant focus, with strategies aimed at familiarising students with the exam format and content. Collaborative learning and teamwork were promoted, though actual implementation varies.

Unfortunately, this pedagogy suggests a reductionist approach to AcLits. It entailed the use of *Secondary Tools* where teachers drew on their own previous experience and knowledge gained from past teaching of language. Consequently, the teachers' interpretation of critical thinking was simplified to opinion sharing, without deeper exploration and/or reference to theory and research. Although the teachers recognised the importance of skills such as researching and notetaking, these were also reduced to online vocabulary searching and a focus on facts, without any emphasis on the critical evaluation and engagement of resources. The teaching of research skills for completing assignments that require information gathering, evaluation, and synthesis was notably absent. Public speaking training was merely presentations within the constraints of the curriculum. While participants do caution students against plagiarism (the act of copying and pasting from sources), there was little extension of the concept so that an understanding and adherence to the broader principles of academic integrity could be developed.

### **7.1.2 Sub-Contradiction 2: Secondary Tools versus Tertiary Tools**

The contradictions within the educational *Tools* used for teaching AcLits highlight gaps in both current pedagogical strategies (*Secondary Tools*) and the EFL teacher training programs (*Tertiary Tools*). As stated in the previous contradictions, common traditional pedagogical

methods do not foster the active engagement and critical thinking required for AcLits. On the training side, EFL teacher training programs often focus heavily on theoretical knowledge while lacking the practical application of this knowledge in classrooms. Many teachers are not adequately prepared to implement complex teaching strategies or adapt to new educational paradigms. There is a clear need for enhanced professional development and support to equip teachers to meet these advanced objectives.

As a decisive step towards modernising Saudi EFL teacher preparation and aligning them with international standards in the field of EFL (part of its commitment to enhancing the educational system), KSA has implemented significant changes in the *Tertiary Tools* for SLTE field. The MoE has also introduced up-to-date curricula and materials, reflecting the latest pedagogical strategies such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the Task-based approach, and the Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP) model (Alqahtani, 2019a; Assulaimani, 2019; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017). Furthermore, the organisation and structuring of ELC alongside PYP have been optimised to strengthen language learning and foundational skills at the tertiary level.

The MoE considers that completing a master's program would equip teachers with the necessary skills to enhance AcLits among students (Okaz, 2024). Starting from 2019 onwards, the requirement for qualifying as an EFL teacher in the investigated ELCs has been raised from a bachelor's degree to a professional master's degree, as suggested by the MoE (Table 2.2 and 3.8). This change reflects the government's emphasis on higher qualification standards to ensure educational excellence (HCDP, 2021). Through the introduction of the Professional Master's program, the shortcomings of the outdated Diploma of Education may be addressed. This program includes specialised coursework and internships focused on EFL

education and on enhancing Pre-service Student Teachers'(PST) comprehension, critical analysis, and problem-solving skills.

Yet, simply raising the level of qualification might not resolve the issue. In fact, if these master's programs do not address the critical elements of AcLits, they do not contribute to current teachers' pedagogical practices. Wenglinsky (2000, 2002) and Slater et al. (2012) conclude that higher academic qualifications of teachers, including master's degrees or above, do not significantly impact student achievement. They argue that factors such as teaching behaviours and classroom interactions are more critical in enhancing students' learning outcomes, suggesting that improved academic standards are more closely linked to the quality of teacher-student engagement than to the level of teacher qualifications. The focus on reinforcing theoretical knowledge that is inherent within master's Programs should not be accepted as how teaching pedagogy will be changed. While the teachers' higher-order-thinking capabilities may be developed, this may not sufficiently prepare teachers to foster a comprehensive understanding and application of AcLits in their teaching practices.

One of the most important factors behind the decline in the quality of education in KSA is the weakness of teacher preparation programs (Al-Seghayer, 2016; Alshuaifan, 2021; Althobaiti, 2017; Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017; MoE, 2024b). PSTs in KSA, traditionally emerging from teacher-preparation courses in both bachelor and master's programs, have been exposed to curricula that emphasise literature and language theories while providing inadequate training in practical teaching methods. Such education training has historically placed less focus on developing English proficiency and practical skills essential for fostering AcLits among PSTs (Al-Seghayer, 2014a; Alqahtani, 2019b; Alshammari, 2021). According to the MoE (2024b),

the pass rates<sup>10</sup>, during the 2015/2016 academic year, for candidates taking the Teacher Efficiency Test, administered by the National Centre for Assessment, were notably low. The average scores were only 43% in the pedagogical component and 37% in the specialisation component, despite the requirement for a passing score of 50% in both sections.

More recently, KSA has been expanding teacher scholarship programs for both local and international professional development. Efforts have been underway for a number of years to boost both international and local collaborations, promoting a comprehensive approach to teacher development (Moskovsky & Picard, 2019). These initiatives aim to support teacher growth and improve educational quality to meet international standards.

Such scholarships are limited and so their impact is not widespread. In contrast to the local degrees, participants who studied overseas, were exposed to learner-centred teaching styles and less hierarchical teacher-student relationships, thus echoing the findings presented by Alandejani (2013). Furthermore, the benefits of teachers studying abroad, as identified by Pikos-Sallie (2018), include not only enhanced pedagogical practices and English language proficiency but also increased independence, intercultural competence, and improved research skills. These gains are met with challenges upon return to their home country, where a lack of clear policies and regulations can lead to frustration and disillusionment among returnees. This situation highlights the benefits of aligning local educational policies and practices with the global competencies acquired by teachers during their studies abroad to fully leverage their enhanced skills and perspectives.

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<sup>10</sup> The pass rates for the teacher competency tests in KSA reflect both proficiency in subject matter and practical teaching skills. Proficiency is assessed through specialised knowledge, while practical skills are evaluated through educational methodologies and classroom management abilities.

Similarly, teachers' reflections on their learning experiences abroad reveal an acute awareness of the necessity for a high level of AcLits, driven by the rigorous requirements of research and written work in postgraduate programs. This contrasts with their undergraduate experiences in KSA, which often lack a focus on such skills, leading to feelings of anxiety and inadequacy among teachers. The contradictions support previous studies (Alkhannani, 2021; Alzhrani & Alkubaidi, 2020; Le Ha & Barnawi, 2015) on the increased availability of advanced strategies and approaches. Arguably, the rapid pace of change meant these were not adopted in the teaching and learning practices of Saudi female teachers.

The 2019 reforms just discussed, were preceded by the 2017 Professional Educational Occupation License Test (PEOLT). This is part of the 'Professional Verification' program aimed to develop the skills of the workforce according to international standards. The program covers both practical and theoretical tests in the specialised fields and seeks to regulate the Labor market and improve employment quality in the country (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, 2022). In education, the tests are underlined by a commitment to Islamic values and professional development among other criteria (The Education & Training Evaluation Commission, 2024). While PEOLT represents a comprehensive approach to assessing educational standards, there is currently insufficient data to conclusively determine its effectiveness in evaluating the higher-order thinking skills that are crucial for the implementation of AcLits such as critical thinking and analytical abilities. While these developments are welcome, they also pose a significant challenge for teachers who are expected to adapt to a rapidly evolving situation. Even within this study's timeframe, many educational transitions took place in KSA and the universities under investigation as noted by Alzhrani and Alkubaidi (2020) and Khawaji (2022). These include the paradigm shift from EFL to English as a Second Language to align with SV2030's goals, significant investment in educational infrastructure to support English language learning, and

the incorporation of critical evaluative approaches to English language teaching programs. Additionally, there is a gradual shift towards embracing a local English teaching workforce over the dependency on native speakers. Furthermore, these transitions reflect a broader strategic realignment towards enhancing English proficiency among Saudi students. This aims to meet the social, economic, and international communication needs of the kingdom, while also emphasising the importance of safeguarding Saudi cultural and Islamic identity within the educational curriculum. This study has found that there was a moderate positive effect from introducing a new curriculum in ESP and EGP courses in terms of changing teachers' practice. In fact, participants adopted collaborative learning, utilised technology, and evaluated speaking skills through participation and presentations.

### **7.1.3 Sub-Contradiction 3: Subjects versus Object**

A further contradiction arises between the *Subjects* and the *Object* (the goal of enhancing students' AcLits and English competencies as per the SV2030 goals). This gap highlights the discrepancies between teachers' readiness and the intricate or innovative changes needed in teaching practices to achieve the objectives of SV2030 and effectively foster AcLits. Despite the SV2030 initiative's encouragement for the adoption of innovative educational tools such as the internet, flipped classrooms, presentations, and project-based learning—several factors impeded their effective utilisation in teaching and learning AcLits. The teachers, despite having access to these modern educational resources, often employed them in a limited capacity, primarily for explaining grammar points or introducing basic course concepts.

The teachers also prioritised the remediation of perceived student deficits through a 'fix-it' approach to surface language skills, including grammar and spelling, draw heavily from behavioural and experimental psychology. This approach views student writing as a technical

and instrumental skill, largely ignoring the complexities of language as a tool for critical thinking, research, and comprehensive understanding.

A discrepancy between current educational practices and the aspirations of the SV2030 and HCDP is attaining, especially in the context of promoting critical thinking, problem-solving thinking and global competitiveness. The emphasis on remedial instruction in study skills, sourced from a paradigm that treats these skills as atomised and transferable, falls short of engaging students in the deeper, more integrated learning experiences necessary for navigating the complexities of the modern world.

Lea and Street's (2006) critique of the 'Study Skills' model as merely an introductory step towards developing AcLits points to a need for a paradigm shift in education. Rather than viewing academic skills as isolated tasks to be mastered, there is a growing recognition of the importance of embedding these literacies within the broader curriculum, as advocated by Wingate (2006) and Haggis (2006). Such an approach encourages the development of competencies through guided instruction that integrates literacy practices with disciplinary content, fostering a more holistic and inclusive educational experience. This moves towards innovative teaching methodologies, while indicative of a shift in pedagogical thinking, reveals a tension between tradition and progress. The continued reliance on traditional study skills and the uneven incorporation of critical thinking and problem-solving exercises reflects a partial transformation in educational practice.

To fully align with the objectives of SV2030 and the HCDP, a broader implementation of practices that foster deep learning, critical engagement, and the application of knowledge in diverse contexts is essential. This requires a re-evaluation of the value placed on decontextualised learning in favour of pedagogical strategies that emphasise the interconnectedness of skills, knowledge, and critical abilities. Such a reorientation would not

only enhance the development of AcLits but also contribute significantly to preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the global settings.

Ultimately, aligning teachers' practices with the objectives of SV2030 and the development of AcLits requires a concerted effort to overcome the barriers to the effective use of innovative educational tools. This involves not only providing access to these resources but also supporting teachers through targeted professional development and addressing systemic issues that constrain educational innovation. By bridging the gap between teachers' readiness and the necessary pedagogical transitions, the educational system can move closer to realising the goals of SV2030 and enhancing critical thinking, problem-solving, and independent learning — key components of AcLits. It is crucial to focus on professional development programs that equip teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively employ these tools. Moreover, addressing systemic constraints that limit the innovative use of educational technologies is essential for creating an environment that encourages exploration, creativity, and the application of knowledge in novel contexts. This systemic shift in how educational technologies and methodologies are perceived and integrated into the curriculum is vital for fostering a more holistic and inclusive educational experience.

Summing up, these contradictions explore the complex relationship between teachers' interpretations and implementation of AcLits in the context of educational reforms in KSA. They highlight the variations in teachers' understanding and engagement with AcLits, which are often influenced by their previous educational experiences and limited exposure to contemporary pedagogical strategies. The study identifies several contradictions in the educational system, such as the misalignment between teachers' traditional methodologies and the innovative approaches required by the SV2030 initiative. These contradictions are evident in the discrepancy between the content knowledge emphasised in teacher preparation programs and the skills needed to implement AcLits effectively. Despite recent reforms to

enhance teacher qualifications and training, the study suggests that these efforts are insufficient to bridge the gap between current practices and the advanced literacies demanded by modern educational objectives. This gap underlines the need for comprehensive professional development and systemic changes to fully integrate AcLits into teaching practices, thereby aligning with the broader goals of enhancing students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills in a global context.

## **7.2 Main Factor 2: Highly Structured and Prescriptive Learning Environment**

To answer the second question (To what extent does female teachers' current cognition promote the development of AcLits required to achieve SV2030?), this section examines the environment in which teachers operate. As Borg (2003; 2015) suggests, cognition cannot exist in a vacuum, and classroom practices are directly affected by contextual factors. This study has found that the integration of AcLits within Saudi EFL classrooms was hindered by a highly prescriptive learning environment. Given the numerous constraints imposed on the teachers, which will be analysed in this section, it can be argued that the teachers have very limited choice in terms of pedagogical practice. The feeling of constraint due to this lack of agency leads them to resort to employing risk-averse educational practices such as display questioning<sup>11</sup>, an overreliance on textbooks, and rigid classroom interactions. These methods result in a highly structured classroom environment that, according to Wright (2005), not only discourages student-centred learning but also impedes the effective teaching and learning of AcLits.

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<sup>11</sup> [Display questions](#) are used by teachers to check learners' knowledge, requiring specific answers, unlike referential questions that seek genuine information without a predetermined response.

A significant reason why the teachers continue to teach in the manner they were taught (impacting the incorporating of AcLits) is an environment that, although changing, has not evolved sufficiently to support and encourage innovative and flexible teaching practices aligned with the goals of SV2030. This emphasises the need for systemic changes that empower teachers to adopt and adapt new pedagogical strategies that are essential for the development of AcLits. A broader perspective reveals how external factors—such as institutional policies, classroom dynamics and teacher–student interaction as well as teachers colleagues’ collaboration, and the allocation of roles and responsibilities in the educational process—further shape and sometimes bound teachers’ ability to implement effective teaching practices aimed at developing AcLits. This expanded analysis demonstrates the complex interplay between teachers’ personal experiences and the structural conditions of the educational environment, highlighting the challenges in fostering an educational setting conducive to the holistic development of AcLits.

In examining the contextual factors impacting the incorporation of AcLits in EFL classrooms, four systemic contradictions emerge, particularly between *Rules* and *Division of Labour*; *Rules*, *Secondary Tools* and *Community*; and *Subjects* and *Community*. The highly structured and prescriptive learning environment fundamentally contradicts the dynamic and flexible nature required for the effective integration of AcLits. The teachers are often confined to a rigid curriculum that did not allow for the incorporation of varied pedagogical strategies. This environment limited individualised attention to students, essential for engaging them in higher-order thinking activities and creates a discrepancy between policy and practice. While SV2030 ambitions promote the development of higher-order thinking skills, the actual classroom practices may not align with these goals.

### 7.2.1 Sub-Contradiction 4: Rules versus Division of Labour

In the ELCs, there was tension between institutional *Rules* and the *Division of labour*, which critically impacted the quality of education. The ELCs often imposed strict *Rules* — allocated teaching hours, fixed syllabus pacing, and larger class sizes — that restricted teachers' autonomy in tailoring their instructional strategies. These centres often operate with a goal of maximising language exposure and proficiency within a limited timeframe, which can necessitate a structured and consistent approach. This rigidity is particularly problematic in language education, where the ability to adapt teaching methods to varied language proficiency levels and learning styles is crucial. This inflexibility can hinder student engagement and learning outcomes, while also affecting teacher satisfaction and professional development. The inability to tailor instructional strategies or classroom setups stifles innovation and can lead to teacher frustration and burnout.

The limited instructional hours dedicated to English teaching not only constrain the teacher's capacity to aid students in acquiring AcLits but also necessitate a focus on linguistic aspects such as vocabulary and grammar, as evidenced by sources like Poole (2005) and Saito (2017). In this study, the teachers' observed use of virtual whiteboards predominantly focused on teaching grammatical concepts rather than facilitating interactive activities. This prioritisation risks neglecting the development of AcLits.

Moreover, the scarcity of formal instructional time presents a significant obstacle for teachers aiming to nurture a learning environment that supports the holistic development of students' AcLits. To effectively develop their AcLits, HE students need explicit instruction, along with ample exposure and practice. Bourdieu et al. (1995) highlighted that 'Academic language is no one's mother tongue' (p. 8), emphasising the unique nature of academic discourse and therefore the need for specific instruction. Key issues for AcLits include that (i) it is not an

easily transferable skill (Tuck, 2015), (ii) it has a predominant focus on the final product rather than the learning process (Kern, 2000), and (iii) academic concepts are opaque and complex (Gibbons, 2009). These elements act as gatekeepers, reinforcing rather than challenging existing social and cultural capitals, deeply embedding these practices within the academic framework.

If teachers primarily focus on linguistic details, it results in an imbalanced teaching approach that does not fully equip students with the necessary academic skills. This leads to a narrow understanding of English among students, thus adversely affecting the quality of education they receive (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). For example, instead of orally discussing the structure of presentations or paragraphs, the teacher could collaboratively create one with students, fostering a more interactive learning environment. It should not be forgotten that the exam focus and limited time that teachers noted frequently lead them to employ an ‘initiation-response-feedback’ approach in which the teacher initiates all the learning (Sinclair et al., 1975; Willis, 2013).

The rigid structure imposed by ELCs significantly constrains teacher autonomy, which is crucial for effective AcLits instruction. Fixed pacing, standardised curriculum, and strict exam schedules limit teachers’ ability to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of their students. This rigidity conflicts with the principle of the *Division of Labour*, which ideally would allow teachers to exercise professional discretion in their instructional methods. The enforced uniformity can hinder the ability to provide tailored educational experiences that cater to diverse learning styles and needs, potentially impacting the overall effectiveness of language education within these centres.

Despite this situation, this study has identified ongoing efforts within the ELCs to reduce the number of classrooms, though large class sizes continue to challenge effective teaching, reduce time for personalised feedback and discourage collaborative writing with creative tools

such as Padlet. Despite these challenges, the study notes that one teacher had been observed providing individualised feedback via Zoom. There is a clear need for ELCs to systematise such personalised feedback approaches across all teachers and facilitate these interactions for students, potentially through collaborations with other colleagues. Implementing these changes could help overcome the limitations imposed by large class sizes and enhance educational outcomes.

In response to these challenges, the educational environment has been undergoing significant constructive development since 2010, aimed at enhancing learning outcomes and the overall quality of education (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020; HCDP, 2021; OECD, 2020). Notable initiatives to align with the aims of SV2030 include efforts to reduce classroom sizes to facilitate more personalised instruction and interaction, the expansion of the curriculum to include more ESP programs, an increase in instructional hours, and overall improvements in the quality of educational outcomes. These changes are intended to alleviate the initial tensions by providing environments that support more effective teaching and learning conditions.

In 2021, the MoE has introduced the trimester academic calendar, aligned with SV2030, with the aim of enhancing educational quality and fostering economic and sociocultural development. The three-semester modification, applicable across all educational levels from primary through to tertiary, expands the curriculum, increases teaching days, and boosts student engagement in and out of the classroom, aiming to close the educational gap existing AcLits and the future AcLits skills required to improve KSA global standings. Through the range of initiatives outlined in SV2030, it is believed that teachers will be better trained, have more time for student assessment and active participation in subject-related activities,

supporting a richer, more effective educational experience for both students and teachers (MoE, 2024a).

