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Investigating the Treatment of Culture in English Language Education within a

Saudi University Setting

by

Jaber Hassan Altheebi

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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University of Southampton

<u>Abstract</u>

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In the rapidly evolving landscape of global education, the treatment of culture in English language education (ELE) plays a pivotal role, particularly in contexts undergoing significant transitions. Saudi Arabia, with its ambitious Vision 2030, finds itself at the intersection of tradition and transformation, providing a unique context for examining culture within ELE settings. This PhD thesis delves deep into the intricacies of culture and its role in ELE during this transformative period in Saudi Arabia, underlining the challenges and opportunities it presents. It critically examines such treatment through an ecological lens, capturing the interplay of cultural constructs across educational ecosystems. Such an exploration not only enriches the field of applied linguistics with insights from the Saudi context but also offers theoretical advancements regarding the intertwined relationship between culture, language, and education. To elucidate this relationship, this study delves into educational policies, textbooks, observational data, and insights gathered from interviews. This multifaceted approach seeks to unravel various treatments of culture at various ecosystem levels that constitute the researched setting. The findings of this study reveal diverse, and sometimes contradictory, treatments of culture within the selected Saudi ELE setting, illuminating a divergence between educational policies and textbooks, and actual teaching practices. While educational policies and textbooks used within this setting call for inclusion of cultural discussions, the actual classroom interactions often prioritise traditional language instruction over cultural discussions. This observed divergence can be attributed to discrepancies between policy interpretations, teachers' and students' sociocultural affiliations, and overarching perceptions of the role of culture in education. Such divergence prompts critical questions about the forces influencing this shift. This tension not only underscores the intricacies of integrating culture in ELE, but also offers broader insights into the complex and emergent relationship between policy, pedagogy, and real classroom practices.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Jaber Hassan Altheebi

Title of thesis: Investigating the treatment of culture in English Language Education within a Saudi University Setting

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

 1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

 2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

 5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

 6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signature: Jaber Altheebi   Date: 22/09/2023

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Definitions and Abbreviations

CLT.............................. Communicative language teaching

EaTEC.......................... Education and Training Evaluation Commission

ELD .... English language department

ELE.............................. English language education

ELT.............................. English language teaching

HE .... Higher education

MoE............................. Ministry of Education

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1   Background of the study

As Saudi Arabia embarks on a significant shift in its history through its vision 2030 and the growing significance of English language in the country, this can be seen to prompt an exploration of culture within ELE settings in the country (discussed below). In an earlier attempt to address this during my MA studies, I carried out an experimental study to explore the impacts of culturally localised texts on the reading comprehension of English language Saudi learners at a university level. I localised a short story by changing names of streets, cars, restaurants, and even characters in the story to what I assumed to be familiar names to the Saudi students. The fundamental goal of the study was to activate students reading schemata by giving them reading texts that align with what I considered as a 'Saudi culture'. That is, I wanted to provide the students with 'familiar' names to help ease their comprehension of culture and enhance their overall reading understanding of the text. I entered the field with a hypothesis that implementing text localisation may improve reading comprehension of Saudi English language learners, especially in finding out main ideas and determining the central theme, grasping general and specific information, and understanding meanings of words. The findings revealed that, even though the experimental group students outperformed their counterparts, there was no significant difference in their overall reading test scores. More importantly, among the 61 participants in the control group, there were students whose test scores were unexpectedly higher than those obtained by some participants in the experimental group, and some even obtained full marks. On the other hand, some participants in the experimental group obtained very low scores and surprisingly failed to answer questions about what I thought to be familiar information.

The findings of that study resonated with me, leading me to continue my search for underlying factors behind such unexpected results. After taking the Language and Intercultural Communication course at the University of Southampton, I was introduced to new insights that sharpened my understanding of 'culture'. I began to realise that individuals have some freedom to choose their cultural norms, identifications, positionings, and perceptions, and this freedom can occasionally lead them to perform practices that may not align with their broader cultural settings. This course also led me to think about factors that directly tap into the treatment of culture such as the complex

ideological constructs that impact on individual's cultural identifications, leading to complex and unforeseen practices within a single cultural setting. Additionally, I started to consider the role of globalisation and the interconnectedness of the world, which leads to greater exposure to and interactions among individuals from various sociocultural backgrounds.

Such awareness led me to conclude that using a reductionist approach to exploring the treatment of culture does not accurately represent the complexity, and therefore reality, of culture. Rather, it resulted in simplifying culture and cultural practices into isolated components based on stereotypes. Reaching such an understanding of culture led me to obtain better interpretations of such surprising findings in that study. For example, I became aware that each participant had had their cultural experiences that did not necessarily align with what I assumed to be the norms of 'Saudi culture'. Such experiences were lived by the students, but also constructed through their interactions with the contextual factors surrounding them, both inside and outside their classrooms. They were also framed by the extent to which each student sociocultural practices were in line with cultural expectations that were normalised as they interact with their surroundings. The complexity of such various experiences, which was not explored, or even thought of, led to having the unexpected findings in that study.

With this in mind, I came to a conclusion that any study about the treatment of culture in language classrooms, like the present study, has to consider the complexity of individuals' experiences and their roles in the treatments and constructions of culture in order to reach satisfactory conclusions, but also appreciate the impacts of contextual factors in 'regulating', or at least drawing lines for such treatments and constructions of culture. This understanding of the complexity of individuals' experiences, classroom interactions and expectations, and the wider settings led me to consider the significance of a holistic research approach that appreciates this complexity when exploring culture and how it is treated within language classrooms.

1.2   Towards nonlinearity in conceptualising, applying, and approaching culture

In the pursuit of understanding and interpreting culture, the approach taken can be as key as the data gathered. However, having in mind that culture is inherently complex, shaped by multifaceted and interconnected factors that resist simplistic interpretations (see Chapter 2), this section explores the emerging shift towards nonlinearity in conceptualising and approaching culture – a move that acknowledges the intricate,

dynamic nature of cultural phenomena. This nonlinear perspective challenges the constraints of reductionist models, advocating for a more holistic and nuanced understanding of culture that reflects its complexity. Specifically, a holistic account not only helps us to conceptualise and engage with culture in all its complexity, but it also empowers this research to achieve richer insights, particularly in the given context, ELE in Saudi Arabia. By embracing this complexity, the research can address the objectives more effectively, shedding light on the multifarious facets of culture within our specific area of study, and as experienced and deemed relevant to participants in this study.

Alexander (2023) drew attention to the pervasive issues associated with linear reasoning across various scientific fields, revealing the biased and overly simplified representations that such research methodologies can perpetuate. As an illustrative case in point, Alexander also referred to reductionist sociolinguistic research. Here, influential studies have often attempted to approach cultural performances captured through empirical observations into rigid statistical models and explanations. This approach has centred on an implicit assumption that statistical models, and models capturing part of a process through compartmentalised models, provide a satisfactory lens through which to interpret the complexities of culture. Consequently, conclusions based on these assumptions often end up oversimplifying, or ignoring, the dynamics at play, suggesting direct causal relationships between the forms produced and their sociocultural significance. This presumption ignores the fact that the process of cultural production and the social meanings associated with it do not adhere to such linear characteristics.

Yet, the shortcomings of the reductionist approach do not end there. Mazzoli Smith (2021) warns us that using reductionist approaches often simplify the complexity of social relationships and focus on categorisation, 'leading to epistemic and methodological reductionism' (p. 87). That is, adopting a reductionist approach tends to isolate factors and, thus, does not consider the interplay of these factors, which could be translated in data collection and analysis methods, tools, and stages. In fact, several concepts frequently employed in cultural research - including beliefs, gender identities, societal ideologies, norms, values, and other social classifications - are often approached from a perspective that oversimplifies their complex nature, presuming linearity where there is, in fact, multidimensionality.

Uryu et al. (2014:42) stated that '[w]hile inherently embedded in ecological reality, utterances, actions and events acquire their meaning in non-linear, historically and culturally contingent ways that depend on the particular beings' point of views and

subject positions in time and space.' Here, Uryu et al. put forward an emerging notion that addresses complex social phenomena, including the treatments of culture – the concept of nonlinearity. This notion has increasingly found resonance across a broad range of disciplines that explore complex systems and phenomena (Larsen-Freeman, 1997; Coupland, 2007; Hiver & Al Hoorie, 2016). It suggests that, among reductionist approaches to exploring any complex phenomena, a common and potentially misleading shortcoming is the tendency to construct linear relationships between complex, social phenomena, such as culture, which, upon deeper exploration, may not have such straightforward connections. In the following section, I will present the theoretical framework upon which this study hinges in its investigation.

1.3   Utilising ecological systems theory as the theoretical framework for this study

This study aims to investigate the ways in which culture is treated in an ELE setting in Saudi Arabia, with a detailed focus on the context, but awareness of influential themes that are influential within this context. By viewing 'culture' as a social phenomenon, I treat affordances, settings, and time as intrinsic parts of the treatment of culture. Through the lens informed by ecological systems theory, the unit of study for this research is comprised of 'nested, networked structures' – that is, lively structures existing within 'other' lively structures. To holistically investigate the intricacies among the component parts of these structures, I add complexity, emergence, adaptivity/adaptability, recontextualisation, performance, performativity, and ecology, in addition to other contextual dimensions to the traditional conceptualisations of 'culture', and its interconnected component parts (e.g., beliefs, identities, ideologies, practices, perceptions, behaviours, and experiences). Bearing this position in mind, this section sheds light on the theory of ecological systems and discusses its relevance for this study.

Ecological systems theory can be traced back to Uri Bronfenbrenner's (1979) notion of 'nested structures' and Neal's and Neal's (2013) notion of 'networked structures', and it foregrounds 'the study of the natural environment and of the relations of organisms to each other and to their surroundings' (Ricklefs, 1990, p. 3). It proposes four integral dimensions, which are process, person, context, and time, which all play vital roles in human interactions (Hayes, et al., 2017). The first dimension in this theory, i.e., process, refers to the reciprocal interactions between the individuals and intermediate

environment. These processes include daily engagements and interactions within activities and routines that lead individuals to make sense of their environments. The 'person' dimension includes individual contributions including personal characteristic, abilities, experiences, skills, and knowledge that an individual adds to their environments. Context, on the other hand, refers to the environmental settings in which the reciprocal interactions between individuals and their environments take place. The context can be broken down into microsystems (including direct environment such as individuals, classrooms), mesosystems (interactions between microsystems such as families, school), exosystems (external environments indirectly impacting on the individual), and macrosystems (larger societal constructs). Finally, the 'time' (or chronosystem) dimension signifies the role of time in shaping human developments, including both the notion of developmental life stages and the societal events unfolding during each individual's lifetime (Hayes, et al., 2017).