However, not all universities have effectively integrated a three-semester system into their academic year which affect time off in between. Additionally, introducing a new initiative such as long weekends interrupts language learning. According to Al Yaela (2023), the recent approval by the KSA Cabinet of the academic calendar for the next two years from 2023 to 2024, which continues the trimester system, has ignited significant debate. This has raised issues such as mass absences and discrepancies in reporting absenteeism, suggesting inefficiencies in the system. Critics, including educational theorist Abdulhamid Al Hamadi, argue that the packed academic weeks compromise the quality of education and teacher well-being, due to shortened vacation times and a condensed curriculum. At the same time, the MoE defends the tri-semester approach, citing a reduction in educational loss with an increased period of instruction from 36 to 39 weeks which is supported by the decision of the Shura Council. This decision revisits the previous commitment to a five-year plan and has led to discussions about potentially reverting back to a two semesters system due to above mentioned challenges.

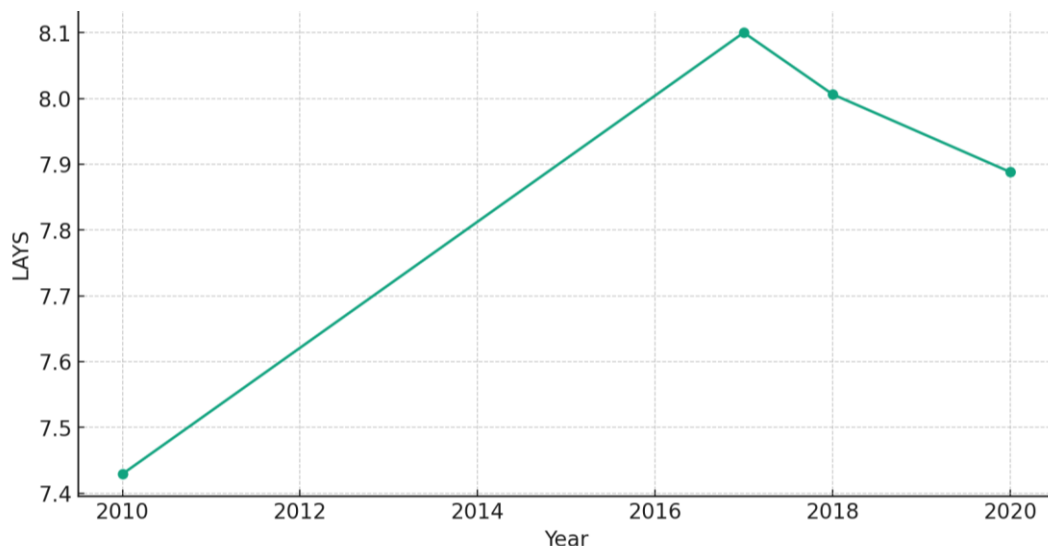
Moreover, this trimester academic calendar structure may be seen as not effective particularly for language learning, where consistency and regular interaction in classroom is crucial. This matter is further complicated by significant cultural festivities such as Ramadan and Hajj, which are not just public holidays but times of extensive religious observance. These periods have historically seen a prioritisation of cultural and religious practices over academic activities, suggesting a need for their thoughtful integration into academic scheduling. Thus, the distribution of semesters should be re-evaluated to more closely align with the cultural, educational, and climatic needs of Saudi students and teachers. Such adjustments would

ensure the academic calendar not only respects significant cultural practices but also enhances educational engagement and effectiveness during operational periods of the school year.

In exploring the duration of learning, Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS) not only considers the average duration of schooling but also present the data based on the quality of learning, which is gauged through harmonised test scores from international assessments (World Bank data adapted by Our World in Data, 2024). This metric is particularly telling, as it links the quantity of education with the qualitative outcomes, reflecting a more holistic understanding of educational advancement within a population. The LAYS in KSA shows an increase from 2010 to 2017, suggesting improvements in both the quality and the quantity of education (Figure 7.2).

**Figure 7.2**

*Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling in KSA (2010-2020)*



In 2017, the LAYS reaches its peak at 8.1, which could indicate a high point in the efficacy of KSA's educational system as measured by the LAYS criteria. However, after 2017, there is a slight decrease in the LAYS value, dropping to 8.006 in 2018 and further to 7.888 in 2020.

This decline suggests that either the quality of education, as measured by international

assessments, might have decreased or the growth in educational quality has not kept pace with the increased years of schooling. It is also important to note the population growth during this period, which could impact the resources and focus of the education system. Overall, while the country remains within the range of high-income countries, the LAYS suggests there may be challenges in maintaining or improving the educational outcomes.

This indicates the importance of not only increasing educational time but also focusing on empowering teachers through professional development and autonomy-supportive practices. Such initiatives are crucial for fostering student-centred approaches and enhancing student engagement and autonomy, essential for effective educational outcomes. Because simply allocating more time to teachers without focusing on their empowerment undermines the potential benefits of this additional time. Teachers need enhanced training in decision-making and the distribution of classroom objectives. This will enable them to effectively utilise class time to foster student-centred approaches, which are crucial for developing students' abilities to think independently, solve complex problems, and engage constructively with their peers. Evidence supports the need for Professional Development (PD) to empower teachers to effectively utilise student-centred approaches, which are crucial for fostering autonomy and engagement among students (Alrabai, 2021; Yilmaz & Arcagök, 2018).

The findings of Fareh (2010) and Asiri and Shukri (2018) strongly support the observation that current instructional practices in the Saudi EFL context inhibit the development of learner autonomy. Fareh (2010) identified a dominant teacher-centred approach, where most classroom time is consumed by teacher talk, significantly limiting students' opportunities to actively participate or question, thereby fostering a passive learning environment. Similarly, Asiri and Shukri (2018) reported that students struggle with setting personal learning goals and managing their learning independently, suggesting a lack of encouragement for

autonomous skill development. On the other hand, Al Asmari (2013a) and Almusharraf (2020) propose enhancing teacher training to adopt autonomy-supportive teaching methods as a remedy. Their recommendations emphasise the potential of student-centred approaches to not only increase engagement but also foster a more active and autonomous learner participation. This contrast highlights the need for a paradigm shift in teaching methodologies to bridge the gap between student capability and actual practice in fostering learner autonomy.

This discussion highlights the interplay between institutional constraints, such as large class sizes and limited instructional hours, and the need for teacher empowerment. It affirms that strategic, autonomy-supportive reforms are essential for cultivating an adaptive, engaging, and effective educational environment that provides meaningful learning experiences and feedback, which are crucial for student engagement and the development of AcLits skills. These reforms ensure that teachers can thrive in a supportive and flexible environment, ultimately benefiting students.

### **7.2.2 Sub-Contradiction 5: Rules, Secondary Tools versus Community**

Building on the previously highlighted issue of limited teacher agency, this discussion addresses the continued impact of this issue in the exam culture. It aligns with the findings of Almossa and Alzahrani (2022), Almossa (2018) and Mansory (2017), which state that the role of EFL teachers in HE assessments remains constrained. This limitation is due to the unified nature of assessments (Almossa, 2021), where teachers are restricted to teaching the curriculum and evaluating students on a narrow set of tasks that have minimal impact on the overall grade. Furthermore, the institutions themselves have not significantly evolved, maintaining a status quo that limits both teaching and assessment methods.

Teachers are often pressured by students to concentrate on exam skills, particularly when high scores are crucial for entrance exams that determine their future. If the exam format is

multiple choice, the focus often shifts towards memorising information and employing specific strategies to be able to complete such a task. Focus on basic skill levels echoes findings by Umer et al. (2018), who reported that English teachers' assessment practices did not align with learning outcomes. In this study, the teachers stated that their approach was significantly influenced by informal talks with colleagues who continuously emphasised the importance of exams and the pressure they felt to ensure their students performed well.

To overcome this pressure, the teachers adhered to the content of textbooks in both preparation and assessing students, limiting more interactive approaches to teaching a language. This dynamic was evident in observations when the teachers explained book content based on their experiences, alerting students about potential exam topics, and advising them on how to prioritise their studies to focus effectively on the exam. This exam-focused approach, with an emphasis on vocabulary and grammar skills, does not support English language proficiency improvement from A1 to B1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Shishan, 2020). The *Rule* aspect stipulates that exams must strictly adhere to the content covered in the textbooks.

For example, if a question indicates that blank appears before a noun, students are prompted to look for an adjective in the answer choices. However, when exams emphasise practical skills such as writing and reading and include content that extends beyond the textbook, both students and teachers are encouraged to focus on skill development rather than mere memorisation. To enhance the assessment process, there is a need to diversify the types of tests administered. Instead of solely relying on multiple-choice questions, the introduction of more open-ended tests with multiple rounds could provide a richer, more comprehensive evaluation of student understanding and skills.

Building on this emphasis on skill development, the educational activity system reveals evident contradictions among the components of *Rules*, *Secondary Tools*, and *Community*. This system highlights the ongoing struggle within educational settings to balance standardised procedures with the diverse needs of the community it serves. The *Rules* component, which emphasises unified exams, is designed to maintain standardisation and accountability. However, these *Rules* often contradict the needs of the *Community*, which comprises students whose future opportunities are significantly shaped by their performance in these assessments. The *Community* would benefit from a more holistic educational approach that values diverse forms of learning and assessment, highlighting a tension between the rigid, exam-focused *Rules* and the broader educational needs of students. Another aspect of the *Community* that is unfortunately missing from formal and systematic engagement is the collaborative practice among teachers in PYP.

*Secondary Tools*, referring to the methods and materials used in teaching, predominantly focus on traditional exams through the assigned digital books presentation. Although there has been an introduction of skills assessments aimed at making evaluations more comprehensive, the persistent reliance on traditional summative assessment methods for university entry and exit underlines a preference that limits the scope of teaching and assessment practices. This creates a contradiction between the *Secondary Tools* employed and the *Community's* needs for skills relevant in a rapidly changing global job market.

Before delving into the discussion of component contradictions in this section, it is essential to understand the sociocultural context of education within and outside the PYP classroom in KSA, especially given the deep-rooted exam culture. This culture significantly influences students' life trajectories: examination outcomes dictate the universities students can attend, the specialisations they can pursue, and ultimately the professional roles they qualify for. The

academic performance throughout a student's school life critically determines their social capital, a concept Bourdieu (1985) defines as the resources available through a network of institutionalised relationships marked by mutual recognition.

The National Centre for Assessment (Qiyas) relies on high school summative assessments to determine student advancement and emphasises traditional entrance exams for universities. This system continues into professional life. Even though this current university admission system has been improved by blending secondary school grades with standardised test scores it still heavily favours an exam-centric paradigm. For example, weighted grade calculations for different tracks within the preparatory year prioritise score from aptitude and achievement tests, highlighting an enduring focus on exams (See the admission criteria of two Saudi Universities: King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals, 2024; and Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, 2024). This exam-centric approach also extends to the professional domain, where eligibility for educational positions often requires a 'Very Good' grade or higher, along with passing specialised professional licensing exams. This reinforces the societal view of exams as the ultimate measure of capability and success. There should be further debate on the nature of student evaluations, with a focus on finding more holistic approaches. A wider range of evaluation methods, which assess a variety of skills, learning styles, and ways of thinking and working, could introduce different angles of creativity and innovation into the system, thereby broadening KSA's human capital and global potential.

This discussion has already started as indicated in the work by Kumar and George (2020), who advocate for a shift towards valuing practical skills over academic degrees in response to rapid technological changes and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their perspective suggests that hiring practices in education and other sectors need to evolve to better reflect the diverse capabilities required in today's dynamic job market.

The reliance on exams outlined in this discussion is reflective of the Saudi sociocultural context where the value of an individual's knowledge and skills is often assessed through their ability to perform in exam settings (Abahussain, 2016; Al-Seghayer, 2014c; Alharbi, 2019; Alshehri, 2013; OECD, 2020). The government's initiatives to expand evaluation criteria and develop transferable, 21st-century skills like critical thinking and creativity are commendable and aim to align with global standards. However, research indicates that a more radical cultural shift is necessary to truly move beyond the exam-dominated mindset (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020; Hakim, 2015; OECD, 2013). This would involve reimagining the KSA education system to one that better aligns with more developed nations that value diverse forms of learning and assessment, thereby fostering an environment where students can demonstrate their potential in different ways, beyond the confines of standardised testing (OECD, 2012). The teachers' acceptance of exam-centric approaches aligns teacher cognition and institutional practices, and this identifies another powerful influence: the *Community*.

*Community* critiques the prevailing exam-centric focus within the education system, emphasising its consequences on teaching and learning practices. It leverages the conceptual framework of the 'human activity system' as delineated by Engeström (1987, p. 67), viewing the community — specifically students — as active participants in knowledge creation and acquisition. This approach underlines the importance of recognising students not merely as beneficiaries of educational content but as vital contributors to the educational process itself.

In this study, the assessments commonly demanded of students in these settings were presentations focusing on vocabulary and general facts. Feedback from the teachers tended to be unsystematic and was typically delivered in a lecture-style for presentation skills and in written form for group work. To mitigate some of these challenges and foster a more engaging classroom environment, some teachers have turned to technological tools such as

Padlet. This platform had been used to make classrooms livelier and to allow students the opportunity to vote on the best group writings, aiming to increase student interaction and engagement.

This study reinforces Chan and Tan's (2022) findings which illustrate how the pressures of national examinations and accountability steer teachers towards a predominance of summative assessments. The focus on exam preparation limits the use of formative assessments, despite their benefits for learning outcomes. This issue is highlighted by Almosa (2018), who found discrepancies between teachers' reported use of formative assessment techniques and their actual classroom practices in ELC, suggesting a gap between understanding and implementation. Such a narrowed focus on exam preparation as exists in KSA not only diminishes the quality of education but also restricts the development of a more comprehensive and holistic educational experience.

The discussion advocates for a shift in educational practices and priorities, emphasising the incorporation of diverse assessment practices such as portfolios, peer reviews, research projects, reflective journals, presentations, integrated skills tasks, and combined self and teacher assessments to develop a comprehensive set of AcLits in ESL classrooms, thereby fostering a richer, more diversified learning experience that goes beyond mere exam preparation.

The implementation of AcLits in EFL classrooms faces significant challenges due to restrictive curriculum policies that limit teacher autonomy in choosing teaching and assessment methods. Implementation is exacerbated by standardised assessment practices, and a lack of adequate training, leading teachers to rely on personal beliefs and institutional culture rather than on pedagogically sound principles. As highlighted by Alzahrani et al. (2022), the dominance of exam-focused pedagogy restricts the integration of broader AcLits

skills. Furthermore, Almosa and Alzahrani (2022) identify a critical need for specific training programs and standards to support effective assessment practices in Saudi HE.

Additionally, the *Community* element exacerbates the tension by offering few opportunities for teachers to engage meaningfully with colleagues due to the highly ELC Structured Prescriptive. The teacher participants' lack of connectedness with their colleagues and the inability to be engaged in a 'community of practice' (CoP) suggested more concerning elements (Wenger, 1998, 2000). Wenger et al. (2002) state that a strong CoP requires:

A unique combination of three fundamental elements; a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain; and shared practice that they are developing to be effective in their domain. (p. 27)

In the vein of positive empirical results, both Parr and Bulfin (2022) and Widodo and Allamnakhrah (2020) highlight the significant benefits of CoP. Parr and Bulfin (2022) found that teachers gained confidence, innovation, and new professional identities, enriching their teaching knowledge through a supportive environment. Similarly, Widodo and Allamnakhrah (2020) demonstrated that a blended professional learning community helped Indonesian teacher transition from curriculum deliverers to curriculum makers, adopting diverse pedagogical methods and balanced assessments. Both studies stress the importance of well-structured CoPs for meaningful engagement and professional growth, which current structures like the ELC fail to provide.

The emphasis here is on the importance of all members being able to participate in the decision-making process and being able to share their practice experience without constraint; the power of the whole is when everyone is working together so growth and positive change occurs. In contrast, isolation is seen to be conducive to stagnation (Akbar & Picard, 2020;

Datnow, 2018; Skinnari, 2020). The effects of these rule-driven constraints on the subject subsequently influence the *Community* aspect of the activity system. When teachers are not allocated sufficient time and resources to dedicate to individual students, opportunities for engagement and interaction within the learning community become constrained.

The study presents a very strong argument to suggest that exam-oriented approaches and limited teacher agency within the Saudi educational system and culture contradict the broader aspirations of SV2030 which aims to promote a knowledge-based economy and develop a skilled workforce (Al-Ghamdi, 2021b; Alanazi & Widin, 2018; Allamnakhrah, 2013; Paige et al., 2003). By neglecting the importance of the integration of AcLits, the system falls short of equipping students with the necessary competencies and adaptability required in today's globalised society.

### **7.2.3 Sub-Contradiction 6: Subjects, Community versus Secondary Tools**

The contradictions between *Subjects*, *Community*, and *Secondary Tools* in English language teaching highlights the tension inherent in educational environments. Teachers, as *Subjects*, recognise the challenges of low English proficiency and motivation among PYP students (*Community*), which hinders the application of AcLits and thorough discussions in the classroom. This situation is thus exacerbated by *Community* expectations, where the prevalent low proficiency and motivation levels prevent teachers from effectively deploying advanced pedagogical strategies.

Research by Al-Abiky (2019), Alshammari (2022), and Picard (2006a) supports the concern that tertiary students often exhibit low English proficiency levels upon entering university, despite having studied the language for at least six years during intermediate (grade 7) and secondary school education. Low student proficiency was identified as one of the issues that made it even more challenging for teachers to advance their academic and professional skills

(Section 4.2.2.4) and may explain why language teachers rely on their First Language (L1) to explain concepts or even conduct their classes. Gaffas (2019) provides supporting evidence for this phenomenon, noting that English Medium of Instruction (EMI) is often sidelined in favour of L1 due to the lecturers' recognition of students' limited English proficiency.

Consequently, the *Secondary Tools*, such as traditional English teaching methods that emphasise grammar and vocabulary, extensive translingual practices, and reliance solely on second-language textbooks, may not adequately address the needs of students who require both exposure to ESP and gradual integration into AcLits, as discussed by Picard (2006a). She argues that academic English should not be withheld until students reach a higher proficiency level. Instead, there should be a recognition that if students are already proficient in cognitively demanding tasks in their native language, they might also handle similar tasks in English with appropriate linguistic support. This perspective suggests that a rigid adherence to conventional ESL progression — from basic interpersonal communication skills to cognitive academic language proficiency — may not always be the most effective approach.

Therefore, the current educational practices, which often delay introducing academic English until students achieve a certain proficiency level, need re-evaluation. Such practices might not only hold back students who can engage with more complex material but also contribute to a disconnect between what educational policies dictate and what is pedagogically beneficial for students. This tension calls for a more flexible and responsive educational framework that aligns better with the actual capabilities and needs of English learners.

Whether the use of the *Secondary Tool* of L1 is genuinely assisting students' understanding in language classrooms is debatable. Without a doubt, teachers should not use the L1 as the main medium of instruction for language learning (Almoayidi, 2018). Relying on L1 extensively as was done by some of the teachers may limit students' development of the targeted language

(Harmer, 2007; Khan & Kosnin, 2022; Krashen, 1981) and as such, inhibit their ability to develop AcLits. Admittedly, there is research that suggests benefits to integrating L1 into teaching and learning. Cross (2016) illustrates how integrating L1 in a strategic and supportive role such as through glossing<sup>12</sup>, rather than as the primary medium of instruction, can enhance language learning and content understanding. Cross's study highlights the benefits of using L1 to facilitate comprehension and engagement in content-focused tasks within a language learning context.

English language students face significant challenges with vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, impacting their confidence and critical thinking abilities. Limited vocabulary not only hinders their ability to articulate thoughts, thus affecting pronunciation and reducing speaking confidence (Zainnuri, 2013), but also impairs their reading comprehension — a critical component of thinking critically (Brooks et al., 2021; Manihuruk, 2020). Additionally, the need to focus on grammatical accuracy slows their verbal expression, further impacting their critical analysis skills (Ünalı & Yüce, 2021). In addressing these challenges, the integration of students' L1 could provide a richer, more accessible learning experience. Judicious use of L1, through strategies such as code-mixing and code-switching, can support rather than hinder the acquisition of the target language. This approach not only helps enhance vocabulary and bilingual comprehension, as demonstrated by (Sabri et al., 2019), but also bolsters student engagement, motivation, and confidence — key elements for developing AcLits, as noted by (Khazaei et al., 2012). Therefore, incorporating L1 in language classrooms offers a nuanced solution that can mitigate the limitations imposed by rule-driven

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<sup>12</sup> Glossing is an instructional strategy where difficult words or phrases in the target language (L2) are explained in the students' first language (L1) or through simpler expressions in L2. This can be done in textbooks, reading materials, or during instruction to help learners understand challenging content without extensive disruption to the flow of learning in L2.

learning environments, allowing students to more fully engage in and benefit from the learning process.

The current study further posits that the reliance on second language textbooks for instruction fosters a ‘dependency culture’ among learners and teachers (Hall, 2011) and results (*Secondary Tools*) into teaching practices where integrating AcLits is often overlooked, unintentional, or inconsistently handled, despite their potential benefits (Allwright, 1981; Richards, 1998). This situation is compounded by the observation that some teachers have become ‘de-skilled,’ losing the ability to think critically or independently and act autonomously in the classroom, which in turn exacerbates their reliance on textbooks for teaching decisions (Alanazi & Widin, 2018; Lillis & Scott, 2007). This heavy reliance on textbooks further limits teachers’ ability to facilitate the development of AcLits, highlighting a need for teachers to retain their agency in decision-making processes (Swan & Brumfit, 1991). The current language pedagogy implies that teachers are expected to use more authentic rather than textbook materials. In the EFL context where most of teachers would struggle with their own language proficiency (Mofareh, 2019), the use of authentic resources was not noted.

The challenges in English language teaching arising from students’ low proficiency and traditional educational methods hinder the application of AcLits and affect student engagement. Research indicates that low English proficiency remains a significant barrier at the university level, leading some teachers to use students’ L1 to aid comprehension (Ahsan et al., 2021). While this can enhance understanding when used judiciously, it may also limit full language immersion. Moreover, the reliance on traditional grammar and vocabulary-focused methods and textbooks does not sufficiently cater to students capable of handling more complex materials. Such misalignment calls for an educational reform that embraces a more

flexible approach, integrating strategic L1 use and reducing dependency on textbooks to better align teaching with students' actual capabilities and needs.

In conclusion, this section has highlighted how highly structured and prescriptive learning environments within ELCs hinder the effective integration of AcLits and stifle pedagogical innovation. The reliance on traditional teaching methods and large class sizes necessitates urgent educational reforms to promote flexibility and teacher autonomy. Addressing these challenges requires systemic reforms that revise structural constraints and enhance support for teachers through professional development and community collaboration. Such changes are crucial for aligning teaching practices with the objectives of SV2030, ensuring the advancement of educational quality. Moving forward, the discussion examines the alignment or contradiction of these objectives within ELCs, crucial for bridging the gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities.

### **7.3 Main Factor 3: Translating SV2030 Objectives in English Language Centres**

For answering the third question (How has the development of AcLits in ELC classrooms in Saudi HE been mediated by the SV2030?), the study shows that the teachers were strongly committed to SV2030, clearly accepting it as a sign of Saudi Arabia's commitment to global competitiveness and improving human capabilities.

SV2030 is also accepted as a strategic roadmap that encompasses various sectors, including education, with the goal of harnessing the potential of human resources to drive sustainable growth and prosperity (Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023; Al-Zahrani & Rajab, 2017; Al Mukhallafi, 2019; Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2018). For example, the implementation of the PYP is recognised as a positive change with teachers acknowledging its advantages for both students and teachers. The teachers' positive attitudes towards SV2030 were critical, as their beliefs significantly influenced classroom practices and the effective implementation of educational

policies (Borg, 2015; Fives & Buehl, 2016). This finding aligned with the perspectives of Al-Zahrani and Rajab (2017), who highlight the positive attitude of EFL teachers toward aligning their scientific and academic development with SV2030, particularly in promoting English language teaching. These perspectives consolidate the research that identifies the enthusiasm and support of teachers toward SV2030, illustrating their belief in its potential to shape a brighter future for education in the country.

The positive impacts of SV2030 on ELCs include advancements in accreditation, a shift in educational paradigms, and female empowerment. SV2030 has significantly influenced ELCs, driving them to achieve local and international academic accreditation and engage with global quality assurance programs. An emphasis on quality aligns with international educational standards, enhancing the prestige and effectiveness of these institutions. Additionally, the shift from EFL to ESL aligns ELC curricula with the practical demands of the Saudi labour market, supporting economic diversification goals under SV2030 (Alzhrani & Alkubaidi, 2020; Bahanshal, 2023).

Significant strides in female empowerment within ELCs were also evident, with more women assuming leadership roles and engaging in decision-making processes. Transformation is highlighted by the experiences of teachers like Nada and Huda, who noted a proactive shift in educational practices and an increase in student-led initiatives and entrepreneurship, particularly among female students. These changes reflected a broader movement towards inclusivity and empowerment in KSA's academic setting, facilitating a shift towards a more dynamic and diversified economy.

However, the SV2030 policy objectives regarding educational outcomes remain unclear, leading to a misalignment between intended educational reforms and actual outcomes. This issue may arise from the rapid pace at which this vision is mandated, potentially causing

discrepancies in the understanding, interpretation, and implementation of these policies in the ELCs. The contradictions between the *Division of Labour* and *Object*, and between *Object* and *Outcomes*, reveal systemic tensions within the educational framework as influenced by the SV2030 ambitions.

### **7.3.1 Sub-Contradiction 7: Division of labour and Object**

A contradiction emerged between the *Division of labour* and the *Object* in the implementation of AcLits within PYP. While the object of enhancing AcLits aims to equip students with comprehensive skills for global competitiveness, the *Division of Labour* necessary remains poorly defined and unevenly distributed among teachers and other stakeholders, leading to inconsistencies in the enactment of educational policies and practices.

The primary responsibility for delineating and enhancing AcLits often remains unclear, leading to challenges in effectively enacting AcLits. Diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, institutions, and disciplinary experts (Carstens, 2013; Fouché et al., 2017; Kang, 2022; Li & Wang, 2018; Richards et al., 2023), play significant roles in shaping educational practices. However, as Schulte (2018) elucidates through the concept of the ‘politics of use,’ the enactment of these educational policies within classroom settings ultimately hinges on the discretion and agency of teachers. I found that there is uncertainty among the teachers about their role in equipping students with AcLits skills. Some teachers expressed that their primary objective in HE was to enhance students’ English proficiency, noting that time constraints make it challenging to address both high-level English proficiency and AcLits simultaneously. It would be beneficial for teachers to understand that achieving proficiency in English, along with developing a comprehensive set of AcLits skills, is a long-term objective. Recognising this as a more extended endeavour might help in adjusting teaching strategies.

The perspective on teachers' discretionary power and agency is particularly relevant in the KSA educational context, where teachers play a pivotal role in translating AcLits policies into practice. Schulte's (2018) analysis reveals that, regardless of the broader sociopolitical and institutional contexts, teachers are instrumental in navigating and mediating the complexities of educational reforms to meet the specific needs of their students. Therefore, in KSA, the primary responsibility for the successful implementation and actualisation of AcLits falls squarely on teachers. This acknowledgment places an additional burden on them especially in the Saudi context, where the EFL teacher is seen as the central figure in the classroom, dominating the learning process (Alrabai, 2014). In critical areas such as the development of the English curriculum, where teacher involvement is essential, AlSehli (2021) found that Saudi teachers play a minimal role and are seldom engaged in these processes.

I also noted a lack of data on contributors to AcLits in the EFL classroom besides teachers, which may lead to unfairly blaming them. Therefore, establishing a balanced *Division of Labour* among various university stakeholders is crucial for supporting teachers in implementing the AcLits framework. Librarians can help develop students' research and information literacy skills, essential for AcLits. Researchers and curriculum developers can work together to integrate AcLits seamlessly into the curriculum, making these skills fundamental rather than supplementary. Additionally, educational technologists can provide tools and platforms that foster innovative teaching methods, enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Potential collaboration lightens teachers' load, allowing them to concentrate more on pedagogical strategies. Such cooperation not only aids in the practical application of AcLits but also enhances the overall educational experience, ensuring a comprehensive learning journey. Thus, this *Division of Labour* represents a strategic alignment of expertise to optimise the development and delivery of AcLits throughout the curriculum.

A final issue in this contradiction, identified as a problem with the *Division of Labour*, is the ineffective follow-up and mentoring strategies for both past learners and current HE teachers, as highlighted by Iraki (2011). Specifically, he points out that during the practicum stage, a clear disconnect between theoretical instruction and practical application becomes evident.

For example, the responsible supervisor typically attends only once or twice during the EFL teacher training period. Moreover, the supervision of PSTs is poorly managed, with supervisors who lack specialised knowledge in English teaching being assigned to advise and evaluate PSTs. Often, these supervisors are not specialists in English teaching but are merely affiliated with the education department. Consequently, they frequently award high marks to PSTs for classroom performance. This problem is compounded by unclear definitions of roles and responsibilities among PSTs, supervisors, school principals, and cooperating teachers. Additionally, in ELC, there was scant reporting on the stages of follow-up except for one teacher at Univ.B, demonstrating a lack of feedback on teaching practices and reliance on personal experience.

SV2030 sets forth highly ambitious objectives aimed at transforming various sectors, including education. Unfortunately, there appears to be a gap in the planning, particularly concerning the structural readiness of universities to support AcLits system starting from the foundational levels, such as the PYP. This oversight might hinder the effective implementation of the vision's educational goals, which are crucial for cultivating a workforce equipped with advanced cognitive and analytical skills.

The strategic ambitions of SV2030 also significantly influence the *Division of Labour* within universities. There is a pressing need for professional development initiatives that not only focus on higher-order thinking skills but also on enhancing the qualifications of teachers and administrative staff. This is essential for creating an educational environment that aligns with

the global standards and innovative practices that SV2030 aims to achieve. Consequently, universities need to adapt their structures and strategies to provide continuous professional development and to integrate AcLits effectively across all levels of education. This approach will ensure that the educational sector can fully support and realise the transformative objectives of SV2030.

In conclusion, the successful implementation of AcLits within the Saudi educational framework under SV2030 is hindered by unclear policy objectives and a poorly defined *Division of Labour*, which lead to inconsistent practices and place undue pressure on teachers. To overcome these challenges, a more collaborative approach involving various stakeholders. This collaborative effort should aim to integrate AcLits seamlessly into the curriculum and provide robust support systems for teachers. Additionally, addressing structural gaps in university readiness and enhancing professional development are critical for aligning educational practices with the ambitious goals of SV2030. By addressing these issues, the educational sector in KSA can better equip its students with the necessary skills to thrive in a globally competitive environment.

### **7.3.2 Sub-Contradiction 8: Object and Outcome**

My final contradiction arises from the unclear policy objectives of SV2030 (*Object*). Such vagueness in policy directives often results in a lack of clear guidance for stakeholders, which is critical for strategic implementation. Ambiguity permeates down to the operational level, affecting English institutions and teachers who are currently responsible for the practical application of AcLits. These stakeholders face challenges due to the indistinct nature of the policy goals, leading to varied interpretations and inconsistent applications of AcLits across different educational settings (*Outcome*).

Translating SV2030 policies into institutional and program objectives involves challenges such as ensuring accurate conveyance and implementation at the institutional level. Discrepancies in understanding, interpretation, and application of these policies can complicate this process. The unclear objectives can lead to a fragmented approach where each institution or teacher might adopt a different strategy for integrating AcLits into their curriculum and teaching practices. A lack of uniformity can undermine the overall effectiveness of educational reforms intended by SV2030 and hinder the ability of students to meet the high standards of academic and professional communication expected in global arenas as noted by Doyle and Polly (2023) and Fulcher (2012). Moreover, the contradiction highlights a broader issue, where the alignment between the *Object* (policy objectives) and the *Outcome* (practical application) is crucial for systemic coherence and effectiveness.

For example, Asma at Univ.A raised a valid concern regarding the absence of specific objectives related to academic skills, a potential gap in adequately preparing students for HE contexts. Although the course specifications at Univ.B delineated the fundamental skills objectives, Huda and Nouran advocated for surpassing the minimum requirements and emphasising a deeper understanding of the subject matter and the development of more complex skills. They expressed a strong desire to incorporate in-depth content, research skills, and career-specific terminology into the curriculum. However, they acknowledged the existing contradiction between their desire and the *Rules* expressed in the set curriculum.

As stated above, the new accreditation process requires that ELCs align with the objectives of SV2030, leading to efforts at Universities A and B to integrate the development of AcLits into their course objectives. This alignment was intended to support the educational goals of SV2030. Nonetheless, this integration into the curriculum seemed to be limited and not fully

defined, raising questions about the depth of its implementation and its actual impact on student learning outcomes.

This study found that ELCs were progressing in terms of logistical objectives, such as redeveloping curricula and updating handbooks for teachers and students. Each ELC included a newly defined mission, elaborated their vision, and articulated their values, which represents progress. However, these changes were primarily driven by the need to meet accreditation criteria rather than from a genuine, bottom-up approach aimed at addressing local issues or fostering global collaboration. I describe these changes as superficial rather than deeply rooted, focused more on meeting external requirements than on genuinely solving local problems in a timely and cost-effective manner.

When institutions face difficulties in accurately translating policies, the government typically takes on the responsibility to ensure precision. Thus, it is essential for the SV2030 department to consistently monitor universities to verify that they not only understand but also correctly implement these policies, rather than operating in an arbitrary manner. This oversight will help ensure that the changes are meaningful and contribute effectively to the development of AcLits, aligning with the broader educational objectives of SV2030. The process highlights the importance of effective communication and collaboration between government bodies and institutions to facilitate the accurate translation of policies.

In KSA, HCDP (2020) sets broad educational goals and defines desired citizen characteristics but lacks the detailed integration seen in the Australian Qualifications Framework Council (2024). The AQF's clear criteria and structured approach provide a coherent pathway for education, detailing responsibilities and facilitating alignment between educational stages and stakeholder needs. To improve its educational system, KSA could benefit from a framework similar to the AQF, with explicit criteria for qualification levels, detailed role descriptions,

and clear guidelines for accreditation and certification. Documentation would enhance transparency, accountability, and international alignment, boosting the global competitiveness of Saudi graduates.

It is essential to ensure that changes in English language education are gradually adapted to fit local Saudi norms and standards. Alzhrani and Alkubaidi (2020) highlighted the significant challenge of aligning English language education with Saudi cultural and educational norms while modernising and internationalising HE through Western theoretical knowledge and the English language. This alignment is particularly crucial in the development of AcLits within English classrooms, highlighting broader issues of policy and practice alignment. These points reinforce my findings and arguments about the need for careful integration of educational reforms to ensure they are culturally relevant and effectively implemented in fostering academic literacies.

In conclusion, the translation of SV2030 into institutional and program objectives requires clear communication, well-defined frameworks, and effective collaboration between government entities and institutions. Addressing challenges related to translation accuracy, policy ambiguity, and governance alignment is essential to ensure the successful implementation of government policies at the institutional level.

#### **7.4 Educational Implications and Proposed Solutions**

This section addresses the final research question (What are the educational implications of SV2030 in relation to the purpose, implementation, and contradictions of developing AcLits?) informed by the above discussion. These implications propose directions for integrating AcLits in ELC and SLTE.

My study used the CHAT and LTC frameworks to demonstrate that teachers' perspectives significantly affect student learning outcomes. This finding contrasted with the widespread agreement among teachers on valuing AcLits and the goals of the SV2030 initiative. It suggested that despite recognising the importance of these educational frameworks, the teachers' individual attitudes may still lead to varied impacts on how effectively they were implemented or contributed to educational success. Current changes within the ELCs include curricular revisions to emphasise 21st-century skills, increased participation of women in decision-making processes, and a shift in students' perceptions towards the value of English proficiency. Despite these positive developments, the educational environment's structured nature poses considerable limitations to the teaching and development of AcLits.

The research on AcLits integration within EFL classrooms in Saudi universities reveals significant challenges in aligning theoretical aspirations with practical educational implementations, especially under the SV2030 reforms. Central to these challenges is the inconsistency in AcLits' application by teachers, reflecting a broader issue of variability in teaching practices. This inconsistency highlights the complexities of AcLits and highlights the difficulties of shifting from traditional, exam-centric educational paradigms to more holistic approaches.

Teachers' previous learning experiences, often rooted in rote learning and exam preparation, negatively impact their ability and confidence to integrate AcLits into their teaching strategies. There is a notable focus on receptive skills, like reading and vocabulary instruction, at the expense of productive skills, which stifles students' ability to engage more broadly with the language. Classroom activities tend to prioritise exam preparation over the development of communicative skills or the broader objectives of AcLits, with a reliance on closed-ended questions that do little to promote critical thinking or independent learning.

Additionally, the research identifies significant sociocultural tensions within the KSA educational system that affect the integration of AcLits. The aspirations of SV2030 often clash with entrenched educational practices, suggesting a need for explicit objectives and clear alignment with the broader educational goals. Large class sizes, limited institutional support, and a curriculum still heavily tilted towards traditional methodologies further inhibit teachers' efforts to foster autonomous learning and adapt pedagogical strategies.

The study also points out challenges in teaching literacy within formal education settings, particularly against diverse literacy demands in everyday and professional contexts. There was a critical gap in the EFL teachers' understanding of situated AcLits practices, which hampered the development of effective EGP and ESP courses. This gap presents an opportunity for comprehensive teacher training that includes ethnographic research into learners' target professional environments to enhance curriculum development and classroom practices.

There is a critical need for systemic reforms in ELT within Saudi universities to align with the SV2030 vision of transformation. Central to these reforms is the integration of AcLits into the curriculum, which necessitates a strategy involving updates to the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and assessment methods.

Firstly, there is a pressing need to enhance the training provided within SLTE programs. These programs must evolve to include AcLits in their curricula, ensuring that PSTs are equipped with both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to implement these literacies effectively. This involves not only incorporating the latest research and best practices in ELT but also providing PSTs with immersive, specialised training that prepares them for the complexities of teaching AcLits. For instance, Tandamrong and Parr (2024) highlighted that the successful implementation of Learner-Centred Education (LCE) in Thai

universities was significantly aided by ongoing professional development and supportive institutional policies. Teachers who engaged in continuous professional learning and participated in professional learning communities were better equipped to navigate the sociocultural and institutional challenges of implementing LCE. This collaborative environment enhanced their understanding and application of learner-centred approaches.

Additionally, existing educational frameworks and curricular objectives need critical re-evaluation to better support the holistic educational goals of SV2030. This includes revising curricula to explicitly incorporate AcLits and aligning assessment methods with real-world academic and professional contexts to better measure students' abilities to apply critical thinking, research, and communication skills. ELCs can support these changes by offering current resources, specialised tutorials, and professional development opportunities tailored to engaging with AcLits.