Closely tied to the ecological systems theory is the notion of affordances, as it allows for an understanding of how complex phenomena, in this case culture, are treated and constructed. Gibson (1979), in his introduction of the concept of affordances, clarified that, '[t]he affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill' (Gibson, 1979, p. 115). Thus, the notion of 'affordances, based on Gibson's explanation, can be seen to refer to the potential opportunities that a particular environment offers to an organism. These opportunities can be in forms of actions the organism can perform or interactions it can engage with, based on the features of the environment. To apply this to our social settings, we can think of various social settings to provide different affordances based on their unique features. For example, in a community gathering, the settings offer a range of affordances, including the opportunity for social interaction and network expansion, the sharing of communal knowledge, participation in 'cultural' practices, and so forth.

Recognising the affordances of particular social settings and resources allows us to examine the available opportunities for action it provides and their effects on our understanding of such phenomena. This offers a nuanced perspective that, in contrast to reductionist approaches, goes beyond the mere static observations of complex sociocultural phenomena. From social gatherings to educational settings, each settings provide unique affordances that contribute into shaping individuals' behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, experiences, and participation in sociocultural practices. Thus, a consideration of the notion of affordances not only enhance our understanding of the nuances inherent in the treatments and construction of social phenomena, including

culture, but also urges us to actively engage with the affordances of our environments in researching of such phenomena. Furthermore, the notion of affordances also opens questions about possible patterns within particular settings relating to these phenomena. It allows us to ask how certain settings might impact the ways in which individuals or groups perceive complex phenomena and contribute to their complexities.

Applying an ecological framework to language teaching and learning settings can be viewed in the same way. Indeed, as Kashiwa and Benson (2018) point out, learning generally requires engagement with numerous contexts over a period of time. Thus, learning does not happen in isolation but in continuous process that evolves through (inter)actions with different settings. Thus, from ecological theory-informed lens, we can view an individual classroom as a microsystem (where the student interacts with their teacher and other students), English language department (ELD) as a mesosystem (where the student is included in the [inter]actions), university as an exosystem (where the students are excluded from the [inter]actions), sociocultural, political settings as macrosystems (where discussions about education and how to be implemented within a particular country) and finally the Chronosystem (which refers to the temporal changes in the four systems).

In the context of this study, which focuses on the treatment of culture in ELE settings, there are some implications of adopting an ecological approach. First, adopting an ecological approach means that this study extended its scope of investigation beyond the confines of ELT classrooms. Thus, it moved beyond the reductionist views of the treatment of culture to be limited to the classrooms. Also, building on the notion of affordances, this study considered the interrelationship between the learners, the teachers, the teaching materials, and the wider sociocultural and political context. To do so, it will take into account the complex, interconnected factors such as educational policies, textbooks, and sociocultural and political elements that impact on how culture is treated within ELT classrooms. Bearing this in mind, the following section is dedicated to shedding light on these aspects, drawing on an ecological perspective.

1.4   Approaching 'culture' in language education settings

In this study, I have utilised a semiotic approach, emphasising the role of signs in the construction of culture and the sovereignty of individuals in constructing their 'cultures' (Geertz, 1973; Peirce, 1974; van Lier, 2004). That is, I consider that signs play a crucial role in constructing our social interactions as we use and interpret them to create cultural meanings and shape cultural practices that ultimately contribute to the

development of our complex cultural identities. Thus, drawing on the semiotic approach, I maintain that while signs can create shared understandings among members of communities, it is important to recognize that individuals' interpretations and understandings of such signs are nonlinear and inconsistent, and are influenced by complex cultural identities and constructs. Therefore, people who live in the confines of a community may have various perspectives on cultural related issues to which they 'belong'.

Applying this approach to language education (LE) settings, as will be discussed below, I consider that culture is constructed in such educational settings, ranging from micro- to macro- levels, in a similar way to how it is constructed in general. For instance, at the micro-levels, cultural meanings and practices within the confines of language classrooms are created based on teachers' and students' understandings and interpretations of the signs, or affordances (see Section 3.4), in their classrooms, which are diverse and based on their individual prior experiences, perceptions, and positionings towards such cultural signs and affordances. Likewise, the treatments of culture at the meso-, exo-, and macro-levels of education, which evolve according to temporal changes, impact on how culture is treated and constructed within the confines of the classrooms.

1.5   Saudi Arabia: A complex and evolving setting

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has been undergoing significant transformations as part of its ambitious Vision 2030 initiative, which aims to diversify the economy and reform various sectors, including education. Central to this educational reform is the role of ELE in equipping young Saudi learners with the skills necessary for engaging in globalised world. However, the integration of ELE within the Saudi Arabian settings poses unique challenges due to the nation's deep-rooted Islamic traditions and sociocultural norms. The present study, thus, aims to investigate how culture is treated in a Saudi higher education (HE) setting, shedding light on the complexities in harmonising global educational standards with local practices, values, and beliefs. As English language becomes increasingly pivotal in the country's development agenda, understanding these dynamics becomes not only timely but also essential for informing future educational policies and practices in Saudi Arabia. The following paragraphs shed further lights on Saudi Arabi.

Saudi Arabia, which was founded in 1932, is one of the largest countries in western Asia. It consists of five provinces: northern, eastern, southern, western, and central, and covers about 80% of the Arabian Peninsula (Alsharari, 2010). As it is the birthplace of Islam and home to the two holiest mosques in Islam, contributing to its status as an important centre of religious activities for Muslims worldwide, Saudi Arabia is often described as a nation that is deeply rooted in Islamic traditions (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013). Thus, as Almutairi and McCarthy (2012) asserted, the general sociocultural practices and behaviours in Saudi Arabia has predominantly been influenced by the teachings of Islam and Islamic law (Shariah), which is based on the holy Quran and prophet's tradition (Sunnah), and has traditionally formed the foundation of the country constitution and governed all life aspects, including politics, economics, entertainment, business, family, sexuality, and other social issues. Furthermore, gender separation is considered an Islamic value that is observed among many Muslims, including Saudis. Drawing on this value, communication between opposite genders is often restricted (Almunajjed, 1997). One reason for such practice, as Almunajed (1997) noted, is that in order to adhere to religious teachings, women should cover their hair, and sometimes their faces, when they are not inside their houses, thus avoiding being seen by males who are not their family or direct relatives, which results in having gender separation as a norm in Saudi Arabia. This practice can be seen in various aspects of Saudi society, such as separate sections in public and private places, including hospitals and schools.

Additionally, in the context of entertainment, areas of popular culture consumption seen in many other countries, especially around music, is argued to be haram (forbidden) among conservative Muslim scholars (Salafis) (Abdul Cader, 2015). The underlying reasons for this belief are that, as (Al-Duwaish, 2010) asserted, listening to music can distract Muslims from their religious duties. Also, they argue that listening to music may lead to sinful thoughts and practices, thus taking individuals away from the true path of Islam. A final reason related to listening to music in events and festivals is that it leads to gender mixing which is considered as a violation of Islamic teachings (Al-Duwaish, 2010).

Despite the presence of such strict treatments of cultural practices, the actual religious practices and level of commitment to Islam vary among Saudis (Algumzi, 2017). Individual practices and interpretations can be seen to differ, leading to varying levels of adherence to different religious practices among Saudis. Factors such as regional differences, socioeconomic statuses, education, and personal beliefs are deemed to

contribute to such variations. In addition to being home for diverse Islamic religious practices and experiences, Saudi Arabia is described as a multicultural country (Aldegether, 2020). This multiculturality has grown because of the increasing number of pilgrims, migrants, and most recently, tourists who enter and stay in the country every year, as well as the existing cultural diversity that constitutes the Saudi society in terms of social classes, national origins, tribes, and individuals with various experiences and expectations (Aldegether, 2020).

ELE in Saudi Arabia has a long history that links to the discovery of oil in the beginning of the last century. Saudi Arabia is known for its massive production of oil, which was discovered in the 1930s and helped the country accumulate huge wealth (Alkharashi & Nickerson, 2012). Since then, the Saudi economy has been largely based on the oil industry (Alshahrani, 2016). The discovery of oil led to the establishment of the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO). As the majority of ARAMCO staff were Americans, as Elyas (2008) mentioned, this resulted in the introduction of English language into the country, which led to a growing interest among Saudis in learning English. Consequently, ELE was introduced into Saudi education system in 1940 (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Since then, ELE has witnessed continual developments and reforms (Alrashdi & Phan, 2015). These reforms were put forward to enhance the quality of education in general and ELE in particular.

Yet, in recent years, ELE has received specific attention in Saudi Arabia (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017). This interest has lately been translated into introducing learners in the first grade to English by incorporating the language into the curriculum in elementary schools. Consequently, the English language is now taught at all levels of education in Saudi Arabia, which may give a clear indication that ELE occupies a high priority in the country. Yet, it is worth mentioning that, in its early stages, teaching English language to Saudis witnessed several challenges, such as the perception that learning a language other than Arabic, the language of the Quran, could pose a threat to the linguistic and religious 'identity' of Saudis (Alshahrani, 2016). This perception, which can be argued to resonate within some Saudis as discussed later (chapter 5), has led some Saudi religious scholars to assert that teaching another language, including English, in Saudi Arabia was forbidden (Elyas, 2008).

Throughout the history of Saudi Arabia, the government has introduced many economic, cultural, and educational initiatives. Most recently, in 2016, Saudi Arabia released its most ambitious initiative, the Saudi Vision 2030, to diversify Saudi economy by reducing its dependence on the oil, and developing various sectors within the

country, including education (Beig, 2019). By introducing this vision, as Beig (2019) points out, the country aims to diversify the sources of income by expanding investments in sectors, such as tourism and entertainment, and increasing non-oil exports. The education sector has also received attention in this vision. Varshney (2019) noted that the Saudi Vision 2030 aimed at improving the quality of education and emphasising moderation and tolerance in the Saudi educational system. Aldegether (2020) reemphasised this point, stating that this vision aims to promote the prosperity of the country and people of Saudi Arabia by raising awareness, mostly through education, regarding multiple issues such as cultural diversity, both at national and international levels.

Given the impact of culture, history, and material conditions on educational practices and orientations, these transformation in Saudi education invite questions about how culture is treated at different ecological levels in Saudi ELE, and what influences these treatments. The specific aims and focus of the research are outlined below, followed by a brief overview of the methods and organisation of the thesis.

1.6   The study

1.6.1   Objectives, questions, and contribution

This study is qualitative in nature and builds on educational document analysis, classroom observations, and participant interviews. It attempts to offer a holistic investigation of how culture is treated in Saudi ELE settings by exploring the interrelationships among educational policies, textbooks, classroom practices, and teachers' and students' beliefs. The research questions guiding the investigation of this study were meant to comprehensively reflect these complex interrelationships. Thus, the entire project is guided by the following overarching question: How is culture treated in Saudi Arabia in a HE ELE setting? This crucially involves finding out how culture is treated in various component parts of the educational ecosystems in the selected HE setting. Thus, to answer the main research question, there are a number of subsidiary questions that need to be addressed. These questions are:

(1) How is culture framed in explicit educational policies relating to ELE in this context?

(2) In what ways does culture appear to be discursively framed in the textbooks exercises observed in this setting?

(3) How are affordances to engage with culture realised (or not) in this setting?

(4) How do English language teachers and students understand and perceive culture, and position themselves in relation to it, in this context?

(5) What factors frame the treatments of culture in this setting?

The investigation of these subsidiary issues takes two phases in this study. In the first phase, educational documents (policies and textbooks) analysis addresses the first two subsidiary research questions (RQ2 & RQ3). In the second phase, classroom observations and individual follow up interviews address the subsidiary research questions (RQ3 & RQ4). Based on this two-phase investigation, insights from all the analyses combine to address the final subsidiary research question (RQ5).

In total, this study explores the framing of culture in educational documents, appearing in forms such as explicit policy documents, course specifications, study plans, programme learning outcomes, and textbooks. By examining these documents, the goal is to find out what orientations and expectations towards, and dimensions and discourses of culture, are in policies and textbooks, and how they outline classroom interactions in relation to culture (i.e. phase one). Then, it investigates the actual treatment of culture within the confines of English language classrooms and teachers' and students' justifications of their practices (i.e. phase two). The actual treatment, utilisation and engagement with culture by the participants appear in their actual teaching/learning practices in relation to culture. In particular, it includes episodes of discussions that shape classrooms practices, and specific ways in which teachers and students engage with textbook affordances and cultural signifiers. It also includes teachers' and students' practices and patterns of recontextualisation of culture in their classrooms. This question, emphasising these practices and patterns, aims to gain a deeper understanding of the actual practices in relation to culture. Teachers' and students' interviews, on the other hand, provide opportunity for the participants to justify and comment on their practices, talk about their concerns and reasons for negotiating/ignoring the available cultural representations, share their understandings of culture and its role in their classrooms, and discuss the factors that influence their treatment of culture inside their classrooms. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of what factors impact on the treatment of culture.

Applying an ecological perspective in investigating how culture is treated in Saudi ELE settings, this study looks at various educational ecosystems and how they, in their totality, impact on the treatment of culture. This can be a missing link in classroom-based research, as it highlights the interconnected relationships between the learner

and their settings (Van Lier, 2004; Withagen, et al., 2012; Palfreyman, 2014; Kashiwa & Benson, 2018).

By following the above processes, this study can contribute to both ELE in Saudi Arabia and to the wider field of Applied Linguistics. Firstly, it will help those in the field to understand how cultural representations in textbooks are actually negotiated within ELT materials and classrooms. By doing so, this study joins the recent trend of ecological research on textbooks use, which range from exploring the interrelation between materials and use (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013), teachers reformulations in relation to textbooks (Thoms, 2014), learners' handling of textbooks (Huang, 2019), to how the use of materials can contribute both to resolving miscommunication among students and their instructors to creating miscommunication when students employ materials differently than intended by the instructor (Matsumoto, 2019). However, this study goes even further by utilising two analytic approaches (Moran, 2001 & Van Leeuwen, 2008) towards analysing cultural representations in the textbooks (see sections 4.7 & 5.5.3). In this regard, this study contributes to textbook use research by including various modes of meaning making in the textbooks and, then, uncovering how such modes are negotiated and performed within ELE classrooms. An extension of this is that this study can contribute more widely to educational reforms research and ELE research in relation to culture, which predominantly adopts reductionist perspectives and orientations towards culture, often overlooking the complex interplay between these classrooms and the broader context that surrounds them (Kramsch, 2006; Fahle et al., 2020; Baker, 2020, 2022). In this sense, the study responds to current calls for in-depth investigations of actual practices in ELT classrooms in relation to culture (e.g., Baker, 2020, 2022), adopting a holistic ecological approach into the treatment of culture in ELE settings, including language classrooms.

1.6.2   Methodological consideration

This exploratory study utilised an ecological approach to explore the treatment of culture in ELE settings as discussed above (see Section 1.3). From the early stages of this study, it was obvious this study had to employ a robust approach that reflected the complex nature of my research questions and acquired detailed data about the treatment of culture. Thus, it was carried out using a combination of qualitative research methods and instruments. This approach was chosen because it provides a deep, interpretive understanding of how culture is treated within ELE settings, allowing me to explore various educational ecosystems that, in their totality, impact on the treatment of

culture. In total, my fieldwork was conducted using document analysis, classroom observations, interviews, and field notes. It started with a thorough analysis of educational documents to trace treatments of culture. During the early stages, the analysis included institutional documents such as course plans and specifications, program learning outcomes, and textbooks. Then, it was expanded to include other documents published at the national level of education. The analysis was accompanied by detailed field notes. This offered a foundational understanding of the formal guidelines, curricula, and instructional materials in relation to culture.

Alongside document analysis, classroom observations and interviews with the teachers and students were conducted, supported by filed notes. In both research instruments, I used audio recorders. The classroom observation provided a practical view of how culture is treated in actual teaching, while the interviews offered insights into the participants' perceptions, positionings and understanding of culture and its role in their classrooms. Data collected during the fieldwork were analysed using various analytical tools and techniques based on the type of each data, as will be discussed later (chapters 5 & 6). Finally, due to the nature of the research and context of the study, which was carried out during the Covid–19 pandemic, I had to consider research ethics and practice additional precautions throughout my research process. A more detailed and extensive discussion about the methodologies will be provided in chapter 4. In the following section, I will discuss the context of the present study.

1.7   Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the theoretical framework and the context of the study, and sheds light on its objectives, questions, contributions, and methodologies. Chapter 2 reconceptualises culture based on ecological theory approaches, and applies this to language education settings. Chapter 3 discusses ecological theory approaches to the treatment of culture in ELE settings. Chapter 4 presents the methodological approach to the present study, drawing on the ecological approach as a guiding framework. It discusses what happened during the study, what tools were used to conduct the research, and why these tools were useful. Chapters 5 and 6 present and discuss the findings of the study, offering comprehensive explanations of how each dataset was approached and analysed in the present study in the beginning of each chapter, and then, presenting and discussing the findings of the study. Chapter 5 delves into the framing and treatment of culture in educational

documents, while Chapter 6 explores such treatment in this ELE setting. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis, discussing the findings, addressing the research questions, acknowledging the limitations of this study, and discussing its implications, including suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2 Ecological approach to conceptualising and applying culture

2.1   Introduction

The previous chapter set out foundational discussions where the study was situated within the context of emerging issues in cultural research. It paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of culture, drawing on ecological models (Chapter 1). This set the stage for a deeper theoretical exploration of the concept of 'culture', which is the focus of this chapter. Specifically, this chapter aims to establish a clear, multifaceted understanding of culture, especially within the context of ELE settings, and particularly the Saudi ELE setting that forms the context for this study. Recognising the complexity of culture and its implications in such educational settings, this chapter engages in an analysis of current conceptualisations of culture, highlighting the limitations of traditional approaches and the necessity of a holistic view when approaching culture. This chapter begins with the section, 'conceptualising culture' (2.2), which looks at how culture is addressed in this study. Then, the section, 'questioning current conceptualisations of culture' (2.3), whichsheds light on the shortcomings of some contemporary conceptualisations of culture. After that, the section, 'applying culture to LE' (2.4), looks at how culture can be applied tolanguage education while maintaining its complexity. Finally, the section, 'conclusion of the chapter' (2.5) summarises the main points in this chapter. An understanding of the facets of'culture' and how it is perceived in this study provides a foundation for the next chapter,where the focus will turn to review literature on the treatment of culture within ELE settings.

2.2   Conceptualising culture

> [Social] phenomena are caused by several different things, acting together in particular ways and at particular times—meaning that the same things may not result in the same phenomena at another time. Patterns will emerge from complex systems over time, and these patterns may be associated with a range of factors, each contingent on the other.
>
> (Ell et al., 2019, p. 6)

Considering the nature of this study and, more importantly, the theoretical framework on which it draws, it was obvious from the beginning that I should deploy careful attention to how I approach the main concept of this study, i.e. culture. In this study, thus, I use the expression 'concept', drawing on Gabora et al. (2008), 'as a participating part of the mind-world whole.' I view 'concepts' to function as a link between our mental processes and worlds, and be constructed by individuals' interactions, ideologies, identities and experiences with various component parts of the environment surrounding them, thus, deviating from reductionist conceptualisations which treat 'concept' as merely a mental processes and representations (Rosch, 1999).

The complexity of the concept of 'culture' was obvious right from the beginning of considering it a focus of the current study. Indeed, after reading about the concept of culture, the most agreed upon feature of the term 'culture' is that it defies a simple definition (Tylor, 1871; Risager, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Williams, 2014). One reason for this phenomenon is that culture and cultural practices are not static; they vary across societies, communities, and individuals and continually evolve in response to changes social and personal contexts (Williams, 2014). Accordingly, culture is referred to as a 'complex' (Tylor, 1871), 'fuzzy' (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), and 'elusive' concept (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 18). Such terms are attempts to capture the complex nature of culture. Viewing culture in this way is also reinforced by Williams (2014), who claimed that culture is 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language' (p. 86). Williams emphasises the complexity of the term 'culture' and its multidimensional aspects. Similarly, Risager (2006) asserted that due to its vast complexities and scope, 'it is not possible to lay down an 'authorised' definition of culture' (p.42). This argument aligns with the work of Kroeber and Kluckhohn, who, in their 1952 attempt to list the definitions of culture, were able to collect more than 160 definitions. Having this large number of definitions in the middle of the last century hints at the notion that any attempt to provide an 'authorised' definition of culture will always be incomplete, which underlies the complexity of 'culture' and cultural practices.

This section, thus, offers an overview of the main facets of culture that have been put forward as an alternative to the reductionist attempts to compile a universal comprehension of culture, to appreciate the complex, emergent ways in which culture is constructed and treated within the confines of particular settings. The prevalent application of linear models, commonly employed when exploring culture, is perceived as inadequate, since it often leads to simplistic representations and potentially

misleading conclusions. In fact, such linear models can be effective in exploring phenomena within constrained systems, yet they are better suited for mathematical theories within closed systems, where statistical data can be directly correlated and relationships can be summarised. They become questionable when dealing with social phenomena, in this case culture, which are known for their inherent complex nature. This is because they comprise multidimensional factors such as cultural practices, beliefs, ideologies and identities, among others. The conventional scientific approach, which involves isolating variables, eliminating factors from equations, and running perfect correlations and causal elements, appears inadequate when applied to dynamic systems, which are in a constant state of flux, never truly finalised, and are characterised by numerous interdependent elements and the multifaceted relationships among them. Thus, any application of nonlinear models is misleading in such contexts. The key areas that highlight the shift in approaches to culture are explained in more details in the following subsections.