Institutional support is paramount to enable teachers to integrate AcLits effectively. This requires clear policies that explicitly support AcLits integration and provide a coherent framework for teachers to follow. Enhancing institutional support also involves ensuring that teachers have access to modern pedagogical materials, technology, and the training needed to use these resources effectively.

The study also highlights the variability in teachers' perceptions and applications of AcLits, indicating a significant gap in understanding and depth. To address this, professional development must be prioritised, focusing on enriching teachers' comprehension of AcLits and equipping them with practical tools for implementation. This professional development should also emphasise collaborative learning strategies, critical engagement with content, and differentiated instruction, which are crucial for fostering a pedagogical shift towards comprehensive student development.

Addressing the identified challenges and contradictions involves not only updating ELT policies and practices but also ensuring that teaching strategies are attuned to classroom realities and assessments accurately reflect students' critical thinking and language proficiency. By realigning educational strategies with SV2030's ambitious goals and strengthening the support systems for teachers, Saudi universities can enhance the development of AcLits, preparing students for global competitiveness and contributing significantly to the nation's transformation into a knowledge-based economy.

Efforts to address plagiarism and academic integrity necessitate the full integration of AcLits into educational practices, going beyond merely policy build on local cultural and religious practices (Akbar & Picard, 2020). Institutions are encouraged to explore various successful methods and test them. Dalal (2015) advocates for reflective practices and dialogue to instil academic values. Lucky et al. (2019) utilise technical detection tools as deterrents. Nelson (2021) calls for systemic institutional reforms. Combining these approaches — educational depth, technical tools, and institutional policies — could create a comprehensive strategy to effectively combat plagiarism and enhance academic integrity. This strategy should include teaching skills such as paraphrasing, referencing, and digital literacy to help students recognise and avoid plagiarism. However, current curriculum limitations and the focus on exam preparation often contradict these aims, hindering the adoption of such practices. Despite some teachers expressing a desire for creativity and student-led discussions, actual classroom practices frequently do not reflect these values, indicating a gap between teacher beliefs and teaching methodologies.

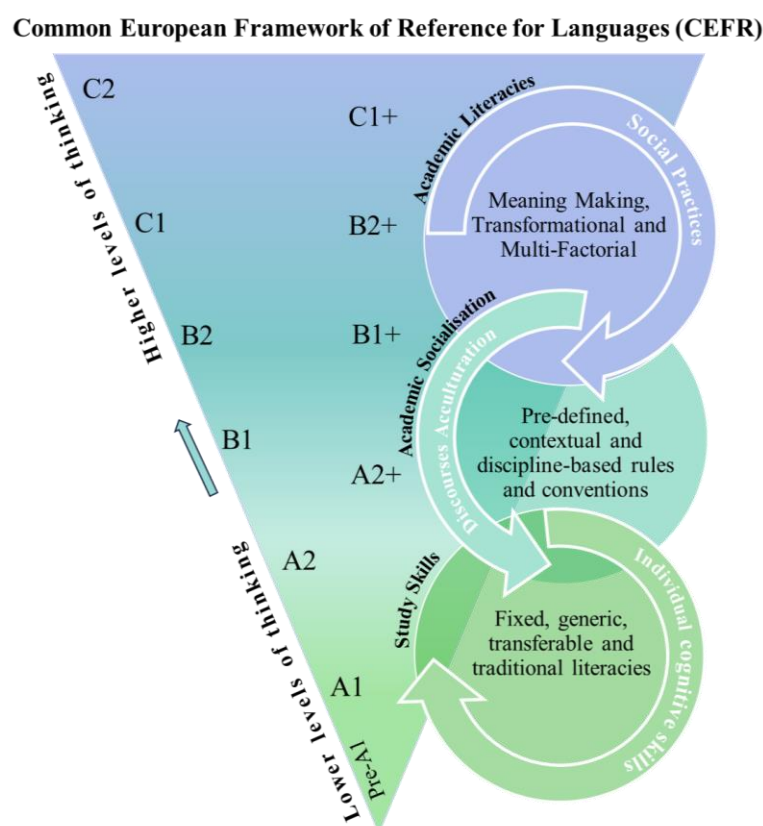
Furthermore, digital platforms such as Mometrix Academy's (2024) reading comprehension videos and the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework (2024) collectively offer a comprehensive toolkit for EFL students and teachers to enhance AcLits and integrate essential life skills into language teaching and learning. Mometrix's videos bolster the understanding of

complex texts and critical thinking, while the Cambridge Framework fosters holistic development across eight key areas, including digital literacy, communication, and emotional intelligence. Together, they advocate for an approach to learning that not only enhances language proficiency and academic success but also prepares individuals for future challenges. This combination makes education more engaging, adaptable, and relevant to global contexts.

At the tertiary level, it is recommended by Picard (2004, 2006a), Jacobs (2005), and Wingate (2018) that ELCs develop both English language proficiency and AcLits concurrently, as represented in Figure 7.3. Such an iterative approach, a dual-focus strategy, recognises the interdependence of the AcLits framework (Lea & Street, 2006) and the CEFR. This could provide teachers, students, and SLTE developers with a more holistic educational experience within the ELC. The progression through these stages is non-linear, allowing flexibility to revisit foundational study skills as needed, even as they advance to more complex levels. This flexibility is crucial for adapting the learning process to meet diverse AcLits needs in the English language classroom.

**Figure 7.3**

*Integrating Academic Literacies and CEFR through a Dual-Focus, Iterative Strategy*



Understanding *Study Skills* focuses on developing cognitive abilities, grammar mastery, and the ability to apply knowledge across different contexts. Essential skills such as organising information, grasping academic vocabulary, and interpreting visual data are crucial. *Academic Socialisation* moves beyond basics to incorporate acculturation into specific disciplines, genre-specific writing, and adherence to academic conventions. This stage advances skills like reflective thinking, enabling students to assess and refine their learning strategies. *Academic Literacies* delve into meaning-making, exploring power dynamics and contextual influences within academia, thus fostering critical thinking and proficiency in handling complex texts. Techniques like metaphorical expression and cooperative learning are employed to promote a transformative educational experience, enhancing both creative and analytical capabilities.

This integrated approach could facilitate a balanced distribution of responsibilities within ELCs. By clearly defining roles, librarians can focus on enhancing information literacy, teachers can concentrate on delivering content and pedagogy, and IT can provide the necessary technological support. This division of labour ensures that each stakeholder can contribute effectively to the educational process, optimising the implementation of AcLits and improving the overall learning environment.

## **7.5 Summary**

This discussion highlighted significant challenges in integrating AcLits into KSA's English language classrooms amid the SV2030 educational reforms. Key issues included a lack of teacher familiarity with AcLits, outdated teaching methods, inadequate teacher training, and rigid institutional regulations, all of which hinder effective implementation of AcLits. Moreover, contradictions in role definitions and policy objectives contributed to a misalignment between intended reforms and actual classroom outcomes. These systemic tensions highlighted the need for reforms in teacher education, policy clarity, and support structures to empower teachers and align ELT with SV2030 goals. Addressing these challenges will not only improve educational outcomes but also enhance KSA's global educational standing. This calls for a collaborative approach among teachers, policymakers, and the broader educational community to streamline ELT practices with reformative objectives, focusing on professional development, curriculum redesign, and clearer policies to effectively develop AcLits in HE.

## 8 Conclusion

This qualitative study employed a narrative case study design to investigate the ways in which English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and two public Higher Education (HE) institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) have recently been responding to the policy of Saudi Vision 2030 (SV2030). It especially focused on how teachers have been interpreting and enacting Academic Literacies (AcLits) practices and principles in Saudi HE, and how these connect with the policy SV2030. By employing Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) in dialogue with theories of Language Teacher Cognition (LTC), it represents and examines the interactions between Saudi education policies, teacher knowledge beliefs and cognitions, and classroom practices.

The teachers in Saudi EFL classrooms expressed an understanding of AcLits as essential, not only for English but across academic disciplines and future careers. However, the study highlights a wide range of interpretations, influenced by limited professional development and teacher preparation programs. Teachers' focus often remains on basic literacy skills, such as grammar and vocabulary, rather than critical thinking and communicative competence, reflecting a mismatch between theory and practice.

This study also revealed that the highly structured and prescriptive nature of the educational environment limits teachers' ability to implement innovative and flexible pedagogical strategies necessary for developing AcLits. Teachers are often confined to textbook-based teaching, large class sizes, and exam-oriented practices, leading to a lack of teacher autonomy and limited opportunities to engage students in higher-order thinking. In terms of contextual elements, significant gaps in students' prior English preparation, particularly in secondary schools, were also identified as an obstacle for HE teachers' practices. On the other hand,

notable changes observed within the English Language Centres (ELCs) include a revised curriculum that emphasises 21st-century skills, greater focus on productive skills, increased participation of female voices in decision-making processes, and a shift in female students' attitudes, recognising English language proficiency as an essential tool for success in the modern world.

Despite the goals of SV2030, the inconsistent allocation of roles and responsibilities among stakeholders, including teachers, policymakers, and curriculum developers, is a barrier to the full realisation of AcLits within Saudi classrooms, where teachers feel constrained by curriculum mandates and time limitations. The rapid pace of reforms also presents challenges in translating policy objectives into classroom practices, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent approaches to AcLits across different educational institutions.

Finally, this study indicates that SV2030 is recognised as a driver for change, but detailed guidance needs to be provided for it to be effectively translated into the English classroom. While the teachers demonstrated commitment to SV2030 and recognised its potential to enhance global competitiveness, the objectives of SV2030 related to education remained unclear. This vagueness leads to varied interpretations of AcLits integration, with teachers often focusing on English proficiency rather than a comprehensive development of AcLits.

The study is consistent with and expands upon international research, which emphasises the critical role of teachers' attitudes in shaping educational performance and driving transformation (Clarke et al., 2009; Issan et al., 2011; Kılınç et al., 2024; Leichenko et al., 2022; Uy et al., 2024). All participants acknowledged the significance of AcLits and the SV2030 initiative, as well as the pressing need to align educational outcomes with labour market demands. They maintained a positive attitude toward the SV2030 initiative, likely because AcLits have long been a topic of discussion. Fostering AcLits requires not only a

positive attitude but also the internalisation of relevant concepts to ensure their effective implementation in the classroom.

The significance of teachers dedicated to fostering AcLits in KSA cannot be understated, emphasising the urgent need for high quality, sustainable professional development programs. Policymakers and language teacher training providers share a responsibility to ensure the successful implementation of AcLits. Whether through pre-service training or ongoing professional development, comprehensive programs are required to equip teachers with a profound understanding of AcLits principles and effective integration strategies, thereby cultivating a generation of internationally competitive students. Without a solid grasp of AcLits, university students may struggle to meet these expectations, which may lead to lower academic performance, higher dropout rates, and limited opportunities for future professional success. Additionally, the landscape of higher education is becoming increasingly diverse, with students coming from various cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. This diversity brings a wide range of literacy practices and challenges into the academic environment.

While teachers have criticised traditional, teacher-centred methods, many continue to rely on them, revealing the strong influence of historical and cultural factors on their teaching practices. This suggests a disconnect between the theoretical acceptance of new teaching approaches and their practical implementation, which in turn hinders the development of AcLits among current students. Despite the strategic implementation of the SV2030 initiative, the actions taken have been inconsistent and lack adequate support. As a result, teachers need greater academic support, and perhaps financial motivation, to effectively embrace and apply these new educational methods.

## **8.1 Recommendations**

The following recommendations outline nine areas for improving the integration of AcLits in Saudi HE, addressing the roles of teachers, leadership, institutional frameworks, and policymakers, to align with the objectives of SV2030.

### **8.1.1 Moving Beyond Study Skills to Develop Academic Literacies**

One of the critical challenges identified in Saudi HE is the current emphasis on receptive language skills, such as grammar and vocabulary, at the expense of productive skills like critical thinking, academic writing, and discourse-based communication. While these basic skills are necessary, they align with Lea and Street's (1998, 2006) Study Skills model, which focuses on technical proficiency. This narrow focus does not fully equip students to engage with the complex, context-specific academic tasks required in higher education.

To promote higher-order academic skills, there is a pressing need to move beyond the Study Skills stage and foster the broader, more complex understanding of AcLits. AcLits are essential for navigating academic discourse, constructing arguments, conducting research, and critically engaging with texts — skills necessary for success in both higher education and professional contexts.

#### **Key Actions by institutional leadership:**

- (i) **Professional Development Focus:** Teachers need targeted professional development that emphasises the transition from teaching basic skills to fostering critical thinking and discourse-based communication. Workshops, seminars, and collaborative training sessions should introduce strategies that promote critical engagement, problem-solving, and academic communication.

**(ii) Curriculum Realignment:** The curriculum should be restructured to integrate AcLits as core components. This means balancing grammar and vocabulary drills with open-ended tasks that require students to engage in critical problem-solving, research, and academic discourse.

**(iii) Practical Application:** Teachers should be trained to implement communicative and student-centred activities, such as debates, project-based learning, and case studies. These methods will shift classroom practices from rote memorisation to tasks that challenge students to create, analyse, and critique ideas in academic and real-world contexts.

By shifting focus from Study Skills to AcLits, teachers can create learning environments that better prepare students for the academic demands of higher education and equip them with the critical thinking and communication skills necessary for real-world applications. This shift is essential to align teaching practices with the broader goals of the SV2030 initiative, ensuring students are prepared for global competitiveness and academic success.

### **8.1.2 Cultivating Autonomous Learning and Student-Centred Classrooms**

A key factor hindering the development of AcLits in classrooms is the prevalence of teacher-centred approaches, where students are passive recipients of knowledge. The traditional lecture format, minimal classroom interaction, and a focus on exams and grades do not foster the autonomous learning or critical thinking required by AcLits. To align with the goals of SV2030, there is a need to create classrooms that emphasise autonomy, where students take an active role in their learning process.

#### **Key Actions by teachers:**

- (i) **Promote Open-Ended Learning Activities:** Teachers should incorporate activities that require independent research, critical analysis, and student-led learning. Assignments like group projects, inquiry-based learning, and student presentations encourage students to explore topics in depth, collaborate with peers, and take ownership of their learning.
- (ii) **Reduce Exam-Centric Practices:** While exams are an integral part of the assessment process, relying heavily on them creates a surface-level understanding of content. Teachers should be encouraged to diversify assessment methods by incorporating portfolios, reflective journals, peer reviews, and oral assessments, which allow for the demonstration of critical thinking and deeper engagement with content.
- (iii) **Encourage Reflective Learning:** Teachers can integrate reflective practices into their classrooms, asking students to think critically about their learning processes, challenges they encounter, and strategies they can use to overcome them. This cultivates metacognitive skills and helps students become more aware of their learning paths.

Fostering autonomy and active learning will help students transition from dependent, passive learning to a model that prepares them for the complexities of academic and professional environments.

### **8.1.3 Developing a Comprehensive National Professional Development Framework**

The discussion highlighted the critical gap in teacher preparation and the disconnect between theoretical knowledge gained during higher education and its practical implementation in classrooms. Teachers often lack the tools to effectively integrate AcLits into their teaching due to limited training, reliance on traditional pedagogical strategies, and institutional

constraints. A comprehensive national professional development framework could provide ongoing, tailored support to teachers in all stages of their careers.

#### **Key Actions by English Language Centres:**

- (i) Systematic and Targeted Training Programs:** Professional development should not be limited to sporadic workshops but instead be part of a continuous framework that evolves alongside teachers' careers. Programs should focus on practical implementation of AcLits, equipping teachers with innovative classroom techniques such as task-based learning, communicative activities, and differentiated instruction.
- (ii) Mentorship and Peer Learning:** Establishing mentorship programs where experienced teachers who have successfully integrated AcLits into their teaching can support and guide less experienced colleagues. Peer-to-peer learning sessions can also provide a platform for teachers to share best practices and collaborate on addressing classroom challenges.
- (iii) Interdisciplinary Training and Support:** Given that AcLits encompass more than just language proficiency, teachers from various disciplines should receive training that helps them integrate literacy skills into their subject areas. This interdisciplinary approach would encourage teachers to understand and address the literacy demands specific to their subjects.

A national professional development framework would also ensure that training is relevant to the local context while incorporating global pedagogical advancements. This would lead to a more systematic and sustainable integration of AcLits across educational institutions in Saudi Arabia.

### 8.1.4 Curriculum Reform and Flexible Pedagogical Approaches

The curriculum in Saudi universities, particularly in English Language Teaching (ELT), is still largely centred on grammar, vocabulary, and exam-based assessments. This structure is not conducive to fostering the higher-order thinking skills and critical engagement emphasised by AcLits. For SV2030's objectives to be met, universities must revise their curricula to ensure that AcLits are integrated as core components across all disciplines, not only within English programs.

#### Key Actions by university curriculum committees:

- (i) **Holistic Curriculum Design:** Curriculum Committees must revise their curricula to move away from content-heavy, exam-driven structures toward more dynamic, flexible, and skills-based approaches. This includes embedding AcLits in every subject area, ensuring that students are developing research, analytical, and critical thinking skills, regardless of their major.
- (ii) **Interdisciplinary AcLits Integration:** Committees should work to integrate AcLits within disciplines beyond language programs, embedding literacy practices in science, engineering, business, and other fields. This interdisciplinary approach ensures that students apply both general and discipline-specific academic skills across a range of subjects.
- (iii) **Flexible Pedagogy:** Universities should encourage flexible teaching strategies that emphasise project-based learning, case studies, and collaborative tasks. This will create opportunities for students to engage in real-world problem-solving, aligning learning outcomes with SV2030's emphasis on global competitiveness and critical thinking.

Curricular reform would ensure that AcLits are not treated as supplementary but as integral to academic success, leading to a broader and deeper application of these skills across various fields of study.

### **8.1.5 Teacher Empowerment and Leadership Involvement**

Teachers' ability to integrate AcLits into their instruction is often constrained by rigid institutional policies, large class sizes, and limited autonomy. To align with SV2030's educational goals, universities must empower teachers by offering them more control over classroom management, curriculum design, and assessment strategies. Leadership within universities plays a crucial role in ensuring that these reforms are adopted and supported at all levels.

#### **Key Actions by university leaders:**

- (i) **Increase Teacher Agency:** Reducing class sizes and granting teachers flexibility in classroom management will allow them to implement more student-centered and innovative teaching methods. Teachers should also be involved in curriculum development to ensure it meets local needs and effectively promotes AcLits.
- (ii) **Leadership Support and Institutional Backing:** University leadership must take an active role in supporting these changes by providing resources, promoting collaborative decision-making, and fostering a culture of innovation. This includes ensuring that teachers have access to professional development opportunities that focus on AcLits and critical pedagogical approaches.
- (iii) **Collaborative Leadership Models:** Universities should adopt collaborative leadership models where faculty, administrators, and educational experts work together to implement AcLits. This includes regular feedback loops between teachers,

curriculum developers, and institutional leaders to ensure that changes in teaching methods align with SV2030's goals.

By empowering teachers and involving leadership in the reform process, universities can create a more adaptive, innovative environment that promotes the development of AcLits while aligning with national educational objectives.

#### **8.1.6 Assessment Reform and Accountability Frameworks**

A major barrier to the development of AcLits in Saudi universities is the reliance on standardised, exam-centric assessments, which prioritise rote memorisation over critical thinking and communication skills. To truly integrate AcLits into the educational framework, universities must redesign their assessment systems to reflect a broader range of skills and competencies.

##### **Key Actions by university assessment committees and institutional oversight bodies:**

- (i) Diverse, Formative Assessment Methods:** Assessment committees should implement varied assessment formats, such as portfolios, research projects, group work, reflective essays, and oral presentations. These methods allow students to showcase their mastery of AcLits through real-world application, critical thinking, and problem-solving.
- (ii) Continuous Monitoring and Accountability:** University leadership and government bodies should create accountability frameworks to regularly audit and monitor the integration of AcLits in assessment practices. These frameworks ensure alignment with SV2030 goals by promoting higher-order skills rather than focusing solely on exam preparation.

**(iii) Professional Development on Assessment Design:** Faculty should receive ongoing professional development to equip them with skills for designing formative assessments that foster creativity, collaboration, and critical engagement. Training should also focus on providing constructive feedback that deepens student interaction with academic content.

Assessment reform is essential for fostering a shift from passive learning to active, engaged, and critically informed student participation. By broadening the methods of evaluation, universities can better prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce, as envisioned by SV203.

#### **8.1.7 Clarifying SV2030 Educational Objectives for Seamless Integration of Academic Literacies**

One of the significant challenges identified in the context of SV2030 is the lack of clarity regarding educational objectives, especially in the integration of AcLits within EFL programs. To successfully align national education reforms with SV2030's broader ambitions of global competitiveness and human capital development, the Ministry of Education (MoE) must provide clear, structured guidance on how AcLits should be implemented across all educational levels.

#### **Key Actions by the Ministry of Education and National Education Policy Makers:**

**(i) Explicit Guidelines for AcLits Integration:** The MoE should develop and disseminate detailed guidelines that clearly define how AcLits will be integrated into curricula at various stages of education. These guidelines should move beyond general policy statements and provide specific strategies for incorporating critical thinking,

communication, research, and problem-solving skills within English and other subject areas.

- (ii) **Regular Policy Updates:** As educational demands evolve globally, SV2030 policies need to be regularly reviewed and updated. Issuing strategic policy updates will help ensure that the curriculum remains aligned with global trends while being adaptable to local contexts. These updates should reflect changes in pedagogical approaches, technological advancements, and the dynamic needs of Saudi learners in a rapidly changing world.
- (iii) **Strategic Implementation Support:** The creation of strategic booklets and guidelines for practical classroom implementation will help unify stakeholders' understanding of AcLits. Teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers must have access to comprehensive resources that demonstrate best practices for embedding AcLits into classroom activities and assessments. This will foster a unified approach to achieving SV2030's educational goals.

By providing explicit, detailed guidance on the integration of AcLits, the MoE will promote a cohesive, consistent approach across institutions, ensuring that teachers and educational leaders have the tools and clarity needed to achieve SV2030's educational objectives.

### **8.1.8 Balancing Modern Educational Reforms with Saudi Sociocultural and Islamic Values**

The integration of AcLits within Saudi educational institutions must align with local sociocultural and Islamic values to be effective and widely accepted. While SV2030 aims to modernise education by promoting critical thinking, creativity, and global competitiveness, it is crucial to respect Saudi traditions and ensure reforms are culturally relevant. Achieving this

balance will require a thoughtful, gradual approach that integrates modern educational practices with the Kingdom's deeply rooted values.

**Key Actions by the Ministry of Education:**

- (i) **Cultural Alignment of AcLits:** AcLits should be integrated in a way that reflects Saudi cultural and Islamic values. This means embedding critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills into teaching practices while respecting the traditional norms that guide Saudi society. Aligning AcLits with local cultural values can help reduce resistance to reforms and promote acceptance among teachers, students, and parents.
- (ii) **Gradual Cultural Shift:** Encouraging critical thinking and creativity requires a shift in mindset, particularly in a system that has historically prioritised rote learning. A gradual cultural shift can be achieved by introducing these skills in a way that complements existing values, allowing for the slow integration of modern pedagogical practices. Educational campaigns and workshops can help raise awareness about the importance of these skills for the future workforce, fostering support for their integration.
- (iii) **Empowering Female Teachers and Leaders:** SV2030's goals of female empowerment within education can be supported by promoting women into leadership and decision-making roles within educational institutions. Encouraging female participation in educational leadership will reflect the inclusive goals of SV2030 and ensure that the perspectives of women are incorporated into strategic decision-making processes. Additionally, initiatives that empower female students through entrepreneurship and leadership opportunities will contribute to a more dynamic, diversified economy.

Balancing modern educational reforms with respect for Saudi sociocultural and Islamic values will help ensure that AcLits are successfully integrated into the educational framework, supporting a gradual but meaningful shift toward critical thinking and innovation in the classroom.

### **8.1.9 Addressing Sociocultural Barriers and Fostering Collaboration for AcLits**

#### **Implementation**

Sociocultural barriers, particularly those related to traditional teaching practices and resistance to change, can hinder the successful implementation of AcLits in Saudi educational institutions. To overcome these barriers, fostering collaboration and creating professional learning communities will be essential. Peer collaboration among teachers and stakeholders will help build a supportive environment that promotes the sharing of best practices and mutual support, encouraging a gradual transition toward more student-centred and critical-thinking-oriented pedagogies.

#### **Key Actions by stakeholders within the educational ecosystem:**

- (i) **Promoting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** Establishing professional learning communities where teachers can collaborate and share experiences will help address the challenges of integrating AcLits into existing teaching practices. PLCs allow teachers to support one another by sharing resources, discussing classroom challenges, and developing innovative strategies for promoting critical thinking and problem-solving in students. These communities can also serve as platforms for addressing cultural resistance to new teaching practices by fostering collective learning and reflection.
- (ii) **Collaborative Stakeholder Engagement:** Educational leaders, teachers, librarians, and curriculum developers must collaborate to develop a multidisciplinary approach to AcLits

integration. For example, librarians can support the development of research and information literacy skills, while curriculum developers can work to ensure that critical thinking and communication are embedded into course objectives. Collaboration across these roles will lighten the burden on individual teachers and create a more holistic educational environment.

**(iii) Encouraging Peer Mentorship:** Mentorship programs between experienced teachers and newer teachers can facilitate the adoption of AcLits. Veteran teachers who have successfully implemented critical thinking and problem-solving techniques can mentor their peers, offering practical insights and fostering confidence in the use of student-centred pedagogies. Such collaboration will help spread best practices more widely and create a culture of continuous improvement within educational institutions.

By addressing sociocultural barriers and promoting collaboration among teachers and stakeholders, the Saudi education system can overcome resistance to reform and foster a culture of innovation that aligns with the strategic goals of SV2030. This will ensure a smoother, more sustainable integration of AcLits, preparing Saudi students for success in a global, knowledge-based economy.

In conclusion, this study addresses the gap between current EFL teaching practices in KSA, which emphasise receptive skills like reading and grammar, and the need to focus more on productive skills such as critical thinking, writing, and communication. It contributes to the theoretical frameworks of LTC and CHAT, highlighting contradictions between teachers' beliefs and the sociocultural factors influencing exam-oriented practices. The study offers actionable policy recommendations for aligning education with SV2030, calling for more integrated curricula, flexible assessment models, and systemic support for teachers. It also provides practical strategies for implementing AcLits in classrooms, advocating for teacher

autonomy, innovative teaching methods, and ongoing professional development. These insights contribute to broader debates on language education reform in KSA and beyond.

## **8.2 Further Research**

Based on the findings and discussions presented throughout this thesis, several avenues for further research emerge. These suggestions aim to deepen the understanding of AcLits integration within the context of EFL teaching in Saudi universities, particularly in relation to the objectives of SV2030. Future research could explore:

- (i) A Practical Model Proposed to Enhance AcLits:** A practical model is proposed to enhance AcLits, grounded in the complex interplay of factors identified through an analysis of contradictions within the current educational system, particularly in relation to the ambitious goals of SV2030.
- (ii) Longitudinal Studies on AcLits Integration:** Investigating the long-term impact of SV2030 reforms on AcLits integration within EFL classrooms could involve tracking changes in teaching practices, student outcomes, and institutional policies over time to assess the sustainability and effectiveness of the implemented reforms.
- (iii) Teacher professional development (PD) Programs:** Examine the effectiveness of specific pre- and in-service interventions focused on AcLits. Research could evaluate which types of PD programs result in the most significant changes in teacher cognition, pedagogical practices, and student learning outcomes related to AcLits.
- (iv) Impact of Sociocultural Factors on AcLits Teaching:** Conduct in-depth studies on how sociocultural contexts influence teachers' cognition and practices regarding AcLits. This could involve exploring the roles of gender, traditions, and societal expectations in shaping educational approaches and teacher–student dynamics in the classroom.

- (v) **Student Perspectives on AcLits Learning:** While my study focused on teachers and institutional policies, future research could benefit from incorporating students' voices. Understanding students' perceptions, challenges, and successes in acquiring AcLits would provide a more comprehensive view of the educational landscape.
- (vi) **Comparative Studies Across Disciplines:** Explore how AcLits are integrated and taught across various academic disciplines within higher education. Such studies could highlight discipline-specific challenges and best practices, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of AcLits across the curriculum.
- (vii) **Technological Integration in AcLits Development:** Investigate the role of technology in enhancing AcLits teaching and learning. Future research could evaluate the effectiveness of digital tools and platforms in fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and other key components of AcLits among EFL learners.
- (viii) **Curriculum and Assessment Reforms:** Assess the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms aimed at better integrating AcLits into EFL teaching. Research could examine how these reforms are implemented, their effectiveness in achieving desired learning outcomes, and their alignment with SV2030 goals.
- (ix) **Cross-Cultural Comparisons:** Conduct comparative studies between Saudi universities and institutions in other countries where AcLits integration has been successful. Such research could identify transferable strategies and practices to inform policy and pedagogical reforms in KSA.
- (x) **The Role of Leadership in AcLits Integration:** Investigate how educational leadership influences the integration of AcLits in EFL teaching. This could include studies on the roles of university administrators, department heads, and other leaders in either supporting or hindering AcLits-focused reforms.

By pursuing these areas of further research, scholars and teachers can continue to build on the knowledge base surrounding AcLits integration, contributing to the ongoing development of English language teaching in KSA, in alignment with the transformative goals of SV2030.

### **8.3 Final Thought**

Reflecting on my journey in researching AcLits and LTC, I have come to understand the forces at play in EFL teacher cognition and practice. While some changes in curricula may have subtly introduced AcLits, many teachers remain unfamiliar with these literacies and hesitant to fully implement them in their classrooms, possibly because these changes were not explicitly recognised or emphasised in their training. The challenges they face, both as preservice teachers and in their professional lives, have significantly shaped how they teach today. This research has highlighted persistent issues in the Saudi educational system, such as classroom size, past experiences, lack of English proficiency, and exam-focused teaching. These challenges are not new, yet they continue to exist even with the reinforcement of the place of English education in SV2030.

This study provides a novel perspective by applying frameworks like CHAT and LTC within the unique cultural context of KSA. These frameworks offer a richer understanding of the above-mentioned challenges faced by teachers, which in turn sheds light on what is necessary for the successful implementation of SV2030. By understanding the sociocultural factors and teacher cognition through these frameworks, more effective strategies that overcome the identified constraints may be developed. For example, it is possible to devise courses for personal professional development and establishing stronger CoPs. Change in the educational system, in fact, first comes with systematically identifying contradictions and then taking informed steps to educate institutions and teachers.

This research has highlighted the sociocultural aspects through the individual participants' stories, demonstrating the realities and commonalities among teachers' experiences. The teachers in this study have articulated many issues that have never been addressed at this level of EFL education, such as plagiarism, fostering active learners, women's voices as leaders, and student contributions to society through public speaking. Although these concepts are still in the early stages in EFL, discussing them openly in KSA context is the first step towards achieving these goals.

Development is a dynamic process that must be embraced continuously. As a Saudi researcher, I am proud of my country's achievements in the last 30 years. Many changes have occurred, yet there is still room for improvement.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

### *Information to Participants Involved in Research*



#### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

##### You are invited to participate

You are invited to participate in a PhD research project entitled *Academic Literacies: A Critical Narrative Conversation with Female ESP Teachers in Saudi Arabian Universities*.

This project is being conducted by a student researcher, Eshraq Sultan Allehaby, as part of College of Arts and Education, for PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Dr Oksana Razoumova and Associate Professor Fiona Henderson from The College of Art and Education.

##### Project explanation

In response to educational Saudi Vision 2030, which stresses the need to develop Academic Literacies, this study will investigate the challenges teachers face and the strategies they use when attempting to implement Vision 2030 directives. The focus is on classes in ESP in the Common First Year (CFY) and Preparatory Year Programmes (PYP) of two Saudi Arabian universities.

This project has three major aims:

- (1) To investigate ESP teachers' perceptions of Academic Literacies, and the strategies they use and challenges they encounter in the classroom, when implementing the expectations outlined in Saudi Vision 2030.
- (2) To understand the extent to which these teachers incorporate Academic Literacies in their ESP pedagogical practices.
- (3) To explore the extent of the impact of Vision 2030 on Higher Education classroom teaching and learning in developing Academic Literacies skills.

##### What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to:

- (1) Provide a one-page written narrative or makes a reflection recording lasting 10 minutes about your previous academic learning experiences. Return your recording or written reflection to the researcher via email.
- (2) Participate in a 90-minute the interview will be only audio-recorded conducted via WebEx. Interview prompts will be forwarded to you in advance. Interviews will be audio-recorded.
- (3) If face to face observations by the researcher were not possible due to the COVID-19 crisis containment measurements, provide two classroom recordings (only audio-recorded) with any relevant materials you have given to the students (for examples, instruction on the white board), and/or assists the researcher in conducting to real-time online observations which will be audio-recorded.

##### What will I gain from participating?

As a participating teacher, you will not gain any direct benefits from this study. However:

- (1) Due to Academic Literacies being identified as a crucial skill to succeed in tertiary education, as a participating teacher you will gain a significantly greater understanding of this concept. This will allow you to personally reflect on Academic Literacies and potentially learn more about how to integrate them into your English lessons.
- (2) With greater knowledge and understanding of Academic Literacies, you will become more proficient at teaching English in your ESP classroom.
- (3) You will be personally involved in increasing current knowledge of Academic Literacies and its benefit to English as a Foreign Language for students.

##### How will the information I give be used?

The data collected in this study will be used as:

- (1) A published PhD thesis,
- (2) An article in a relevant academic journal, and
- (3) A conference presentation.

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#### **What are the potential risks of participating in this project?**

This research is Low probability risks. There might be some slight psychological or social risks related to the discomfort of being observed and speaking about your work and perceptions. You may feel uncomfortable discussing the practices and challenging moments of Academic Literacies and sharing or reflecting on your previous experiences. You might also feel like you are being assessed on your English and teaching competencies. As you are providing valuable feedback about your organisation, you may feel anxious about confidentiality issues. You may feel uncomfortable discussing the practices of your work colleagues and the impact of this on your professional relationships.

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#### **How will the risks be minimised?**

Risks can be avoided by either not discussing any experience that causes you distress, or by your withdrawing from the study at any time without needing to provide a reason. If needed, a counsellor will be available. Her contact details are:

Dr Thoria Abdul Whab AL-Tayab, consultant Psychiatrist at Umm Al-Qura University.

Phone +9661 254 26222 (extension 7479). Email address is [tatayeb@uqu.edu.sa](mailto:tatayeb@uqu.edu.sa)

Any personal, work-related information or responses provided to the researcher will be treated as non-identifiable and remain confidential in password secured files. The researcher will remove all identifiable data. For example, direct quotes that would identify a participant will not be used in any reports, presentations or publications arising from this study. You will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your privacy, and no data gathered will be onpassed to anyone at your university. However, if you wish for your name to be used and published for your professional benefit, this option will also be available. If you feel more comfortable, you can use Arabic in all aspects of communication. A transcript of your interview will be sent back to you to determine its accuracy.

You will be reminded that your participation is voluntary and that you do not have to answer any questions if you feel uncomfortable. You can withdraw from your participation in this research at any time, and any interim data will be deleted.

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#### **How will this project be conducted?**

In this study the researcher will collect a one-page written narrative or makes a reflection recording lasting 10 minutes of your previous academic learning experiences. The researcher will also conduct a 90-minute WebEx interview with you about your perceptions of Academic Literacies. Finally, the researcher will conduct two observations of your classroom practises using the Observation Protocol in Academic Literacies (OPAL) either in person or online. Any relevant materials you have given to your students will also be gathered.

**Note:** If face to face observations by the researcher were not possible due to the COVID-19 crisis containment measurements, provide two classroom recordings (only audio-recorded) with any relevant materials you have given to the students (for examples, instruction on the white board), and/or assists the researcher in conducting to real-time online observations which will be audio-recorded.

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#### **Who is conducting the study?**

This study will be conducted by Student investigator, Eshraq Allehaby, a Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia, PhD student. Contact details are: (+966) 5000 35835. Email address is [eshraq.allehaby@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:eshraq.allehaby@live.vu.edu.au)

The chief investigators are Dr Oksana Razoumova and Associate Professor Fiona Henderson at Victoria University. Dr Razoumova's phone number is (03) 9919 4354, and email address is

[oksana.razoumova@vu.edu.au](mailto:oksana.razoumova@vu.edu.au). Prof. Henderson's phone number is +61 (3) 9919 4972, and email address is: [fiona.henderson@vu.edu.au](mailto:fiona.henderson@vu.edu.au)

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

## معلومات للمشاركات في البحث

### أنت مدعو للمشاركة

أنت مدعو للمشاركة في مشروع بحثي للدكتوراه بعنوان " تطوير المهارات الأكاديمية في قاعات اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة في الجامعات السعودية: محادثة سردية نقدية مع معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية" يقوم بتنفيذ هذا المشروع الباحثة إشراق اللهبي، كجزء من دراسة الدكتوراه في جامعة فيكتوريا تحت إشراف الدكتورة أوكسانا رازوموفا وأستاذ مشارك فيونا هنديرسن من كلية الفنون والتعليم.

### شرح المشروع

استجابة لرؤية المملكة العربية السعودية 2030 التعليمية، التي تشدد على ضرورة تطوير المهارات الأكاديمية، ستحقق هذه الدراسة التحديات التي تواجهها المعلمات والاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمونها عند محاولة تنفيذ توجيهات رؤية 2030. وينصب التركيز على الفصول الدراسية في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة في السنة الأولى المشتركة وبرامج السنة التحضيرية لجامعتين سعوديتين. يهدف هذا المشروع إلى تحقيق ثلاثة أهداف رئيسية هي:

- (1) معرفة تصورات معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة لتطوير المهارات الأكاديمية بما في ذلك الاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمونها والتحديات التي يواجهونها في القاعات الجامعية عند تطبيق متطلبات وأهداف الرؤية 2030.
- (2) فهم مدى دمج معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة للمهارات الأكاديمية في ممارساتهم التعليمية.
- (3) استكشاف مدى تأثير الرؤية السعودية 2030 على التدريس والتعلم في التعليم العالي لتطوير المهارات الأكاديمية.