2.2.1   Culture as nested structures

Comprehending the notion of 'nested structures' is useful when aiming to fully understand the various component parts that constitute social phenomena, in this case culture. This ecological perspective challenges reductionist discourse surrounding such parts and questions the methods they employ. These methods, often embedded within cause-and-effect paradigms, have frequently been accepted without question, and subsequently applied to complex phenomena – a context that extends beyond their original bounds. To elucidate the concept of 'nested structures', it is beneficial to draw upon the notions of complexity and emergence. As interconnected networks of ideas and principles, these notions enrich our understanding and approach to specific aspects of culture. The recognition of 'nested structures', combined with an appreciation of the complexity and emergent nature of culture, contributes in building a theoretical framework for this study. Indeed, this framework enables a more nuanced exploration of the treatment of culture within language education settings, including ELE. By acknowledging the complex interplay of various elements within 'nested structures' of culture, and the inherent complexity and emergent properties of these structures, we can aspire for a more profound understanding of the dynamic nature of culture within the realm of ELE.

An agreement among contemporary attempts to conceptualise culture is that it is complex. These attempts, as a whole, are made to address the shortcomings of reductionist discourses. Questioning these reductionist conceptualisations requires a holistic exploration of the processes that occur within 'culture' and contribute to its construction, which is nothing less than a challenging endeavour, considering the multiple dimensions and ecologies of these processes that are involved. To capture the difficulty of researching the nature of complex phenomena, Ell et al. (2019), as mentioned above, explained that such 'phenomena are caused by several different things.' This statement summarises the benefits of drawing on the notion of complexity in the constructions and treatments of culture. Applying this to social settings and ecologies where culture is constructed and treated, the implication of 'several different things', for example practices, ideologies, identities, values, and norms, should not be seen to exist in isolation or solely created in the human mind, but instead as interpersonal, existing in their actions and their interactions. With this in mind, we should perceive social phenomena as being performed into being, thus, perceiving 'them' as parts of complex nested systems, that move back and forth between micro- and macro-systems, and not as 'several different things' in and of themselves. Thus, individuals' experiences, practices, beliefs and positions in any of these systems should be seen as elements that shape and are shaped by elements not only within themselves or within their systems, but also at various scales and in different ecologies.

From a complexity theory perspective, Alhadeff-Jones (2008) raised another important point, which is worth taking into account when exploring the ways in which culture is conceptualised, including in ELE settings. Alhadeff-Jones proposed that this theory is used to resist simple, positivist cause-and-effect analysis of social phenomena. Indeed, this positivist approach can be seen untenable when exploring how culture is treated within ELT classrooms, as there are a few more complex ecologies with which teachers and students can engage.

The reductionist analytical methods, which focus on a simple cause-and-effect model, can be perceived in certain spheres of culture research within language education settings, including English language. Data gathered from these settings are frequently presented in a fragmented fashion, broken into constituent parts, with little consideration for a holistic view of human interaction. While such data are not without value, ecological systems theory warns us against making predictive, explanatory, or universal claims based on individual elements of 'a' system - in this case, the treatment of culture within

the confines of ELT classrooms - and then generalising these claims to other systems. It instead encourages a more nuanced approach (Tudor, 2003; Van Lier, 2004). It urges us to consider the intricate interplay among these individual elements, as well as the potential relationships between them and other emergent aspects. Applying this perspective to social interactions, an ecological-oriented view leads us to perceive individuals' practices, beliefs, positionings and behaviours as being interconnected. These elements (inter)relate in response to complex contextual affordances (Gibson, 2014, discussed above), underlining not only the complexity of these interactions but also their emergent nature. Therefore, the ecology-oriented approach calls for a re-evaluation of how we interpret the emergent characteristics of these aspects. This shift in perspective is essential if we are to fully comprehend the operation of nested structures within sociocultural systems. This understanding is of paramount importance, in order to interpret the complex ways in which culture manifests and evolves, particularly in dynamic and diverse settings such as ELE settings.

In recent decades, in addition to the notion of complexity, emergence has become increasingly relevant to the study of culture. This notion underscores the fact that complex social phenomena, in this case culture, involve several, diverse constructs, including contextual and sociocultural practices, inherent variation, adaptive mechanisms in cultural construction, and intricate interconnectedness between discourses, ideologies, identities and the process of culture creation, among others. Ell et al. (ibid) suggested that these diverse constructs can be seen as 'acting together in particular ways', resulting in patterns that 'emerge from complex systems'. Therefore, by integrating the concept of emergence into the theoretical framework of this study, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how organised, systematic, and collective practices can originate and be perpetuated at both the individual and interpersonal levels (Roberts, 2014). Simultaneously, this perspective allows us to steer clear of simplistic notions of direct causality. This reductionist view is effectively challenged by the concept of emergence, which instead embraces the inherent dynamism and fluidity of complex social phenomena such as culture. As with the notion of complexity, the exploration of these complex social phenomena requires a substantial shift from conventional academic methods, it requires us to transcend the frequently rigid, institutionally established borders that define specific academic disciplines. Instead, it promotes an integrated, cross-disciplinary approach, opening up views for understanding the multifaceted nature of culture.

With this study placing a focus on the practices, accounts, and approaches to culture within language education settings, the concept of 'nested structures' comes to the fore. This concept, alongside the principles of complexity and emergence, aids in addressing the integrated but non-explanatory role of experience, positioning and identity, and considers the construction of culture within educational discourses. Furthermore, the study recognises 'context' as a construct formulated in the perceptions and actions of those who contextualise their performances and relationships in alignment with the prevalent discourse of their immediate environment. One of the focal aspects of incorporating an ecological perspective into this study is the non-separation of the aforementioned elements of practices, identities, ideologies and perceptions. These elements intertwine in unforeseeable ways, mutually influencing and co-constructing with each other across various timescales and manners, while numerous other ecologies simultaneously playing their part. The reason is that culture does not reside merely in the cultural references and the opportunities they present, but instead emerges within the temporal flow of practices, negotiations and perceptions surrounding them, which is why the dynamic and lively nature of culture, as another area of interest of this study, is discussed in the following subsection (subsection 2.2.2).

2.2.2   Culture as living, networked structures

Another notion that is of interest to this study is dynamicity, which suggests that beyond being complex and emergent, culture is constructed through dynamic relationships between humans and their environments. Both early and contemporary discussions on the origins of the word culture can be seen to depict culture as (inter)relationships between people and nature or the soil. For example, in his discussion on the origins of culture, Tucker (1931) pointed out that culture is derived from the word 'cultura', which is a derivative of the Latin verb 'colere' which means 'to cultivate' and 'to till' among other things (Sorrells, 2015). Tucker's explanation is very interesting, because it portrays the construction of culture as including various aspects, including the interaction between individuals and the ecological contexts in which they live. For example, it suggests that people practise and perform actions in their natural settings, and at the same time, the natural settings are responsive and alive. It also describes people's practices and natural responses as unpredictable and constrained by time and space. In other words, neither people's ways of cultivating the earth nor the earth's response to such

cultivation is completely identical. Rather, people differ in the methods, tools and even the time they take when cultivating the earth. Similarly, the productivity of the lands is affected by, but not limited to, each individual's practice. Thus, Tucker's explanation can be seen to describe culture as a dynamic and nonlinear relationship between people and the natural surroundings they live in.

Similarly, Risager (2006) warns us that 'it can be difficult to completely ignore a concept of culture that has to do with the earth, with roots, growth, etc.' (p. 35). Thus, Risager, as Tucker before him, calls for a consideration of the dynamic relationships between individuals and their contexts when exploring how culture is constructed. Yet, in a step towards challenging reductionist discourse, she goes further by considering culture as a 'living metaphor' (p. 35). Building on this metaphorical view of culture and how it is constructed through engagements with affordances at various ecological levels, we should perceive individuals' practices, beliefs, understandings, and identities, among other aspects, as being capable of evolving and transforming over time, thus reflecting the dynamic nature of their environments, akin to living organisms.

Neal and Neal (2013: 729), in their introduction of the notion 'networked structures, called for 'an observation that patterns of social interactions between individuals change over time, and that such changes impact the focal individual, both directly and by altering the configuration of ecological systems surrounding [them].' Furthermore, Uryu et al. (2014:43) considered that 'a 'timescale' is a heuristic device that serves an epistemological purpose, and as such, constitutes an observer's perspective of the object in question.' Uryu et al. statements, in addition to Ell's et al. (2019) reference to 'times' above, urges any exploration of social phenomena to consider the temporal changes during which particular social practices take place. Applying this to the context of my study and bearing in mind the aim of Vision 2030 (as mentioned in Chapter 1), it is evident that there have been many changes to many areas and roles in society within Saudi Arabia, including gender roles, with women gaining more rights, including the right to drive and attend public events.

Considering the notion of dynamicity, the origins of the word 'culture', and the notion of a 'living metaphor', as well as the more recently coined term 'networked systems', allows us to consider how culture may be constructed through evolving, collective developmental processes, where each individual can be seen to take part. In addition, it is clear that this process is also influenced by the environment and time where these

individuals live. While this perspective may seem to reiterate the idea of emergence, it actually deepens our understanding of how time-related changes in individuals' practices, beliefs, and positions impact on their interaction with their environments. In this regard, the treatment of culture within ELT classrooms in Saudi Arabia can be seen as a 'microcosm' of this interaction (Battalio, 2005), with teachers and students dynamically shaping and being shaped by their cultural experiences, beliefs, understandings, expectations, and educational discourse. This raises questions about what happens to culture as it travels through and across various ecological scales, which is a point of interest in this study that is discussed in the following subsection (2.2.3).

2.2.3   Culture as adaptive

In an attempt to deviate from the reductionist discourse, adaptability/adaptivity as a feature of culture has been highlighted in contemporary conceptualisations of culture, to accentuate the proposal that social practices, which change according to contextual factors including time, do not remain in the same form. Rather they take various forms, which do not necessarily resemble the original one. This adaptability/adaptivity is akin to the responsive changes seen in ecological systems, where organisms modify their behaviours and structures in response to changes in their environmental conditions, as discussed above. In an earlier quote in this section, Ell et al. (2019: 6) stated that 'the same things may not result in the same phenomena at another time.' Adaptivity/adaptability is thus an important concept to consider when explaining how culture is constructed. Among other aspects, social practices, beliefs, ideologies, and identities evolve in alignment with changes, including temporal ones, in the surrounding environments and ecologies.

Van Leeuwen (2008) viewed discourse on social actions as ever evolving through processes of recontextualisation. He suggested that as the social actions discourses evolve, they are presented in 'other' forms of actions, performances modes, actors, presentations styles, times, spaces, resources, etc., yet they 'pass through the filter of the practices in which they are inserted' (p. 13), which he referred to as 'genre'. The notion of recontextualisation, then, should be considered when exploring complex social phenomena, in this case culture. Social actions change over time, adhering to the new, complex constructs of ideologies, identities, and ecologies they are exposed to. This can be seen as similar to ecological succession, where an environment undergoes

various stages of change. Each stage, or context, shapes the behaviours and identities of the individuals within it, demonstrating the interconnectedness of social and ecological structures and systems.

The notions of adaptability/ adaptivity and recontextualisation are a crucial part of conceptualising culture in this study, as the treatment of culture within Saudi ELE 'settings', which are varied through and cross various educational ecosystems, must be 'different' from that of its 'original' treatments and constructions in the textbooks, by writers, distributors and, of course, initiators/natives. This raises questions about the forms individuals' performances and roles can take, and the part their environments, or cultural ecosystems, play in the construction of their performances and roles. Indeed, this is a point of interest in this study and is discussed in the following subsection (2.2.4).

2.2.4   Culture as performed

Before we bring this section to a close and delve into another facet of culture and social life, it is crucial to highlight the transformative role that the focus on how culture operates in contextual performances has played. This focus has served as a means for a multitude of researchers, prompting them to venture beyond the conventional confines of positivist frameworks and explore alternative conceptualisations of culture. Simultaneously, this shift in perspective has showed a change in research priorities. This change can be seen to mirror an ecological perspective, where the emphasis shifts from viewing culture as isolated entities to recognising them as dynamic ecosystems that are in constant (inter)actions with various internal and external elements. Rather than exclusively seeking to establish overarching principles that could explicate and guide the construction of culture, researchers, such as Goffman (1966), Geertz (1973) and Sealey and Carter (2004), have begun to turn their gaze towards the nuanced interplay of sociocultural influences on culture. Indeed, their attention is increasingly being directed towards examining how situated practices manifest within specific contexts, thereby painting a more detailed and nuanced picture of the complex mechanisms at work in cultural construction and enactment. Mush like how an ecologist might study the intricate relationships within a given ecosystem, these researchers are increasingly looking at the complex 'ecology' of human culture and how it changes, adapts, and interacts with various environmental and social conditions.

The notion of performance was brought to the fore earlier and continues to be useful in current conceptualisations of culture. Geertz (1973: 2) suggested that, when people engage in any 'cultural' interaction, '[t]hey may change their roles, their styles of acting, even the dramas in which they play; but - as Shakespeare himself of course remarked - they are always performing'. Geertz's quote can be seen to provoke interesting thoughts on how to conceptualise culture and interpret human interaction. One of which is that it reminds us of the fact that individuals are able to construct and reconstruct social realities, as they engage in sociocultural interactions and meaning making processes. Therefore, Geertz's view of culture reinforces the notion of people's agency in the construction of culture. This can be seen to align with ecological concepts of adaptation and resilience, where organisms and systems continually adjust in response to changing conditions. Secondly, if we accept Geertz's assertion, the borders between these constructions of reality are never fixed. Rather, they take place in an unpredictable way, as those individuals' position and reposition themselves during the course of their interactions. This positioning, on the other hand, is in response to how individuals interpret 'symbolic forms', 'webs of significance' and 'symbolic sources of illumination' (Geertz, 1973), or 'affordances' (Gibson, 2014) that they engage with in real social interactions and meaning making processes.

Additionally, as discussed above, it is worth mentioning that is not only the individuals that contribute to the construction of culture, but also that the social constructs that people draw on are also contextually realised and change meaning and function in relation to individuals, time, and discourse. Sealey and Carter (2004) viewed culture as a system of propositions about beliefs, knowledge and norms which are distinguished from people's practices. That is, the meanings, norms, and values that individuals create and maintain collectively within their societies are inherently context-dependent, manifesting differently based on cultural, temporal, situational and personal contexts, as well as being impacted by these contexts. Applying this to the context of this study has several ramifications. An example of this is a situation where an individual, in this case a teacher or a student, identifies as a 'Muslim' and finds themselves interacting with another Muslim in an all-male educational environment. Although Muslim, the cultural practices, perspectives, and interpretations that they bring into their (inter)actions can significantly deviate from the core teachings of Islam.

In line with Geertz, Goffman (1966), in his notion of 'dramaturgy', made a link between the way actors constantly adjust their practices on stage and the way in which

individuals present themselves to each other in social interactions. That is, similar to actors on a stage, people often adjust their behaviours to influence the impressions of others in social interactions. Based on Goffman's notion of dramaturgy, it is evident that, within social contexts, individuals discursively adjust their behaviours according to the affordances they interact with in the discourse of such interactions. Such discursive adjustments remind us of both the centrality of cultural symbols and the significance of people's subjectivity in the construction of culture. That is, in addition to individuals' roles, signs also play a central role in the construction of culture.

Considering the notion of 'performance' in the process of conceptualisating culture can be seen as a paradigm shift in our understanding of culture. This shift posits culture not as a static entity, but as an action - something we perform with intent, and this intent, in turn, influences the very manner of our performance. Research attempting to unearth the intricacies of cultural treatment and construction has had to grasp this transformative notion. This 'practice turn' and nonlinear approach in cultural studies (Kennedy et al., 2016), and related disciplines, can be seen to have laid the foundations for the critical relevance of the notions like performativity and ecology, which are of relevance to this study in its attempt to conceptualise culture. In the following subsection (2.2.5), I will shed light on these notions and their relevance to this study.

2.2.5   Culture as ecology

Risager (2006: 49) offered a semiotic point of view on cultural symbol formation. She emphasised the importance of examining 'how cultural symbols are created and recreated in the negotiation between people in interaction'. Her perspective serves as a reminder of the nuanced processes involved in cultural formation and transformation. It allows us to critically revisit and rethink the predominantly positivist approaches towards culture. These approaches have often attempted to quantify individuals' cultural practices and classify them into distinct, well-defined cultural groups. By challenging these simplifications, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of the rich construction of culture. To do so, we should consider the concepts of performativity and ecology, ideas that serve as counterpoints to these reductionist views, as they highlight the intricate processes involved in the creation, reconstruction, deconstruction, and achievement of such socially embedded constructs. In addition, they also shed light on the semiotic mechanisms by which they are established and extended. These are the last two notions that are of interest to this study.

The term 'performativity' can be traced back to the work of speech act theory by John Austin, in particular, the concept of the 'performative utterances'. In his book *How to do Things with Words* (1962)*,* Austin presented a new understanding of language that went beyond the spoken and written word. Austin's primary argument was that language use is performative and people's utterances are action-oriented. That is to say, meaning is generated through social settings rather than existing in the linguistic symbols. One classic example of performative utterances given by Austin is 'I now pronounce you husband and wife'. This utterance entails meanings and actions that go beyond the linguistic symbols. These actions manifest in the form of marriage rituals such as having a wedding reception. Moreover, it suggests that some changes will happen in terms of the couple's statuses, as one person will become a husband and the other a wife. If we accept Austin's assumption, these 'contextual' and never fixed practices are core to the meaning of the utterances. In fact, performativity has been researched in a range of fields such as gender identity (Butler, 1993) and language and culture studies (Pennycook, 2004).

Butler's seminal idea, introduced in 1990, revolved around the performative nature of gender. She posited that feminism, by accepting and reinforcing inflexible gender notions, risked preserving patriarchal power systems. This, she argued, led to a dialectic that solidified power dynamics and sustained the status quo, rather than questioning the false ontological basis of socially assigned roles. This argument aligns with Foucault's approach to tracing the origins of power. Like Butler, Foucault perceived inherent imbalances as an inescapable facet of human societies. His emphasis was on identifying elements of dominance, especially in discursive categorisation. According to Foucault, this categorisation, perpetuated through institutional and organisational practices, kept certain groups at a consistent disadvantage while privileging others (see Bell, 2008).

Pennycook (2007), on the other hand, applied performativity theory to global transcultural flows. He warned us that, the notion of performativity does not, as many have speculated, reduce culture to a completely discursive process. Instead, it highlights culture as a human constructed aspect of culture, emphasising its historical nature, its disciplinary power and its ability to impose processes of normalisation within social groups. By applying this to our social practices, we perform certain behaviours over and over again, until they become seen as the 'norm'. Any deviation from this norm can be seen as strange, which shows how conceptualising 'culture as performative'

implies the powerful aspects of social control, which shape our behaviours according to the named culture we live in.

Bell (2008) emphasised 'how the issue of [cultural] survival is crucially related to that of environment or ecology', stating that, '[t]he environment has to be interested, or at least 'patient' with the element that it apprehends and sustains as it is simultaneously apprehended by it' (p. 403, scare quote in original). Bell urged us to see the interconnectedness between cultural practices, beliefs and identifications and the ecology, highlighting how the relationship between such cultural elements and its environment is reciprocal and interdependent. Bell suggested that for a cultural element to survive, the environment has to accommodate and sustain that element, even as it is influenced by it. Drawing on this, we can perceive both cultural elements and the environment to be in continuous process of shaping and sustaining each other.

The relevance of the notion of performativity and ecology in this study is that they highlight how people's practices are never fixed, whether within the specific settings of language education – the focus of my study – or within broader societal settings. Rather, people tend to adjust their behaviours and practices according to the context in which they interact. In this sense, the settings, with their affordances, impact on people's practices and (inter)actions. To an extent, these practices are not fixed but discursive and are based on the signs/affordances available, as well as how these signs/affordances are re-negotiated among people based on the contextual factors. In this regard, the way in which performances in social interactions create social realities among people and offers them emergent and contextual meanings is important for conceptualising both people and the culture that is central to them. Thus, although 'culture' is central to shaping social realities, it is not the only cause for producing these. Rather, there are also subjective choices that contribute to the construction of culture, and these subjective choices have an impact on people's practices within social interactions.

2.2.6   Concluding remarks

This section has established for the theoretical framework of this study. The key assumptions of which encompass a diverse array of critical aspects of culture including the notion complexity, the process of emergence, inherent dynamicity, adaptive and adaptable characteristics, as well as notions of performance, performativity and

ecology. Each element interweaves with the 'others', forming a comprehensive paradigm that reflects the multi-dimensional nature of culture. Integral to this conceptualisation in the recognition of culture as ecologically situated; it is indistinguishably linked with natural and built environments in which individuals and communities exist.

Building on these notions, the conceptualisation of culture in this study is grounded in the complex, transformative process of individuals' formation of their identity through their interaction with others and their environments. These interactions, which are rooted in historical and cultural discourses, shape individuals' shared understanding of what it is to be human within their cultures. They are also deeply tied to how people relate to, utilise, and perceive their ecological surroundings. The environment, in turn, shapes and is shaped by cultural practices and beliefs, emphasising the adaptive nature of culture in response to changing ecological conditions. However, these seemingly solidified meanings are flexible, and are constantly reshaped and reinterpreted with each new social interaction. That is, each interaction presents us with an opportunity to restate, challenge, dismantle and reform the meanings that stem from this discourse (Butler, 1993; Bell, 2008).