### ماذا سيطلب مني أن أفعل؟

سيُطلب منك:

- (4) تقديم تجربتك في تعلم المهارات الأكاديمية كتابةً في صفحة واحدة أو تسجيلًا صوتيًا لمدة عشر دقائق؛ و إرسال الكتابة أو التسجيل الصوتي إلى الباحث عبر البريد الإلكتروني.
- (5) المشاركة بمقابلة عبر برنامج ويكس لمدة 90 دقيقة؛ سيتم إرسال المقابلة إليك مسبقًا وستكون أسئلة المقابلة مسجلة صوتيًا.
- (6) حضور الباحثة محاضرتين لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة وتسجيلها صوتيًا لرصد الممارسات لتطوير المهارات الأكاديمية. إجراء ملاحظتين دراسيتين باستخدام بروتوكول المراقبة في تطوير المهارات الأكاديمية وجمع أي مواد ذات صلة قدمت للطلاب. وسيتم تسجيل الملاحظات صوتيًا. في حال استمرت أزمة كوفيد-19 ولم تستطيع الباحثة حضور المحاضرات شخصياً يُطلب منك مساعدة الباحثة إما بتسجيل المحاضرات صوتيًا وتصوير الشاشة أو ادخال الباحثة في المحاضرات عبر منصات التعليم عن بعد المتوفرة في الجامعة وإرسال أي مواد ذات صلة قدمت للطلاب.

### ما الذي سأكسبه من المشاركة؟

- كمدرس مشارك، لن تحصل على أي فوائد مباشرة من هذه الدراسة. ومع ذلك:
- (4) نظرًا لأن تطوير المهارات الأكاديمية تعتبر مهارات مهمة للنجاح في التعليم العالي، بناءً على ذلك مشاركتك سوف تزيد من معرفتك لهذا المفهوم وسيساعدك ذلك على النقد الذاتي للمهارات الأكاديمية المدمجة في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة. بك.
  - (5) بمعرفتك وفهمك للمهارات الأكاديمية، سوف تصبح أكثر كفاءة في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة.
  - (6) مشاركتك في هذا البحث تساهم في زيادة المعرفة بالمهارات الأكاديمية وفائدتها لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية.

### كيف سيتم استخدام المعلومات التي أعطيها؟

سيتم استخدام البيانات التي تم جمعها في هذه الدراسة على النحو التالي:

- (1) رسالة دكتوراه منشورة،  
(2) مقال في مجلة أكاديمية ذات صلة، و  
(3) مشاركة في المؤتمر.

#### ما هي المخاطر المحتملة للمشاركة في هذا المشروع؟

احتمالية المخاطر على المشاركين منخفضة لأقصى درجة.  
قد يكون هناك بعض المخاطر النفسية الطفيفة حيث قد تسترجعين بعض المواقف الصعبة إلى قد تكونين مرتبي بها سابقاً. قد تسبب عدم الارتياح عند مناقشة الممارسات واللحظات الصعبة لتعلم المهارات الأكاديمية أو مشاركة أو التفكير في خبراتك السابقة. قد تشعر أيضاً بأنه سيتم تقييمك على لغتك الإنجليزية وكفاءاتك التعليمية. ويمكن أيضاً الشعور بالقلق نحو مشاركته أو مناقشة القضايا السردية حول جامعتك وقد تشعر بعدم الارتياح لمناقشة ممارسات زملائك في العمل وقد يؤثر ذلك على علاقاتك المهنية.

#### كيف سيتم تقليل المخاطر؟

يمكن تجنب هذا الخطر إما عن طريق عدم مناقشة أي تجربة من هذا القبيل تسبب لك الضيق، أو عن طريق الانسحاب من الدراسة في أي وقت دون الحاجة إلى تقديم أي سبب. إذا لزم الأمر هناك مستشارة نفسية متاحة. تفاصيل الاتصال الخاصة بها هي: الدكتورة ثريا عبد الوهاب الطيب، استشارية الطب النفسي بجامعة أم القرى.

هاتف +9661 254 26222 (تحويلة 7479).

عنوان البريد الإلكتروني: [tatayeb@uqu.edu.sa](mailto:tatayeb@uqu.edu.sa)

ستكون البيانات سرية بحيث لن يتم الإفصاح عن هوية المشاركات وستظل سرية في الملفات الآمنة بكلمة مرور سوف تقوم الباحثة بإزالة البيانات فور نشر البحث. على سبيل المثال، لن يتم استخدام الاقتباسات المباشرة التي تحدد هوية المشارك في أي تقارير أو عروض أو منشورات ناشئة عن هذه الدراسة. سيتم تعيين اسم مستعار لحماية خصوصيتك، ولن يتم تمرير أي بيانات تم جمعها إلى أي شخص في جامعتك. ومع ذلك، إذا كنت ترغب في استخدام اسمك ونشره لمصلحتك المهنية، سيكون هذا الخيار متاحاً أيضاً. سيتم إرسال نسخة من مقابلتك لتأكد من تطابق المعلومات. إذا كنت تشعر بأن استخدام اللغة العربية سيكون مريحاً أكثر لا تتردى في استخدامها. تذكر أن المشاركة اختيارية وأنه ليس من الضروري الإجابة على أي أسئلة إذا شعرت بعدم الارتياح. يمكنك الانسحاب من مشاركتك في هذا البحث في أي وقت وسيتم حذف أي بيانات بعد النشر.

#### كيف سيتم تنفيذ هذا المشروع؟

في هذه الدراسة سيقوم الباحث بجمع تجارب سرديّة للتعليم الأكاديمية السابقة مكتوبة في صفحة واحدة أو تسجيل مدته عشر دقائق. كما ستجري الباحثة معك مقابلة عبر برنامج سكايب لمدة 90 دقيقة حول تصوراتك لتطور المهارات الأكاديمية. وأخيراً، ستقوم الباحثة بإجراء ملاحظتين لممارسات القاعات الدراسية باستخدام بروتوكول الملاحظات لتطوير المهارات الأكاديمية وجمع أي مواد ذات صلة قدمتها لطلابك. في حال استمرت ازمة كوفيد-19 ولم تستطيع الباحثة حضور المحاضرات شخصياً يتطلب من المدرسة مساعدة الباحثة اما بتسجيل المحاضرات صوتياً وتصوير الشاشة أو ادخال الباحثة في المحاضرات عبر منصات التعليم عن بعد المتوفرة في الجامعة وإرسال أي مواد ذات صلة قدمت للطلاب.

#### من يقوم بالدراسة؟

ستجري هذه الدراسة الباحثة إشراق اللهبي، جامعة فيكتوريا في ملبورن، أستراليا، طالبة دكتوراه. تفاصيل الاتصال هي: 5000 35835 (+966). عنوان البريد الإلكتروني هو: [eshraq.allehaby@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:eshraq.allehaby@live.vu.edu.au)  
المحقق الرئيسي هو الدكتور أوكسانا رازوموفا، والأستاذ المشارك فيونا هنديرسون بجامعة فيكتوريا.  
رقم هاتف الدكتورة رازوموفا هو (03) 9919 4354، وعنوان البريد الإلكتروني [oksana.razoumova@vu.edu.au](mailto:oksana.razoumova@vu.edu.au).  
رقم هاتف البروفيسور هنديرسون هو 61+ (3) 9919 4972، وعنوان البريد الإلكتروني هو: [fiona.henderson@vu.edu.au](mailto:fiona.henderson@vu.edu.au)  
يمكن توجيه أي استفسارات حول مشاركتك في هذا المشروع إلى كبير الباحثين المدرج تفاصيلها أعلاه.

إذا كانت لديك أي استفسارات أو شكاوى حول الطريقة التي عوملت بها، فيمكنك الاتصال بسكرتير آداب المهنة، لجنة أخلاقيات (آداب المهنة) البحوث الإنسانية بجامعة فيكتوريا، مكتب البحوث، جامعة فيكتوريا، ص.ب. 14428، ملبورن ، فيكتوريا، 8001، البريد الإلكتروني [researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchethics@vu.edu.au) أو هاتف 4781 9919 (03) أو 4461

## Appendix B

### Consent form Participants Involved in Research



#### CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

##### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into *Academic Literacies: A Critical Narrative Conversation with Female ESP Teachers in Saudi Arabian Universities*.

This study has three major aims: to investigate English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers' perceptions of Academic Literacies, including the strategies they use and the challenges they encounter in the classroom when implementing the expectations outlined in Saudi Vision 2030; to understand the extent to which these teachers incorporate Academic Literacies in their ESP pedagogical practices; and to explore the extent of the impact of Saudi Vision 2030 on Higher Education classroom teaching and learning in the development of Academic Literacies skills.

Procedures will include: (1) a one-page written narrative or a reflective recording lasting 10 minutes explaining your previous academic learning experiences; (2) a 90-minute interview that will be conducted via WebEx and audio-recorded only; and (3) two audio-recorded lessons to capture your classroom engagement in using Academic Literacies teaching practice. If face to face observations by the researcher were not possible due to the COVID-19 crisis containment measurements, provide two classroom recordings (only audio-recorded) with any relevant materials you have given to the students (for examples, instruction on the white board), and/or assists the researcher in conducting to real-time online observations which will be audio-recorded.

##### CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT

I, .....as an EFL teacher who is also teaching English for Specific Purposes, certify that I am at least 18 years old\* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study: *Academic Literacies: A Critical Narrative Conversation with Female ESP Teachers in Saudi Arabian Universities*, being conducted at Victoria University by PhD student, Eshraq Allehaby. I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by: Eshraq Allehaby, and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- (1) I will provide a one-page written narrative reflection or a ten-minute oral narrative recording about my previous academic learning experiences. I understand that any documents or recordings will be sent to the researcher via email.
- (2) I will participate in a 90-minute interview will be only audio-recorded conducted via WebEx. I understand interview prompts will be forwarded to me in advance and the interviews will be audio-recorded.
- (3) If face to face observations by the researcher were not possible due to the COVID-19 crisis containment measurements, provide two classroom recordings (only audio-recorded) with any relevant materials you have given to the students (for examples, instruction on the white board), and/or assists the researcher in conducting to real-time online observations which will be audio-recorded.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and understand I can withdraw from this study at any time, and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher Eshraq Allehaby, phone (+966) 5000 35835 or email [eshraq.allehaby@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:eshraq.allehaby@live.vu.edu.au)

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [Researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

## نموذج الموافقة للمشاركات في البحث

معلومات للمشاركين:

يشرفنا أن ندعوك لتكوني جزءاً من دراسة "تطوير المهارات الأكاديمية في قاعات اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة في الجامعات السعودية: محادثة سردية نقدية مع معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية"

تهدف الدراسة إلى تحقيق ثلاث أهداف رئيسية: (1) معرفة تصورات معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة لتطوير المهارات الأكاديمية بما في ذلك الاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمونها والتحديات التي يواجهونها في القاعات الجامعية عند تطبيق متطلبات وأهداف الرؤية 2030؛ (2) فهم مدى دمج معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض خاصة للمهارات الأكاديمية في ممارساتهم التعليمية؛ (3) استكشاف مدى تأثير الرؤية السعودية 2030 على التدريس والتعلم في التعليم العالي لتطوير المهارات الأكاديمية.

سيشمل البحث: (1) كتابة صفحة واحدة أو تسجيل صوتي لمدة عشر دقائق عن تجربتك في تعلم المهارات الأكاديمية؛ (2) مقابلة عبر برنامج سكايب لمدة 90 دقيقة؛ (3) حضور محاضرتين لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض خاصة وتسجيلها صوتياً لرصد الممارسات لتطوير المهارات الأكاديمية.

### إقرار المشاركين:

أقر أنا ..... استاذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية وادرس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة وأني أبلغ من العمر 18 عاماً على الأقل، وأني موافقة على التطوع في المشاركة في بحث: " تطوير المهارات الأكاديمية في قاعات اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الخاصة في الجامعات السعودية: محادثة سردية نقدية مع معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية" الذي يجري في جامعة فيكتوريا للباحثة: إشراق اللهبي.

وأقر بأن أهداف الدراسة والمخاوف والضمانات المرتبطة بالإجراءات المذكورة أدناه والتي ستنفذ في البحث، قد أوضحت لي تماماً من قبل الباحثة: إشراق اللهبي، وإني أوافق بإرادتي على المشاركة التي تشمل الإجراءات المذكورة أدناه.

(1) سأقدم صفحة واحدة أو تسجيل صوتي لمدة عشر دقائق عن تجربتي في تعلم المهارات الأكاديمية؛ وإن على إرسالها عبر البريد الإلكتروني للباحثة.

(2) سأجري مقابلة عبر برنامج سكايب لمدة 90 دقيقة؛ وأنا على علم بأن المقابلة ستكون مسجلة صوتياً.

(3) أعلم ان الباحثة ستحضر لي محاضرتين لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض خاصة وتسجيلها صوتياً لرصد الممارسات في تطوير المهارات الأكاديمية وإن الباحثة ستستخدم بروتوكول لملاحظة الممارسات الأكاديمية في القاعة.

أقر بأنني أتيت لي الفرصة للإجابة على أي أسئلة وأنني أفهم أنه يمكنني الانسحاب من هذه الدراسة في أي وقت وأن هذا الانسحاب لن يعرضني بأي شكل من الأشكال للمساءلة. لقد تم إخباري أن المعلومات التي أقدمها ستبقى سرية.

التوقيع: ..... تاريخ: .....

يمكن توجيه أي استفسارات حول مشاركتك في هذا المشروع إلى الباحث إشراق اللهبي، الهاتف 5000 35835 (+966) أو البريد الإلكتروني [eshraq.allehaby@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:eshraq.allehaby@live.vu.edu.au)

إذا كانت لديك أي استفسارات أو شكاوى حول الطريقة التي تعاملت بها الباحثة معك، فيمكنك الاتصال بلجنة أخلاقيات البحوث الإنسانية بجامعة فيكتوريا، مكتب البحوث، جامعة فيكتوريا، ص.ب. 14428، ملبورن، ولاية فيكتوريا، 8001، البريد الإلكتروني [researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchethics@vu.edu.au) أو 9919 4781 (03) أو 4461

## **Appendix C**

### *General Information*

#### **General Information:**

1. What is your age group? Please circle where appropriate: 20-30   31-40   41-50   51-60
2. Where did you study English as a foreign language? For how long did you study?
3. How many years of experience do you have teaching English for Specific Purposes?
4. What is your mother tongue? Apart from Arabic and English, do you speak any other languages?
5. What is your qualification and teaching specialisation if there is one?
6. What is the current English for specific Purpose program you teach in?
7. To protect your privacy and to keep all of your responses confidential, could you please nominate a pseudonym that I could use to represent you in this study?

## Appendix D

### *Initial Reflective Accounts*



### **Reflection: Past Academic Learning Experiences**

**Kindly answer the following question either in a 10-minute recording or a one-page written reflection.**

What tools, methods and practices were used (in school, university, pre-service teaching and ongoing professional development) to enhance your level of proficiency, in line with your understanding of the *academic skills component* of your English learning experience? These skills could include using motivational and development strategies, thinking critically, setting goals, problem-solving strategies and gathering and synthesising information. You are invited to give further examples in your stories.

**Look at Gibb's model (1988) below, it might be helpful in structuring your response.**

***Use the questions as a guide for your response, if needed.***

**1. Description:**

- How and when did you start developing your academic skills?
- What academic skills did you focus on in your education? Can you tell me about one activity that was used to develop this skill?

**2. Feelings:**

- How did you feel and what did you think about that development?

**3. Evaluation:**

- What were the advantages or disadvantages of your academic experience?

**4. Analysis:**

- What activities did your teacher use that you found very useful?
- What academic skills do you believe you developed particularly well?

**5. Conclusion:**

- What else could you have done to develop your academic skills? Or what could you have done differently?

**6. Action plan:**

- How will you continue to develop your academic skills?

## Appendix E

### *Interview Questions*



### Interview Questions

#### **Part 1: Teacher's experience as a language learner**

1. What is your understanding of academic skills? Where did that understanding originate?
2. When you were learning English in higher education, what experiences did you have developed your academic reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills?
3. What other learning skills do you believe are necessary to succeed in the university context? Why?
4. Were there any activities outside of your university that you feel helped you to add to the development of those skills? How?

#### **Part 2: Teaching experience in pre-service programs**

5. In your pre-service training, how were you taught to teach academic writing, reading, listening, or speaking skills in a classroom?
6. What aims/objectives/outcomes did you follow to meet the requirements for an effective language lesson in Saudi Arabia? Why?

#### **Part 3: Experience in teaching English in ESP classrooms**

7. To what extent do you introduce academically focused tasks into your classroom practice? Why and how is it done?
8. What academic skills do you think are important for students to succeed in higher education or later in the workforce and why? How do you teach these skills?
9. Circle your five most important academic skills for higher education and workforce from the list below. Justify your choices. (If they are different).

#### **List of academic skills (examples only)**

- researching
- analysing the text
- linking content/text to their lives, histories, and realities
- categorising
- critical thinking
- problem solving
- using digital literacy strategies
- interacting positively with peer/group/teamwork
- making decisions
- evaluating ideas, arguments and options
- synthesising ideas and information
- being creative and innovative
- constructing a text from own ideas or other resources
- taking an active role both within and outside the organisation including leadership
- understanding and describing one's own and others' cultures
- understanding and discussing global issues – environmental, political, financial and social
- being independent as a learner
- taking notes
- identifying the main points in a text
- memorising/recalling information
- regulating self, maintaining motivation, and staying focused on the task
- reflecting on and evaluating their own learning success
- maintaining academic integrity and plagiarism
- referencing
- developing study skills including revising for exams

- understanding emotion, demonstrating empathy and having good interpersonal skills
- understanding personal and social responsibilities as part of a group and in society
- developing time management skills
- **others (please add)**

**Part 4: Academic skills presented in curriculum and syllabus objectives.**

10. What is the most significant aspect of your university's ESP program? (e.g., the nature of course, objectives, material, and assessment) how does that impact/reflect in your teaching?
11. Can you tell me about the ESP curriculum objectives in your university regarding academic skills? How are they incorporated into your teaching and lesson planning? How do you select content/materials for your teaching? Why?
12. What is your opinion about the materials used in the ESP course?
13. How are different academic skills assessed?
14. Has your syllabus, classroom practise and assessment been affected by or modified due to the COVID-19 crisis?

**Part 5: Teacher's comfort with innovations required by Saudi Vision 2030**

15. Saudi Vision 2030 has been developed to include language and learning skills teaching through critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making. How do you interpret this requirement and how does it influence your teaching?
16. Consider your current university policies and professional development. What changes have been made to assist the successful implementation of the Saudi Vision 2030 requirements? Have you found it to be a difficult or smooth transition? Why?
17. What are the changes and challenges in education imposed by the COVID-19 crisis? How are you coping with these new changes and challenges?

**Part 6: Closure**

18. Do you have any suggestions on how to better develop academic skills into your curriculum and in your teaching?
19. Are there any other aspects about you or your experiences in developing academic skills that you would like to share with me?

## Appendix F

### *Nada's Narrative*

#### **Teacher Nada: From the Status Quo to Molding a Legacy**

- **Nada's Early Days: Role Models and Future-self Expectations**

Nada, who is in her late 30s, studied basic English as a compulsory subject for six consecutive years in intermediate and secondary education in Saudi Arabia in the mid and late 1990s. Due to growing up in an educated family, she was motivated to aim high and take the first step towards becoming a professor of higher education. Her mother was an English language teacher, and her father was a government officer (held an intermediate-school certificate). But her mother was very keen on us getting the best chances in education.