2.3   Questioning current conceptualisations of culture

Emerging studies within the realm of 'culture' are continuously (re)shaping our conceptualisation of culture, especially in the context of an increasingly globalised world. Despite its gains, such research only holds the potential to explain the roles and limitations of incorporating culture into language education settings. Yet, there are many questions that can still be addressed in the field. Indeed, while large amount of conducting such research has been dedicated to the rigorous debates surrounding the merits and shortcomings of investigating the ways in which culture is treated and constructed in ELE settings, there are still no actual advancements (Baker, 2020, 2022).

It is not my aim to critique attempts at conceptualising 'culture' for the purpose of this study, nor to reinforce its contributions in the field. If that were my primary goal, other conceptualisations driven by intercultural perspectives - (Byram, 2021; Holmes & MacDonald, 2020) and transcultural perspectives (Pennycook, 2007; Baker, 2016; Baker & Ishikawa, 2021) to language education, would have presented simpler alternatives. Yet, in a continuation of the ongoing process of conceptualising culture, I

consciously veer away from the use of the prefix 'inter' and 'trans' in labelling the processes of treating and constructing culture. Instead, I consider that the contemporary theories of social phenomena including culture such as theories of complexity, emergentism, recontextualisation, performances, performativity, with their potentials to inform us about how culture is constructed and treated, can broaden the theoretical frameworks we lean upon, as opposed to merely adopting convenient pre-packaged models.

The contemporary attempts to conceptualise culture have approached it from various angles - as a social practice, an ongoing inquiry, a construct within layered system structures, and a dynamic part of human social life. However, what they seem to lack is a means to holistically present, scrutinise and actively engage with various ecosystems that tap into the construction of culture. Therefore, we must leverage this potential of including ecological systems informed lens to enrich our understanding of 'culture' in its complexity and dynamism. An ecological perspective can be seen to provide a pathway forward, inviting scholars and practitioners alike to engage with culture as a complex, emergent, dynamic, adaptive, and performative/ecological system that is deeply embedded in the fabric of human social phenomena and continuously shaped by social, historical, and environmental factors.

In fact, the landscape of contemporary cultural studies is not without its critics. Various conceptualisations and approaches to 'culture' have been subjected to criticism, primarily for what critics perceive as their inclination to oversimplify complex human experiences. These criticisms revolve around the active attempts to categorise individuals or groups based on 'cultural' parameters, creating artificial compartments and arbitrary classifications. These classifications are often anchored in foundations that are not thoroughly thought out or are misaligned with the inherent complexities of human culture. Furthermore, such approaches can risk drawing upon and perpetuating certain notions or stereotypes about cultures that may not necessarily exist or hold true in the diverse fabric of human societies.

Indeed, by examining the current conceptualisations, including culture in language education settings, it is clear that they have always remained positivist in nature (Baker, 2020). That is, they portray human cultural behaviours and interactions to be static, linear and 'analysable units' that can be linked to particular cultural groups based on their intellect and knowledge (Arnold, 1867), gender (Tylor, 1871), or even their

'programming of the mind' (Hofstede, 1994, p. 5). These conceptualisations, which still finds echoes in contemporary discourse (Baker, 2022), imply that culture can be seen to either unify or divide people within their social groups. That is, drawing on Arnold's, while the former suggests that 'culture' unifies people who obtain knowledge together, the latter may indicate that 'it' divides people into those who are knowledgeable and those who are ignorant. Thus, 'culture' can be seen to put people in a hierarchical social order, where people are ranked from knowledgeable to ignorant. Similarly, 'culture' can be seen to unify or divide people based on their gender. Indeed, scholars of intercultural and transcultural perspectives to language education warn us against such views (Holliday, 2000; Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Baker, 2016; Byram, 2020). For example, Holliday (2000) warned us against these essentialist conceptualisations of culture in which, as he suggested, culture is viewed as 'a concrete social phenomenon which represents the essential character of a particular nation' (p.1). This is because such conceptualisations and approaches reinforce stereotyping and prejudice among people, a phenomenon that is well documented within language education settings, including LT materials, because of the wide adoption of cross-cultural perspectives, where culture is treated as a discrete, analysable entity, often with national characteristics (Kohler, 2015; Baker, 2020).

2.4   Applying 'culture' to language education

The complexity of exploring culture has been raised in various domains including education. Thinkers of the concept of culture and culture related studies have proposed various reasons for such complexity of the concept in academia. However, the one explanation that seems to be convincing is given by Spencer-Oatey (2008). Spencer-Oatey explained that the underlying reason for culture defying an authorised definition is that each interpretation of culture hinges on the domain of study in which culture is being discussed. That is, according to Spencer-Oatey, scholars in multiple academic disciplines interpret culture based on their own needs, thus, their interpretations are shaped by their discipline agendas, methodological approaches, and the particular ways each discipline collects, analyses, and interpret data about culture. This lack of consensus can be seen to underscore the need for a holistic approach to culture, especially within language educational settings that is argued to be continually evolving (Shen, 2008; Alshumaimeri, 2022).

The cruciality of integrating culture into language education settings is raised by several applied linguists, as mentioned above. Having in mind how culture is conceptualised in this study, this section discusses how culture can be applied to language education settings. But prior to delving into the focus of this section, it is worth touching upon how language is perceived in this study.

Saussure (1916) considered language as a system of signs that stand for certain concepts or ideas. To explain this, Saussure divided linguistic sign into a signifier (sound, image, or word) and a signified (the concept it represents). However, it is important to note the distinction between Saussure's structuralist ideas and their evolution into poststructuralist thought. Poststructuralist thinkers, such as Derrida (1970) and Foucault (1980), have expanded and transformed Saussure's concepts, emphasizing the fluidity and contextuality of meaning. They propose that meanings are not fixed but are constantly being renegotiated and reconstructed within various discourses and social contexts. This perspective is crucial for the current exploration of language, as it aligns with the view of culture as dynamic, contested, and always in evolving. In this thesis, while Saussurean concepts provide a foundational framework, it hinges on the poststructuralist view that language is continually shaped and reshaped by social conventions and power relations, as opposed to pursuing the structural properties of languages and meaning making. Drawing on this, language, like culture, can be seen to be (re)contextualised as it travels across discourses; thus, meanings do not rise from words in language but from their interpretations, and influenced by how, where, when, and by whom these words were us. ed. To put it simple, though language has unified linguistic manifestations, it also has semiotic and socio-political dimensions that fundamentally contribute to its construction (Otheguy et al., 2018; García, 2019; Lemke & Lin, 2022).

Based on these views, culture and language, although generally inseparable, i.e., emergent cultural practices require language to be transformed and language needs culture for its interpretations, they do not form together static and fixed entities. Rather, they are continuously re-constructed in reaction to contexts (Risager, 2006). Risager (2006) also suggested that, considering the global mobility of languages, languages and cultural phenomena can be easily separated. Similarly, Blommaert (2005: 72) notes that,

> Whenever discourses travel across the globe, what is carried with them is their shape, but their value, meaning, or function do not often travel along. Value, meaning, and function are a matter of uptake, they have to be granted by others on the basis of the prevailing orders of indexicality, and increasingly also on the basis of their real potential 'market value' as cultural commodity.

In this quote, Blommaert explains the movement of discourses across the globe and the differences that can occur in interpretation and implementation as they meet cultural flows from other contexts. He explains that basic structure or form of the discourse, including the words, ideas, or theories, remain the same when they are moved from one place to another. However, the ways in which the values, meanings and functions of that discourse are understood and perceived can vary depending on the new context it has entered. That is, these values, meanings, and functions are perceived based on the complex social and cultural norms, values and understandings of the new contexts. Furthermore, Blommaert establishes that certain discourses are valued more highly in some contexts than in others.

Bernstein (1990), in his theory of recontextualisation, explained how the process of teaching does not resemble the actual processes of knowledge production in higher educational institutions. In this theory, Bernstein stated that recontextualisation process 'selectively *appropriates*, *relocates*, *refocuses*, and relates other discourses to constitute its own order and orderings' (Bernstein, 1990, p. 184). In this quote, Bernstein is expressing his belief that knowledge passes through a series of production and reproduction processes. These processes are accentuated by the new discourses through which the knowledge is passed. Such processes, if we accept Bernstein's suggestion, result in having knowledge that is different from what was known originally.

Similarly, Van Leeuwen (2008), in his book 'discourse as recontextualisation of social practice', views discourse as a social practice that does not merely reflect, but actively shapes social realities. Van Leeuwen names this continuous process as 'recontextualisation' which he suggests to involve the adaptation, selection, and integration of social practice from their original context into new contexts. He also points out that this process is not just simple reproduction, but an active transformation that could involve the omission of some elements, or even addition of new elements that were not available in the original context.

However, Blommaert (ibid) suggested that the notion of recontextualisation is embedded in a wider notion he called 'Entextualisation', which he defined as 'the process by means of which discourses are successively or simultaneously *decontextualised* and meta-discursively *recontextualised*' (p. 47, emphasis added). Blommaert evoked a holistic understanding of how discourses travel within and across various settings. His suggestion implies that when 'original' discourses are inserted into different settings, these discourses are first decontextualised and then are reshaped into units that seemingly coherent, unambiguous, effective and memorable. Applying the notion of 'entextualisation' into language education settings, we can see how linguistic and cultural references are first decontextualised through processes of omissions (Fan & Xiangming, 2016), or substitution based on forms or functions (Sachet & Mottweiler, 2013) and then recontextualised into new norms and facts that suit the new settings.

From a language education perspective, Cenoz and Gorter (2021) proposed the notion of 'pedagogical translanguaging' which they described as 'a theoretical and instructional approach that aims at improving language and content competences in school contexts by using resources from the learner's whole linguistic repertoire' (p. 1). Cenoz and Gorter proposal suggests that teaching/learning any named language, in this case EL, should not be seen as just teaching/learning a collection of isolated units from that language, but rather as teaching/learning a complex system that requires inclusion of students' 'whole linguistic repertoire', which includes their 'known' local and national languages. Applying this proposal to the context of the current study, we can perceive ELE in Saudi settings to need a recognition of the students' known languages including 'Arabic', through which the students have developed their cultural experiences, beliefs and practices, a notion Baker (2016) called for to be adopted in (international) HE institutions ' where *local languages* exist alongside *students' first languages (L1s)* and increasingly *English* used as *a lingua franca* (ELF)' (p. 438, emphasis added). Although, Baker referred to international HE settings, drawing on the understanding of language in this thesis, which is similar to culture, his suggestion could be applied to any HE settings.

Applying these views to any taught language, including English language which is taught and learned around the world (Risager, 2006), it can be said that the basic structures of the language, e.g., its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, are transferred in their original form. Yet, the meanings, values and functions of this named language

can differ greatly based on the new cultural, social, political and educational context in which it is learned. In line with my previous views of culture and language and the relationship between the two, I view culture to play an important role in language education. This view is supported by applied linguists, such as Kumaravadivelu (2008), Risager (2018), Kramsch & Zhu Hua (2016), to name a few, who suggest that culture is an indispensable part of language education. Yet, it is significant for any study to explore the treatments and constructions of culture in language education in a flexible, holistic way. A consideration that was put forward by this study from the early stages of its construction.

2.5   Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter provided a discussion on the concept of 'culture' based on contemporary understandings. It included the notions of nested structures, living, networked structures, adaptivity, performances, performativity and ecology to establish for conceptualising culture not merely as a collection of static attributes or practices, but rather as dynamic, interconnected web of relationships, values, and shared meanings that adapt and evolve within a larger societal and environmental ecosystems. This chapter explains why any investigation into culture and its treatments and applications, including in ELE settings, needs to take into account both the complexity of individuals' practices, beliefs, and identifications and of the settings where these practices, beliefs, and identifications take place.

This chapter also delved into questioning the frequent conceptualisations and approaches to culture in language education settings, which, in their totality, can be seen to approach culture as a quantifiable/ objectifiable entity, promoting stereotypes in language education settings. Instead, it discussed how an ecological perspective could provide an alternative approach to these approaches by looking at the treatment of culture as complex and emergent that shapes and is shaped by the intricacies of ecological component parts.

Furthermore, the chapter discussed how the interplay between culture and language education, particularly English in its international status, exemplifies this dynamism, where culture and language are not distinct domains but rather deeply interwoven tapestries that impact on and shape one another as they travel among and across various educational ecosystems. This notion, in particular, necessities further

exploration of literature of how culture, in its contemporary features, is treated in language settings drawing on an ecological perspective, which is the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 3 Ecological approach to exploring the treatment of culture in (E)LE settings

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter aimed to discuss the concept of culture, adopting an ecological lens that recognizes the complex and multifaceted nature of culture (Chapter 2). It delved into the theoretical framing of culture, positioning this study within a constructivist, emergent perspective. It moved beyond the reductionist views of culture, advocating for a conceptualisation of culture as nested, networked, adaptive, performed and ecological, building on the key ideas of culture as a semiotic entity, as discussed in Chapter 1. The current chapter extends the discussion by specifically focusing on how this complex understanding of culture manifests within the realm of language education. It reviews literature around the treatment of culture in language education settings, with more focus on ELE. The aim is to bridge theoretical insights with practical realities, highlighting how cultural aspects are interwoven within the fabric of language education and the broader societal context. It is centred on carrying this understanding of culture forward not only by examining literature on how culture is treated within language classrooms, but also by acknowledging the broader contextual elements that impact onhow culture is constructed and negotiated within language classrooms, offering a holistic, in-depth discussion. This exploration is critical for grasping the dynamic nature of culture in educational settings and for understanding its implications in shaping language education policies and practices.

This chapter begins with the section, 'conceptualising settings and treatments' (3.2), which introduces the concept of 'settings' with its component parts such as educational policies, textbooks, classrooms and classroom practices, teachers' and students' beliefs, positionings and identifications, and, then, the concept of 'treatments', drawing on an ecological perspective. Then, the section, 'networks of treatments' (3.3), which discusses various notions around the treatments of culture in various educational ecosystems, ranging from educational documents to teachers' and students' beliefs. Finally, the section, 'conclusion of the chapter' (3.4) concludes the current chapter.

3.2   Conceptualising settings and treatments.

3.2.1   Settings

This subsection offers an overview of aspects of the notion of 'settings' that have been introduced to appreciate the complexity of language education settings, in this case ELE, in an avoidance of positivist depictions of them. Reductionist conceptualisations, like with culture (see Chapter 2), approach language education contexts as reducible to component parts. Thus, for example, according to reductionist methods, context is reduceable to a single location and can be analysed independently of other aspects. Yet, before shedding light on such aspects, it is crucial to introduce the approach adopted in this study to the notion of settings. Such introduction will establish better understanding of component parts that emerge into the construction of language education and open questions about reductionist methods that impact on researching such settings.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines 'setting' as an interactive space where individuals actively engage with one another. In Bronfenbrenner's view, then, setting is not merely a physical location or isolated factor, but a series of complex, interconnected structure of aspects. Expanding on Bronfenbrenner's definition, Neal and Neal (2013) advise us, due to the increase of technology where social interaction includes in person and virtual, to shift our focus towards, but not limited to, the experiences, expectations and beliefs of people, who exist within the structures. These views acknowledge both the influence of our physical and virtual spaces and the centrality of our social interactions within these spaces.

Tudor (2003:10), from an ecological approach, urged any exploration of language education environment to delve into 'exploring the deep script of human interaction with the learning process, not in isolation, but within the broader context of students' concerns, attitudes and perceptions'. Similarly, Van Leir (2004: 11) stated that language education researcher should look 'at the entire situation and asks, what is it in this environment that makes things happen the ways they do? How does learning come about'. Tudor and Van Leir reminded us that learning environment is not just the physical space where learning occurs or the tools used in the process. Rather, it includes all aspects of learner's interaction with their surroundings, including, but not

limited to, their cultural backgrounds and experiences, individual perceptions, attitudes and concerns. Such views towards approaching language education environments underlie the benefits of adopting an ecological approach to explore how individuals navigate their learning environment as it highlights the complexity of perceptions, practices and social contexts. Indeed, adopting an ecological approach to language education can be seen to produce a holistic investigation of the learning environment. It requires delving into the complex nature of classroom interactions, experiences and perceptions that shape and are shaped by the classrooms. In addition, it requires a consideration of contextual factors that impact on classroom processes.

Palfreyman (2014), in his ecological approach to learning, suggested that a learning environment is system comprised of teachers, students, materials, and other elements that interact with each other. Thus, language teaching and learning are not isolated acts but exist within a complex, interconnected network where each component part has a potential to impact, while also being impacted by, other parts. Recognising the learning environment as an interactive system, including teachers, students, materials, educational policies, and political and sociocultural factors, thus adds to any exploration of the complex dynamics at play in language classrooms in relation to culture.

The notion of 'settings', in its complex, emergent nature, then is relevant to this study, as it allows for a consideration of contextual elements and ecologies, with their affordances, that contribute to the treatments of culture within and beyond the ELT classrooms. This study, thus, draws on elements such as learners, teachers, materials/artefacts and the wider educational, sociocultural and political contexts. By doing so, this study embraces a holistic perspective to language education that goes beyond the confines of the classroom, in an attempt to avoid any reductionist orientation to the learning environments. It recognises the interplay of educational policies, textbooks, and sociocultural and political impacts a part of the broader learning environment. Yet, it should be kept in mind, while mentioning these elements appear simple, they are, in fact, complex elements within themselves, a point of interest to this study that is discussed in the following subsections.

3.2.1.1   Educational policies

Educational policies are agreed to play a crucial role in shaping, while also being shaped by, the teaching and learning processes within any educational setting,

including language education (Lenhoff et al., 2023). Traditional perspectives, however, often fail to account for the complex, interconnected and contextual nature of educational processes, particularly when it comes to the treatment of culture. This subsection, thus, briefly explores literature on the concept of 'educational policies' and introduced how it is conceptualised in this study. With a close review of literature, it can be said that conceptualisations of educational policies are deeply informed by the traditional perspectives towards these policies (see for example, Bell, 1998; Minh Ngo et al., 2006).

Bell (1998) defines policy as a both 'text' and 'discourse'. As a text, Bell's conceptualisation tends to regard policy as a neutral, objective document that includes clear goals and methods for achieving them. This conceptualisation of policy as a text can be seen to overlook the interpretations of policies that occur at various levels. His conceptualisation of policy as a discourse, on the other hand, aligns with traditional perspectives especially when considering discourse as a top-down, driven by policy-makers and power holders rather than by those affected by these policies. Thus, it overlooks the complexity and nonlinearity of policy making in general.

In the field of education, different scholars also conceptualised educational policies drawing on traditional perspectives, one fits all (discussed below). Spolsky (2004), in his model of language policy, posits language policy comprises three interconnected component parts. Firstly, practices denote the typical or practiced language behaviours exhibited by a community within various sociolinguistic domains. Secondly, beliefs and ideologies involve the views held by community members concerning what constitutes appropriate or desirable language behaviour. Lastly, management refers to the strategies employed by stakeholders aiming to shape practices or beliefs within a community regarding language use.

Minh Ngo and his colleagues (2006), in their model of educational policy, proposed a framework of a policy cycle which explains a sequence of stages through which policy progresses staring with problem identification, then policy formulation, adoption, implementation, and finally evaluation. This sequential representation of policy formulation reflects the traditional perspectives which perceive policy processes as straightforward, predictable and operating in a one-directional manner, as discussed earlier. In addition to their portrayal of education as linear, predictable processes, these conceptualisations

To avoid these shortcomings, I use the term educational policies to refer to evolving and interconnected components of a complex multilayered ecosystem, which shapes and is shaped by the individuals (i.e. teachers and students) and their immediate environment (i.e. classrooms), the institutions (i.e. university), and broader sociocultural and political context (i.e. governmental and societal aspects) (Lenhoff et al., 2023). In this conceptualisation, educational policies are meant to be seen as woven into the fabric of the ecological systems. It also offers a comprehensive understanding of educational policies in relation to culture, which is the focus of my study, by acknowledging the multilayered ecological systems, their interconnections, and their chronological evolution. Thus, returning to my study, this conceptualisation can be seen to offer a multi-dimensional view that addresses the complexity of exploring culture within language education settings. Here, the interactions within and among the various ecological systems underscore the diverse components impacting on the treatment of culture. That is, at the ecological systems outside classrooms, broad societal, cultural, political and institutional landscapes shape how culture is framed in educational policies, including ELT policies. These policies might reflect complex and, sometimes contradicted, cultural narratives, ideologies and political tendencies of the governing bodies. Additionally, they can dictate how culture to be treated within language classrooms. Applying this in the context of this study, having in mind the complex sociocultural and political nature in Saudi Arabia (as discussed above), this ecological conceptualisation of educational policies can be seen to enable this study to understand the complex ways in which such policies, as part of a multilayered ecosystems, shape and are shaped by sociocultural elements within language education settings.

Different ecological systems policies also contribute to the complexity of the issue. For example, while the exosystems policies bring in the complex indirect factors that may impact the policies, such as national educational standards, societal expectations, and global trends in ELT, the mesosystems policies accentuate the interplay between different systems – universities, educational departments, local communities, and even global ELT organisations, as well as guide how culture is treated within language classrooms. These policies, although adhere to various policies designed outside classrooms, they are also shaped by immediate classroom dynamics and teachers and students' backgrounds and cultural identities. Finally, this conceptualisation appreciates that the treatment of culture in educational policies is not static but continuously evolves due to shifts in societal attitudes, academic discourse, national visions and aspirations, and international relations (Lenhoff et al., 2023). In conclusion, approaching educational

policies from an ecological framework can be seen to provide a holistic, multifaceted and dynamic understanding of the treatment of culture in language education. It could allow for a recognition of the complex impact of diverse components at various levels of an ecosystem, societal, institutional, classroom, and individual, and their evolution over time. This framework, thus, is instrumental in this study as it seeks to explore the complex treatments of culture within ELE settings as informed by various educational policies within and across various ecosystems. In the following sections I review literature on the textbooks building on an ecological framework.