So, upon graduating from secondary school, Nada decided to join the family flock and pursue a BA degree in a major where she was sure to receive both professional and emotional support. Although she was not originally fond of English nor its culture, she was eventually drawn to English in her third year of engaging with the language. She further anticipated a future where she is loved, surrounded, and strongly appreciated by her students for whatever she could do to contribute to their success and well-being, considering how her mother, who was an English teacher, was adored by her students. Thus, following in the steps of her best role model, her mother, she majored in English studies at University A (Univ.A). The focus of her English BA program was on language skills, linguistics, literature, and translation. She combined her four undergraduate years with an extra year of pre-service teacher training to receive a minor degree in *Education* to be qualified for an educational position.

- **Undergraduate Years: An Absence of Formal Classroom Guidance and Basic Academic Skills Training**

As an undergraduate student, Nada was an introverted and sensitive perfectionist who was always concerned about how her other classmates perceived her. “[I] did not want to feel bad in front of my classmates,” she noted (Interview, 2021, line 180). Consequently, a very self-conscious Nada lacked confidence in her speaking and listening skills, even though she demonstrated excellent reading and writing skills and

passed the latter's respective courses with flying colors. She blamed her limited speaking and listening proficiency on the fact that she was not *"keen on watching movies [or] listening to music in English ... So, [her]... spoken language [skill] was not improved"* (Interview, 2021, line 152). Such shortcomings have taunted her and turned into a nightmare that would prevent her from presenting anything without first preparing and rehearsing with her mother; an act she found to be tedious and unnecessary even though it was all driven by an obsession to not lose any marks.

However, Nada was soon disappointed that her Listening and Speaking instructors were not committed to their work and often came to class totally unprepared. Attending classes where *"there were actually no [formal or clear] instructions"* (Interview, 2021, line 174) along with the lack of academic step-by-step scaffolding made Nada feel stressed and lost. Rather than being driven by the teaching practices and pedagogical enthusiasm of her instructors, and while being grateful for whatever it was that the instructors did to contribute to her knowledge, Nada was only motivated to finish the tasks because she wanted to score high - if not the highest among her peers. Moreover, despite having passed her courses as one of the best achievers, Nada still felt that she could have learned and achieved better had she received exemplary guidance and guidelines. For instance, one of the chief academic skills taught in the four-leveled Listening and Speaking course was note-taking, and this skill was taught quite badly. Reflecting on that bad experience, Nada recalled:

*'...most of the teachers who taught me [my Listening and Speaking] courses were not very keen [on]... teaching; ... They did not really care how much we improved. ... [the classes took place] in a listening lab but we did not use them [the equipment] that much. I still remember ... it was challenging, it was not easy at all because we used to listen to like 10 to 15 minutes of spoken English and ... take notes, and the exam was like that as well ... Nobody told me how to do it, like, "What can you do?", "How can you make yourself faster?", "What are some of the tips that can help you to write faster?" maybe using abbreviations and not stopping at each and every detail, you know, things like that. Nobody taught me. So if you ask me now, I want to say that ... it would have been really useful if I was taught like that ... with strategies of note-taking. (Interview, 2021, line 167).*

As a result, Nada initially felt unfortunate when she found out that she had a native American-English speaker as an instructor of one of her courses. The thought of having to communicate with a native speaker while missing the necessary listening and speaking proficiency horrified Nada, considering how her lack of spoken language skills had constantly haunted her. However, she eventually grew to like the course and instructor who, according to Nada, was supportive and good-natured and did not mock nor yell at her students' poor English proficiency, unlike other teachers who were impatient. More interestingly, one main writing practice that Nada greatly appreciated from this instructor was the Writing Lab sessions she conducted for them. The instructor would divide her students into five-student groups, meet each group separately during her office hours, have them write something individually, and then provide each student with comprehensive feedback. *"It was not easy, of course, as you know ... in high school, we are not taught writing in a proper way. We just memorise [the assigned model paragraphs] and then we come, and we write whatever we have memorised"*, Nada noted (interview, 2020, line 277). Compared to the common Secondary School writing teaching practices she was used to these Writing Lab sessions were a great improvement and helped Nada's writing advance.

Unfortunately, similar to her Listening and Speaking courses, and somewhat contrary to her aforementioned Writing course, Nada had been poorly instructed when it came to Reading, too. Nada confirms that they *"did not have to do much of writing, and even critical reading was not there really. It was basically about exams"* (Reflection, 2021, line 13).

Ultimately, the total duration of Nada's formal English language learning was approximately ten years; six years in public schooling and four years as a BA student majoring in English Language Studies. Thinking back on her Academic skills development during her undergraduate years at Univ.A, Nada believes that these poorly guided practices have impacted her pre-service teaching performance and post-graduate studies. All in all, there was moderate emphasis on academic literacies and related skills development on Nada's part during this stage of her education.

- **Pre-service Training: Low confidence Resurfacing Despite Good Practices**

Nada was not aware that she had the option to choose between either enrolling in the integral minor education program where supervised and evaluated field training in schools was a requirement or signing up for the diploma program where such training could be waived. Had she known, Nada admits that she would have opted for the latter; considering her stage fright predicament and low self-esteem now that she had to present in front of a few dozen students.

Most of Nada's pre-service education was centred around educational psychology and leadership with only two courses addressing *Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages* (TESOL) with a theoretical focus in the first semester and a school-based practice in the second. However, Nada highlighted that the theoretical and field training parts of the program were not as efficient as she had hoped,

*"... because of a simple reason ... the assistant professor who was responsible for that course was not very honest in teaching... [like her undergraduate Listening and Speaking instructors] this assistant professor will come unprepared, and even when she would come to your class as a supervisor... she would not give you good feedback. She would be sitting in the back but ... she would not be looking at you carefully."* (Interview, 2021, line 575).

Regardless of the loss and stress she endured in the absence of clear-cut instructions preceding the practical part of her training, Nada still feels that she came out triumphant. She was especially delighted to have, to an extent, overcome her stage-fright, and to have gained the confidence to deliver her lessons to a few dozen students all while managing the class. *"I was not a bad teacher, but I was scared to death, all the time, every time I would go to class I would be scared. ...Nobody gave me some [or] any important tips, I would say,"* (Interview, 2021, line 593).

The psychological barrier of her intensified stage-fright was the overarching feeling of this time for Nada, rather than the endorsement or the importance of academic literacies in her minor education pre-service program. Nada's focus on her shaken confidence and her supervisor's poor practices further impeded her confidence. Despite taking a Curriculum Design and Teaching English Language course, Nada did not feel able to incorporate academic literacies in her teaching, and did not feel

supported in this by her supervisor. Nada clearly did not feel any connection with the supervisor and felt that her final mark did not reflect her ability.

- **Overseas Postgraduate Scholarship: ‘No choice. I decided to dive’**

Upon finishing her undergraduate education, and prior to receiving a postgraduate scholarship, Nada worked briefly as a part-time teaching assistant, where she was tasked with teaching vocabulary, general basic English, and writing. She used to teach EGP courses and ESP for the *Economics and Islamic Finance stream* and *Computer Science and Information System stream*. Due to the fact that she was keen to travel to the UK, funded through a government scholarship, she also used that time to further invest in herself and improve her English proficiency. She started watching TV in English and that helped boost her listening skills. Furthermore, because she was appointed a teaching assistant position in the English Language Centre, she was entitled for a scholarship to do my MA and PhD degrees.

*“[immersing myself in English via extensive TV exposure] made a big difference....After I went to the UK, my language improved as I had a lot of practice. So, I would say that in the beginning it was watching TV, trying to expose myself more to English but then my spoken language improved only after I went to the UK”* (Interview, 2021, line 158).

Although she had achieved an acceptable IELTS score to enrol in a foreign university and did not need to take any extra language courses before starting her MA studies, Nada still felt the need to improve more in another domain in which she found herself to be lacking. That is, she decided to work on developing her own academic literacies.

*“This was a challenge because, all of a sudden, I found myself starting an MA program, where I do not really have the needed skills... it was very difficult. In the beginning, I did not even know how to deal with the library, how to read the books, how to read the articles critically, how to write and how to build my argument”* (Reflection, 2021, line 18).

“Diving in” was how Nada described the strategy she adopted to enhance her academic skills shortcomings. She felt this was the only option for her as she “started going to the library a lot, ... reading a lot, and ... built [her] academic writing ability gradually

*through reading.*” (Reflection, 2021, line 22). After that she took up a number of in-session courses. Nevertheless, that was not enough to get Nada the desired results. The first semester still proved stressful, and she considered giving up many times before she finally scored a good mark, which was her criteria for success and helped her regain some more confidence in herself.

- **PhD: The Academic Community**

Her PhD supervisor helped Nada practise editing articles that were about to be published to increase her confidence and critical thinking ability. The supervisor included decision making and writing skills in weekly PhD group meetings. They would read *“an article most of the time and comment on that article”* (Reflection, 2021, line 36). The sessions usually started with voting on an article which was still under review. Everyone would read the article and then the voting on whether or not the article was ready for publication would commence. This was a very cathartic experience for Nada because this taught her to respect others and their decisions.

Then the supervisor added the critical reading technique gradually. Nada’s supervisor normally received many articles to review, and upon getting the permission from the journal editor, she and other PhD students became his co-reviewers. Nada said: *“I learned a lot more than you can imagine even about the writing skill itself [and] how to write...to build your argument. What is an acceptable argument and what is not? Is it really clear to the reader what you want to convey? Or is it not that clear?”* (Interview, 2021, line 48).

Nada was clear that the supervisors had been creating social practice in the community and were boosting confidence to review work for others. Actually, the community is very important because all of Nada’s supervisor’s PhD students respected each other’s opinions. Nada found the group to be courteous and polite to each other’s opinion. But according to Nada, the most important aspect of her story was her supervisor’s confidence in her decision making.

In the beginning, it was not easy for Nada going to these sessions, making her quite uncomfortable. She would often have conflicting thoughts wondering if she was capable enough to be critical of these established scholars. Soon that thought changed

as she began to admire and understand that nobody is above criticism. The takeaway from these sessions was all about conquering fears. She understood one thing clearly: if one publishes a research work then their work is out there and so are the critics. Therefore, it is fundamentally very important to be confident when it comes to developing skills and a supervisor will make a significant difference in this developmental stage. So, Nada feels that the most important skill of this set of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is *critical thinking*. According to Nada it is not easy but also not difficult to achieve, as long as the teacher role is to give students the confidence to enhance their abilities.

After graduation, she kept publishing many articles and, she believes this to be the only way to keep improving her writing skill, as she further commented:

*“I am still publishing... and I’m learning a lot from that...I decided that whenever I find, or I receive comments from reviewers, I will take them positively...Each article that you publish, each review that you receive, should build your abilities and your skills as a writer. It’s not difficult, it takes time.”* (interview, 2021, line 63).

Nada thinks that being an academic depends on improving how we are open to taking feedback. The dynamic nature of academia made her conscious that she has to adapt to change and continue learning from her mistakes, even though Nada has a career of 12 years in publications. The process of reflection when it comes to making mistakes is continuous. For example, recently Nada had a review on her submission and the reviewer advised Nada to use a language editor. This was an extremely difficult decision for Nada however she was curious to see the outcome of having an editor; however, when she received her review she was astounded to see the suggestions made by the editor *“the fixes were not big, but there were some problems with style. ... I learned what to avoid, what words are not acceptable when you are writing in an academic manner. What should you use? What shouldn’t you use”* (reflection, 2020, line 83). Nada acknowledges this is a pursuit to academic knowledge and it is a must for all academics not to be blindsided with their overconfidence, *“Read, read, read, the more you read, the better you will become. Critical reading, learn to be confident in your views. If you think that this is not right, write a note and you will build your critical ability over time. Whenever you receive feedback about your dissertation, or*

*about your articles, your manuscript that you send to journals, try to learn”* (reflection, 2020, line 111)

Living in an academic community Nada is invited to review papers and every time she reviews a submission, she learns something new whether it is literature, reporting results or if the submission provides clarity to the purpose and method. Nada also learned from her supervisor that as a reviewer they are the gatekeeper in decision making in what makes a good article but that at the same time Nada feels that this is also a process of continuous development in her learning.

Overall, Nada spent five years in an English inner circle country pursuing her postgraduate education in *Applied Linguistics*, which she feels she dramatically boosted her academic literacy skills.

- **First Year Deanship: Are Academic Literacies a Part of English Teaching?**

For the last five years, Nada has been teaching English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific purposes (ESP) courses to first-year college students in the medical stream ELC at Univ.A; she is also a member of the Curriculum Committee. This is despite the fact that she has had no official training or experience teaching ESP, let alone any profound knowledge of medicine, finance or computer sciences. Her qualifications in Science are limited to a high school certificate (Science stream). She specifically tells her students that she did not know the medical terminology herself and that it took her 6 months to learn it - she believes this will motivate them and make them believe that they too can learn it in this timeframe.

Nada notes that she now follows a model-based writing strategy when teaching her students. Most of the students that she teaches are beginners who have just graduated from high school. *“They are scared to death of the word writing”* (interview, 2021, line 1101), and she notes that her students’ negative energy can be felt whenever they are given a writing task. Interestingly, she mentioned that this can be felt even online during this pandemic. Nada added that she cannot fault high school students or teachers for the students’ lack of academic skills, especially their confidence in writing. She believes that this is the reality of things, and we must deal with it. Therefore, she cannot leave the students without clear instructions. Nada explained:

*“So, they [the students] would get a model, they will study the model very well, and then they would ask to write something similar... I will start with the model, we read it very well, we analyse it, what are the steps...what is the structure of this writing. Then I will give them my model... that I built myself and then I tell them .... Now, go and write something similar.”* (interview, 2021, line 1095)

She described her way of thinking as traditional, in the sense that she wants to retain control. While she does recognise that this is a problem (as she knows that independent learning skills are also important to develop), she says she *‘doesn’t want to be loose’* and this is connected to the idea of not making mistakes in front of her students. Her main concern is that she does not want to be unfair to the student. Hence, she devotes extra time to them, and even in this pandemic situation she still uses her office hours online to give feedback and practise speaking with her students.

- **Research Skills: An important skill but are they ready?**

Nada stated that it is very difficult to implement academic skills such as researching, decision-making or referencing because *“the PYP’s only one year, you cannot do everything in one year. This is something that we need to accept”* (interview, 2021, line 895). She continued that for English language courses the students were not fully prepared to write a proper paragraph which told her that their language level was lower than expected.

*when we know that [students] are coming from high school, knowing zero about writing. Believe me, for them, writing is one of two things. Either copying or translating one of them and they don’t blame them. It’s the teacher who taught them in high school, the books, and maybe even the teacher. We cannot blame the teacher and the high school because there are so many different types of pressure. The level of the student, the book that she’s teaching, you know the amount of supervision that is above her head, so many things that are difficult for her. So, for whatever reason, the students are joining college when their writing skill is zero. Do you think we can jump in one year from zero to writing a research article?* (interview, 2021, line 906).

Nada thought research was a very important skill for tertiary students to learn at all levels. However, as she is only dealing with undergraduate students, she only mentioned teaching the skill of searching for source material regarding vocabulary and course content through Google. As students have only learned writing an English paragraph through memorisation – not through constructing grammatical texts - they are not able to deal with learning higher level academic skills. She explained that this means students need to be taught how to write “*basic skills like spelling, punctuation, grammar, each sentence should have a verb*” (Interview, 2021, line 688). Unfortunately, by the time they build these basic English skills the semester is over and there is no time for going deeply into improving their research skills. Working online has made learning even more challenging.

- **Independent Learning**

Interestingly, when asked about how she teaches students to learn independently, Nada mentioned several aspects that are also common to research skills. These were all in the textbook she regularly used, *Oxford Milestone*, which introduces students to basic academic literacy skills of how to use a dictionary, how to use websites, and how to use ‘Readers’ to improve their reading and writing skill. As for independent learning, she only mentioned that she would ask her students to practise these aspects at home. Furthermore, although Nada regards evaluating ideas, arguments and options as important she believes that it is impossible to build these things in a paragraph. Instead, she considers the skill of argument as more related to essay writing which is not possible in the first year PY program. For these reasons Nada teaches this skill by verbally discussing different ideas in the form of agree or disagree and discussing the rationale behind students’ choices.

- **Plagiarism**

Nada explained the serious issue of students whose English is so low that they are constantly looking for texts to copy, in the way they have been previously taught. Consequently, Nada found it very hard to convince students about the serious legal issues involved in maintaining academic integrity and avoiding the plagiarism that would lead them to failing their subject if they chose to study abroad. Due to their low level of English and different cultural background, this topic is always hard for

students to master at beginner to low intermediate, particularly when they are working online and not in front of their teacher.

‘Do not tell me about plagiarism, I had a fight actually with them about [it] because ... when we started doing writing ... it is online ...they are not in front of me ... when they would come to me with the first draft it would be an exact copy of a paragraph from Wikipedia and they want [to] convince me that this is [a] fine teacher .... We took it from there but this is writing. It is still writing. So, believe me, I had to convince them that this is plagiarism....if you do it, when you are studying in the UK, or in the USA, you might fail the course ...It wasn’t easy, but you can do it easily when you teach writing. It will take time, but surely, they will be an effect at the end’ (interview, 2021, line 840)

- **Decision-Making**

Similarly, Nada stated that making decisions is a higher-level skill which is attached more to study, especially when doing research structure, design, and analysis. However, in the ESP course she indicates that it is not implemented for the beginner, it only can be applicable to the intermediate level since it takes time particularly in the first semester. She said,

*“We do not make decisions; these decisions are not much related, you know, to writing or to reading. Decisions is more related like to how, when, to take the exam, which units. The exam is going to be and things like that, but it is not really like when you have when you’re doing your PhD, for example, and you have a choice between two different areas you need to choose which area, or you have a choice between two different resources, and you need to choose which resource is better than the other. I don’t think It’s doable at this level.”* (interview, 2021, line 740).

- **Problem-Solving**

Nada feels the most important skill in language teaching is problem solving because students can apply it in their daily lives. Nada gives the students a short paragraph with errors that should be corrected by them. This is a problem-solving exercise for the students to enhance their attention to details. This is another example of trying to solve

the problem of plagiarism that her students are facing in the university. The sole solution to this problem is Nada as she tries to find the balance with teaching online. She shares the website with the students, practically showing them how to use the automatic plagiarism checker. In the beginning it was very difficult for Nada to convince the students to use this tool as she was soft in her approach of exposing illegal behaviour in written submission. But by the end of the semester Nada found a middle ground in fighting plagiarism by modelling what is acceptable and what is not. Thus, she was able to educate them about keeping their work original.

- **Referencing**

Nada states that Referencing is an essential academic skill needed to be learned. However, Nada thought that teaching reference skills to ESP students in their first year was excessive as it is more related to research. Research is not the focus of the courses.

Most of the students got a low score in their mid-term exams in the English course although their level of interaction and English proficiency more generally in the classroom was reasonable. They were able to draw on their previous knowledge to activate their learning. Nada justified students' low grades simply breaking it down to nervousness or they must have not studied well for the exam. Nada motivates those who felt less adequate and capable to succeed in the courses. She urged her students to apply a positive attitude towards mastering the English course.

Her conversation often reflects the general discussions of students who have aspirational goals. Nada advises her students that it is not the end of the world if they do not do well. They always have room to improvise on the course and make up in their final tests. To achieve a satisfactory level, she encourages them to maintain their hard work and keep their grades high in the final exams.

- **Race against the clock to teach AcLits and textbooks**

Due to the time limitation in EGP course, Nada must be highly selective when teaching academic skills. She stated that textbooks are full of activities targeting the 21st century skills such as '*Synthesising ideas and information*'. For example, one of the exercises focuses on evaluating and synthesising information from different websites. The students should decide whether a website is academic or not and its appropriate

use as a tool for their learning. They should be comfortable to navigate and critique information they find online. However, according to Nada these 21st C skills in EGP classroom are not the main focus.

Nada acknowledged that the textbook represents note-taking skills effectively. The book includes tips for taking notes in listening and reading activities. It also highlights how to summarise ideas and get the gist from written text. She believes that these activities can develop the students' research skills.

- **Flexibility, digitality and cultural considerations**

Nada feels now that she can relinquish control in her classroom and has had to let go of many of her fears. In her mind she needs to change the way she thinks; she needs to be more flexible. In the past she saw herself as rigid and wanting to be in control all the time. Breaking the code of control is one thing and utilising it is different. For example, the use of camera is a taboo in Saudi culture. Nada feels lack of facial interactions is a hindrance to teaching because in language teaching one uses facial expressions to convey the meaning of words. Also, during a one and half hour class it is very difficult to keep the students motivated without a camera. This needs to change. However, online teaching in Saudi was noted to be unreliable as equipment did not always function properly and that made it difficult to interact. Nada feels now that the situation has changed with two years into the pandemic. It has improved a lot.

In the normal face to face classroom, Nada usually interacts with students by grouping them. However, in online teaching, it is not always convenient to use the breakout room as it is time consuming. Therefore, she has learned to give space to her students for their personal growth and development. Going with the flow has always been a personal problem for her but now she is adapting to this new way of teaching - she noted that the pandemic has forced these changes, and in some way they have been positive changes.

*“Our future is in the palm of our hands and apps will rule the future ...you cannot say well! I don't know how to use this app. You will need to learn and don't have any other choice”. (Interview, 2021, line 935). Students, Nada states, need to cope with the influx of technologies that will flood our lives.*

However, Nada advises that teaching digital literacy is not her responsibility as an English teacher especially in PY program. She indicates that this is a job of the computer teacher. She quotes, “*Maybe I’m mistaken but this is how I feel about it.*” (Interview, 2021, line 946)

According to Nada, teachers in her university have taken the same approach and have collaborated in creative design in their teaching. Nada and her colleagues have challenged themselves away from their comfort zone, from face-to-face teaching to online teaching.

- **Gender and change**

Nada is positive about the shift in power structures noting that previously women in Saudi Arabia were never involved in making decisions. Now things have changed, and women have now become an integral part to form a cohesion with their male counterparts. For example, after the Vision 2030 a female now can lead an institution without involving a male in the process of decision making.

Because women now have far more control in terms of decision making, Nada is optimistic about the future. She notes that many Saudi students are returning to Saudi with PhDs from developed countries, bringing with them innovative ideas and creative approaches to their thinking and planning. The willingness to change has made this easy for them to embrace and apply. She also notes that Vision 2030 is going to help the country cope with the changes that are happening very rapidly. “*...the world is not going to stop and wait for us to follow*” (interview, 2021, line1353).

According to Nada, teaching English in Saudi Arabia should change the focus from receptive to productive skills. The PY program should put more effort into speaking and writing as she believes that it is not an easy process to write as their previous instruction is lacking.

Nada is concern that perhaps people are not always using the direction to it potential especially in educational institutions. Nada quotes ‘*Until now I wouldn’t say there is a big effect*’(interview, 2021, line 1211). As Nada is in the curriculum committee, she is making modifications to the books which implement 20<sup>th</sup> century skills. This will be a turning point to enhance independent learning, problem solving and dealing with

online resources. The books currently have all the criteria of the EAP, but they are not highlighted in the syllabus. However, we can only do this when teachers are comfortable. They are just getting used to online teaching, so before shifting the focus onto new textbooks we have to create this tangible process of delivery. She noted that *“if you’re talking about academic skills, it doesn’t really make a difference, what area you are teaching, if you want to be in academia, whether you are doing math, doing English doing chemistry doing medical research, you need to deal with these skills”* (interview, 2021, line 648).

Nada also confirmed that,

*Not all aspects of Vision 2030 have been realised in our teaching. The system is still being implemented. But one thing that might be relevant is social responsibility. The book (Oxford Milestones) provides students with examples to show that they should take active role in their society. They should, for example, be responsible when it comes to the traditions of their society and how these relate to international traditions in other countries.*

## Appendix G

### *Transcription of Nada's Online Classroom*

**Lesson Example 1:** (T: Nada; Student interaction by Voice or in the Chat, Textbook: *Nursing 1*. Lesson: Nutrition and Obesity.) (online)

#### **Chat**

[teacher greetings in Arabic Alslam Alukum and many students replay in the chat in Arabic Walakum Alsalam]

#### **Nada**

So, ladies, as I told you yesterday, we are going to start today with unit, eight, and the title, there it is. What's the title of the unit?

#### **Student**

Nutrition and obesity

#### **Nada**

Exactly nutrition and obesity excellent (Name of student -NS-) so we are going to talk about food that you should eat, and that food How can that affect your body. How can you become obese, what are the different solutions for this kind of problem? Okay, so this is the topic of this new unit, as I told you yesterday, it's a very interesting unit, not that difficult.

#### **Chat**

student: I'm exciting

#### **Nada**

Most of the information that we are going to discuss you already know like diabetes like obesity. I'm sure you have read the passage also Tom the one that I told you about and you could see that it's not that difficult. So, I hope inshallah you're going to enjoy the unit. Now as usual before we start the unit we have the little introduction to nutrition and obesity. One thing that you need to keep in mind is that the body gets nutrients and energy from food so all the type of nutrients that you need like vitamins, minerals, all the things that you need, you get from the food, of course. Now when we talk about the food, a person might have a one of two kind of diet. Either you have a balanced diet, or you have an unbalanced diet. And if you look at the picture here, you will see what we mean by a balanced diet. When we talk about a balanced diet that means that includes fruits and vegetables, meat and fish food high in fat milk and dairy products, and also bread, and rice. If you eat those different components in a balanced way so fat is a little bit less than the other components, you eat a lot of fruits and vegetables, you will have to be very careful about the balance in your diet. If your diet is balanced that means that you, your body will go. Normally, and you will not suffer from the problems related to food, like diabetes, and type two of course, and also, obesity, sometimes some people have an unbalanced diet, what do we mean by an unbalanced diet. Again, looking at the picture. What do we mean when we say that diet is unbalanced.

#### **A Student**

Maybe not healthy

**Chat**

Maybe they eat more fat not healthy

**Nada**

Not what sorry, say it again (voice of student not very clear). Heavy you mean you mean heavy diet. You eat more fat, maybe. Thank you so much (NS).

**Chat**

eat more calories than their body burn.

**A Student**

Maybe it's full of carbohydrates.

**Nada**

lot of carbohydrates! it is fine. You should eat carbohydrates, but which type, and how much excellent not healthy so as (NS) said maybe we have a lot of fat. All of these answers are great. So, you need to be very careful about the balance and the food and by the way, and insallah when you do that with Miss. Intesar (second teacher), there is a very interesting passage about balanced and unbalanced diet that we can eat. Okay, so if you want to be healthy, you need to eat a balanced diet.

**Chat**

Now, can we have problems related to food. Yes, we have so many different types of food disorders disorders or problems or diseases related to food. Here we have four of them, and it's really interesting because throughout the unit, we are going to talk about each one of them in detail, maybe except Pica.

**Nada**

let's talk about them quickly one by one, obesity, or overeating is one when somebody is eating a lot, and the body mass index is really high. And we are going to see in the unit, what do we mean by body mass index, how do we measure it and so on. So it is a chronic disease, and the person will suffer from so many problems because of obesity. What do we call it in Arabic obesity.

**Chat**

In Arabic [سمنة] responses

**A Student**

السمنة

**Nada**

Exactly. Exactly. So being overweight, in a way that is not healthy. So, this is number one. When we have Anorexia Nervosa, have you heard about this disease before?

**Chat**

yes (one response)

**Nada**

It is actually a disease when you don't eat. You look at yourself in the mirror. You are very thin, but still you think that you are fat. So, you're still eating. You don't eat for days, you only drink water and then after this, you will find that your body is suffering, and maybe they will take you to the hospital. So, anorexia nervosa is when you don't eat you decide not to eat. Okay, another related disease which is a little bit different, is Bulimia Nervosa, so we have Anorexia, and we have bulimia, we are going to talk about the difference a little bit when we do the writing in this unit. So, bulimia Nervosa is actually eating a lot, but at the end you feel bad. I eat a lot. I will gain weight. I'm going to be obese, so then you go to the toilet, and you vomit you force yourself to vomit. You eat too much. And then you take medicines to vomit. Yes, eating a lot, but at the end, you go, you take medicines, you go to the toilet and you force yourself to vomit. It's very bad, it's this kind of disease is really dangerous, it might cause death if the parents don't really notice that. And at the end of the unit we are going to talk about a teenager who suffers from this problem this is going to be the last listening exercise in the unit. And as I told you, if you remember, in this unit we are going to do the listening task. Remember the listening task for book one. So we are going to do the listening task in the book, and then I'm going to send you a YouTube video, we watch it and we discuss it together. So we are going to see what we mean exactly by Bulimia nervosa

**Chat**

eat but very much

**Nada**

The last one is really interesting. It happens especially with children, it's called Pica. It means eating things that shouldn't be eaten, like dirt, can wood, hair, glass.

**Chat**

eat unnormal food

**Nada**

Can you give me some other things that children, sometimes eat/

**Chat**

this happens due to a lack of phosphorus paper glue toys sand

**Nada**

Exactly (NS). maybe, maybe we're not going to talk a lot about that disease in this unit, but can you give me other things that children might eat that shouldn't be eaten, paper? What is it, sorry?

**A Student**

soap

**Nada**

Yes, excellent. So, yes, glue paper. Maybe toys sometimes they just follow toys. Excellent. All of these things are things that they sometimes eat, and it's very bad for the health, except (NS). Yes, even sand. Now, always remember ladies, and this is something that we are going to talk a lot throughout the unit. Obesity is associated with many health problems. If you are obese, it means you have high levels of risk for blood

pressure for high cholesterol for respiratory problems, or clean respiratory problems, you should know, respiratory

**Chat**

lung (2 responses) Diets

**Nada**

and the lung exactly related to blood breathing type two diabetes, and in this unit, we're going to talk about the difference between type one and type two diabetes, and so many other problems, how can we treat obesity if we know that obesity is a major problem, and it causes so many other medical conditions, diet, and behaviour therapy. Okay, sometimes, especially now it's becoming very popular to go for surgery. What do we call the surgery. If you want to lose weight. Do you know

**Chat**

in Arabic Sleeve gastrectomy [تكميم] (2 responses) No (2 responses)

**Nada**

what do we call it in Arabic? Exactly. Do you know the meaning of the word in English. Have you heard about it before sleeving? sleeving sleeve means كم, so sleeving, is that kind of surgery that you do in order to decrease the size of the stomach.

**A Student**

تكميم

**Nada**

Okay. So, after this little introduction, let's get started. And let's look at the first page of the book. As you can see in the Scrub up, we have very interesting pictures of different types of foods. What they want you to do and exercise one so this in your book page 46. Your book page 46. What they want you to do they want you to look at the different types of food that we have and try to tell us the name of each type of food. If you're not sure, or maybe if you don't know, you can click here at the bottom of the page, we have a menu. check the menu, you have some names. Okay, so I'll give you two minutes. Try. Even if you make a mistake that's fine. But let's try together. Some of them are easy.

**Chat**

the potato? source of carbohydrates (student ask we solve the question in this way)

**Nada**

No, (NS) we are not ... we are not looking for what source of food, it is, we are looking for the name. What do we call this food so for example, let me start with something easy. This one here, what do you think this one? (teacher is pointing on basket of eggs)

**A Student**

Potato

**Chat**

Okay for answering the her question. Egg (six students responded) students put a shy face and said Oh God (يوييلي)

**Nada**

here in the basket. Do you think it's potato, maybe is not potato but it sounds really easy, it's eggs, it's eggs. These are eggs about those... (teacher points to the olives picture) That's fine (to the shy student in the Chat). What about those?

**A Student**

a pear

**Nada**

Oh, no, wait a small, look at the size.

**A Student**

Olives

**Nada**

this green olive, so try it this way. and to make it easier, we are going to divide it into two sections (teacher draw a line to divide the picture). Lamb.

**Chat**

Olives (2 students responded) lets us talk about meat Done Lamp

**Nada**

But be careful about the spelling lamb. That's correct.

**Chat**

lamb

**Nada**

Yes, excellent (SN) mushrooms.

**Chat**

Mushroom Broccoli Chasse

**Nada**

These are mushrooms. lamb, broccoli extent. This one you think it is cheese, it's not really I'm going to tell you what we call it looks like cheese.

**A Student**

Tofu

**Chat**

tofu

**Nada**

It is tofu. who said that? (SN) Thank you so much for your are right it is tofu, and we are going to talk about tofu and why it is important.

**Chat**

Noodles Pasta 2 responded

**Nada**

Noodles. Excellent. So, let's look at them together. Let's look at the first part here. We are going to look at this side first. And then we are going to look at the other side. Okay, so let's look at the first side one. You know what these beans what we call them in English?

**Chat**

Lentil

**Nada**

Lentil exactly lentils we have lentils soup sometimes we eat lentil with bread. So lentils. Okay. Then we have lamb and be careful about the spelling. And B silent. Baby is silence, then we said we have eggs. What about this beef also excellent we can call it beef if it comes from cows, or we can call it steak, any kind of steak, any kind of heavy kind of meat. then we said broccoli.

**Chat**

Lamb, beef

**Nada**

What about those two. here what do you think?

**Chat**

Pasta and Noodles Pasta?

**A Student**

Noodles

**Nada**

One of those them is Noodles And this one, past that. Exactly. So Noodles and pasta. And finally, as I've said this is Tofu and Tofu is very interesting. It comes from the Far East Asian culture. We used to for for people who don't like to eat meat. It is high in protein, and they use it for people who don't like to eat meat. Okay, It's called tofu you can read about it. If you are interested, I know that most of you are interested in the Japanese culture. Right. And I think it comes from there. Do we use it in place of meat? Now let's look at the second part. What do you think this is?

**Chat**

Oliver oil? Oil Vinegar? Sauce? Soya

**Nada**

Troy, I guess it's not really oil because it's not. mmm can be vinegar. That's correct. Look at the colour, it can be vinegar, but it's not. It is sauce, what kind of Sause. Soya Sause, you know the soya sauce that we use for Chinese food. So, this is soya sauce.

**Chat**

yes (6 response)

**Nada**

What about this?

**Chat**

Tuna? Salmon? Salmon? fish fish meat

**Nada**

This one here, what do you think it is kind of fish tuna fish, then we said we have olives, mushrooms. And finally, different types of beans.

**Chat**

beans (three responses)

**Nada**

Exactly. So if you don't know all of these things, make sure that you know the spelling and the meaning and be careful ladies about the spelling of words like lamb. In lamb, it's b the not p and the B is silent. Okay, so now let's look at exercise two, if you look at your book. Exercise two in the same page it says, look at the lab, and answer the questions before we answer the questions. I want you please to look quickly at the list, and ask me about any difficult words. I'll give you one minute read the menu, and the long difficult words.

**Chat**

Wine! tinned? what about steamed? blue box steamed Onion rings? حلقات البصل

**Nada**

Let me know within the same page, page 46. Tinned, it means you put it in a can. When we say tinned, it means you put it in a can. Where is that? let me try to find it. Here is the kind of cooking, we're going to talk about it. Steaming is a kind of cooking. So keep it in mind we're going to talk about it in a minute. Any other questions I could see some questions before, but they couldn't see them on your lens. Let me show you a picture here. I'm sure you know them, maybe you don't know the name in English. You can eat them in fast food restaurants. Exactly.

**A Student**

fried Onion rings?

**Nada**

Yes. The onion rings, The onion they cut it into pieces and then they put it in, you know, great. and then they fry it in oil. So, this is what we call fried onion rings.

**Chat**

Wow delicious, I got hungry

**Nada**

It is very delicious but is it healthy? We're going to talk about the pudding. Look at this.

**Chat**

Pudding?

**Nada**

This is pudding chocolate pudding. We call it. Chocolate pudding. So, something like chocolate mousse. tinned tomatoes as I told you, tomatoes in cans. tofu carry. As you can see, it has to hold those pieces that they talk to you about when we put them in carry, we call it to carry. You know the meaning of pie. yes 4 and say in Arabic the meaning فطيرة We have fish pie. Do you know the meaning of pie. Look at the picture. going to bread. Right, exactly. So, this pie in the middle here we have fish, so we call it fish pie. Also, we have baked beans. By the way here and the Saudi culture, we don't eat beans this way, we don't put them in the oven, and we bake them, but in the English culture in the British culture, they eat it this way. So, do we eat it like a sauce with a tomato sauce but in their culture it's a little bit different. Anything else that you don't know. Okay, so now, since we know the meanings of the words. One thing before we look at exercise number two. One thing that they want you to keep in mind.

## Appendix H

### *Overview of Nada's Language Teaching Practices Across Different Skills*

Language skills	Nada's Practices
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused on textbook reading activities</li> <li>• Asked students to go through questions before reading</li> <li>• Required students to do pre-reading before class</li> <li>• Focused on vocabulary before and while reading</li> <li>• Asked students to read aloud</li> <li>• Asked students to justify their answers</li> <li>• Highlighted answers in the text</li> <li>• Provided extra reading comprehension questions on the textbook passage</li> <li>• Addressed the exam format for reading</li> </ul>
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused on textbook listening activities</li> <li>• Had students read questions and highlight vocabulary before listening</li> <li>• Asked students more open-ended questions</li> </ul>
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraged students to open their microphones</li> <li>• Marked in-class participation</li> <li>• Highlighted differences between British and American English</li> <li>• Provided feedback on presentations before presenting, including visual aids and time management</li> </ul>
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused on textbook vocabulary activities</li> <li>• Noticed a mismatch between student and textbook level</li> <li>• Conducted a warm-up activity before introducing vocabulary</li> <li>• Assigned pre-reading at home before the vocabulary exercise</li> <li>• Skipped the interactive vocabulary task</li> <li>• Used additional online sources to explain vocabulary</li> <li>• Asked students to search online to reinforce vocabulary learning</li> <li>• Asked students for the L1 equivalent of vocabulary</li> <li>• Asked students to read vocabulary aloud</li> <li>• Taught vocabulary pronunciation</li> <li>• Corrected students' spelling</li> <li>• Highlighted the difference between words</li> <li>• Raised cultural awareness of vocabulary</li> <li>• Used roots and suffixes to explain vocabulary</li> <li>• Addressed the exam format of vocabulary</li> </ul>
Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused on textbook grammar activities</li> <li>• Asked students the rationale for their answers</li> <li>• Asked students to generate sentences</li> <li>• Encouraged students to use the dictionary</li> <li>• Addressed the exam format of grammar</li> </ul>