3.2.1.2   Textbooks

In the previous subsection, I discussed my conceptualisation of educational policies in this study, shedding light on the complexities surrounding the structure and implementation of such policies in language education settings. In this subsection, I delve into another crucial component part of the educational settings: textbooks. Specifically, I explore how textbooks are perceived in this study drawing on the notion of 'representations', which refers to the ways in which textbooks depicts language and culture; and the notion of 'interactions', which highlights the dynamic engagement between teachers and learners and these representations.

Pierce (1974) highlighted that the process of knowledge acquisition occurs because of the 'triadic' relationship between the sign or 'representamen', its object, and its interpretant. To describe this relationship, Peirce said that:

> A sign, or *representamen*, is something, which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object'* (Peirce, n.d. as cited in Iliopoulos, 2019, p. 44, emphasis in original).

In this quote, Pierce explained how people make sense of signs and how they perceive them in the first place. Importantly, each sign, according to Peirce, is selected, internalised, and framed by an individual. Furthermore, the process of selection, interpretation, and framing are continuous and never totally predictable. To illustrate this process, Pierce put forward the term 'conjecture', which means that we take something as a sign on the background of our knowledge, but we continue reinterpreting

these signs in sign systems through second order signs. To clarify this, Peirce put forward his model of signs, which consists of three elements, namely, a representamen, an interpretant, and an object. The representamen is the form of the sign, the interpretant is the concept that an individual generates for the sign, and the object is something to which the sign refers. Applying Peirce's notion of triadic to how textbooks transmit cultural knowledge in language classrooms, we can perceive a representamen as a cultural sign presented in the textbook, which can come in textual, visual, and/or audible form. The object, on the other hand, is what this representamen stands for in the real world. Finally, the interpretant is the understanding of meaning that the textbook aims to convey about this cultural symbol.

Halliday and Hasan (1989), from a linguistic perspective, stated that text comprises 'language that is functional. By functional, we simply mean language that is doing some job in some context, as opposed to isolated words or sentences' (p.10). Halliday evoked the functionality of language in texts, proposing that texts are not just complications of isolated words or sentences, but rather are 'doing a job' and serving a specific purpose or task within a given context. Applying this to language classrooms, textbooks, through their textual constructions of language, should be seen to offer teachers and students with contents that are relevant to the actual use of language.

Hall (1997), from a semiotic perspective, suggested that in representational systems, signs are used to represent objects, people, or events in the real world. The same could be applied to textbooks, which include linguistic and visual signs that represent objects, events, and/ or people. Moreover, Hall distinguished between three approaches towards cultural representations in texts, namely reflective, intentional, and constructionist. The reflective approach presents culture as a reflection of reality. The intentional approach, on the other hand, reduces cultural representations according to the author's purpose. In this sense, this approach tends to put its focus on the background of the author to explain how culture is represented in the textbooks. Finally, the constructionist approach emphasises that the interpretations of cultural representations in the textbooks are never fixed or predictable. Instead, they are the outcome of social construction processes, relying on how individuals enact, negotiate, and socially construct their understanding of these cultural representations based on individuals' experiences and beliefs (a discussion on the notion of beliefs is below).

Risager (2014:2018) reminded us that current approaches to analysing cultural representations in textbooks include thematic, intercultural, power and empowerment, and semiotic (Risager, 2014, 2018). As for the first three, Risager (2014:1) said that '[t]hematic analysis typically means that culture is regarded as a large number of *topics*, e.g. in relation to everyday life, society, history, etc.' By utilising this approach, studies essentially identify themes and topics relating to culture. Intercultural analysis, according to Risager, 'means that culture is regarded as a diversity of the various *perspectives* of individuals and groups, their various types of knowledge about the world by virtue of their different life stories'. This approach explores multiple perspectives and identities that emerge in textbooks as mediators of intercultural learning. The third approach, which Risager referred to as power and empowerment analysis, regards culture as 'an arena for *conflicts and ideologies*.' (Risager, 2014, p.1, emphasis in original). In this approach, the textbook is seen as a site for social and political discussions. As for the last one, the semiotic approach, Risager (2018: 25) stated that it focuses on the relationships between modalities, particularly verbal and visual text. In fact, the semiotic approach is stressed in the work of Kress and Leeuwen (2001, 2006), van Leeuwen (2008), and Weninger and Kiss (2013) among others. They all hold the position that meaning making emerges from the linguistic and non-linguistic modes such as images that accompany any given text. A notion that appeared to have resulted in a paradigm shift towards considering the relationship between images, texts, and pedagogic tasks (Weninger & Kiss, 2013) and the role of textbooks, not as representational but emergent component part of language classrooms interactions.

Canale (2016:226), emphasising the role of inter(actions), pointed out that, those who engage with a text 'do not just decode pre-established meanings; they may become agents in the process of reinforcing, appropriating, or contesting the 'representations' textbooks (re)produce' (scare quote added). Canale reminded us that readers do not merely receive information from texts passively; they are active agents who can reinforce, appropriate, or context the 'representations' in textbooks. Applying this in the context of language classrooms, we can perceive both teachers and students to take an active role in negotiating cultural references afforded to them from textbooks. Thus, teachers, while preparing and presenting lessons, can reinforce cultural references by referring to them, appropriate them by adapting them for their classroom use, or contest/ignore them by questioning their validity or applicability. Similarly, students, while learning, can reinforce cultural references by showing willingness to take parts in

discussions concerning such references, and thus, appropriate them in their participations, or contest them by avoiding taking parts in discussions about them.

Canale (2016), from a semiotic perspective, urged any exploration of cultural 'representations' in textbooks, to consider that such 'representations require the negotiation of those who produce and those who interpret them' (p. 226). This point is reinforced by McConachy (2018) who, from a critical perspective, stated that it is 'important to know more about how language learners interpret the cultural representations they are exposed to and how they engage their critical faculties in the process of reflection' (p. 80).

Drawing on the notions 'representations' and 'interactions' is significant to conceptualising textbooks in my study. Peirce's model, which provides a valuable framework for understanding how cultural 'representations', in the form of representamen, in textbooks interact with their real world referents (objects) and the interpretations that both teachers and students make of them (interpretants). Halliday and Hasan (1989) asserted that text is functional language doing a job within a context, which implies that textbooks provide relevant language use through their textual constructions. Further nuance is added by Hall (1997) contributed to the understanding of representations, positing that signs in representational systems are used to depict objects, people, or events. Simultaneously, the ideas put by Canale and McConachy underscore the dynamic, interactive nature of engaging with these cultural references. Rather than being passive recipients, both teachers and students play active roles in negotiating these cultural references, through reinforcing, appropriating, and/or contesting them in a continuous, unpredictable process of selection, interpretation, and framing. This perspective resonates with the ecological perspective, which emphasises the interrelationships and interactions within learning environments. It highlights how textbooks are dynamic resources that can play a role in creating an active, critical engagement with cultural references in language education settings. Building on this understanding towards textbooks, this study joins a few studies which explored the use of textbooks in classrooms drawing on ecological perspectives (see, for example, Gurretazz & Johnston, 2013; Thomas, 2014; Jackonen, 2015; Matsumoto, 2019).

There have been a considerable number of studies in the context of Saudi Arabia that have explored the representation of culture in English language textbooks using

Kachru's (1992) notion of inner, outer, and expanding circle countries (see for example, al Alshenqeeti, 2019; Alzubi et al., 2023; Roohani & Molana, 2013). These studies attempted to identify the type of culture in English language textbooks by categorising culture into source, target, and international culture. Other studies explored gender representations in textbooks to reveal covert ideologies relating to women and their roles in their societies compared to men (see for example, Al Abiky, 2019; Aljuaythin, 2019; Sulaimani, 2017). Despite the usefulness of these studies in presenting various aspects of the treatments of culture in language teaching textbooks, they did not consider all the diverse aspects and multimodalities that merge together to frame the representations of culture in textbooks, and how they are actually negotiated within the walls of language classrooms. This study, thus, attempted to adopt a comprehensive in-depth analysis focusing on both the representations of culture in the selected chapters from the textbooks and also actual treatments of such representations inside language classrooms (See below more discussion on the analytic methods adopted in this study). This aligns with the theorisation of language and culture presented above, as these are conceptualised as existing within social practices and relationships, and not in signifiers or artefacts in themselves. From this perspective, research on culture and textbooks that do not look at classroom practices are accounting for potential meaning and signification only, which goes back to the distinction between Saussure's contribution to structuralism and the wider implications of his work on semiotics to understand culture and communication in more contextual and complex ways.

3.2.1.3   Classrooms practices

The notion of 'classroom ecology' has evolved from the field of psychology. In particular, classroom ecology builds on views such as Bronfenbrenner's (1979) notion of nested structures, Peirce's semiotic theory and Gibson' (1979/2014) concept of affordances (discussed above) and Bateson's (2000) work on the ecology of the mind.

Bateson's (2000) work on the ecology of mind investigates human development by defining the specific relationships between nature and mind. It explains the impact of the environment or nature on the complex systems of individuals' minds and how humans acquire knowledge about the world based on where they live. Bateson placed emphasis on immaterial features of living systems such as relationship, form, pattern,

interaction, and information. Indeed, he believed that any investigation into human development in relation to nature should be considerate of such features.

Van Lier (2004), drawing on these theories, proposed his ecological-semiotic framework of language learning classrooms, which he believed to provide 'an alternative to traditional ways of doing educational theory, research and practice' (van Lier, 2006, p. 20). This framework portrays language learning as a 'semiotic activity', which van Lier defined as a nonlinear, emergent process of meaning making. In fact, van Lier (2000: 333) highlighted three assumptions that underpin his ecological perspective on language classrooms.

The first assumption, according to van Lier, is that 'it shifts the emphasis from scientific reductionism to the notion of emergence'; therefore, 'instead of assuming that every phenomenon can be explained in terms of simpler phenomena or components, it says that at every level of development properties emerge that cannot be reduced to those of prior levels.' In this assumption, van Lier explained that the nature of classroom interaction is complex and cannot be stratified into a series of layers. This complexity is clearly mirrored in van Leir's definition of the concept 'emergence' as 'a reorganisation of simple elements into a more complex system'; thus, 'results of events and activities may be dramatically different … and may not be reducible to' those simple units (van Lier, 2006, p. 82). In this sense, unlike other theoretical perspectives that focus on some aspects of classroom interaction, an ecological approach attempts to understand interaction by involving various variables and ecosystems within and beyond language classrooms.

The second assumption, according to van Lier, is that 'ecology says that not all of cognition and learning can be explained in terms of processes that go on inside the head.' In this assumption, van Lier considered that the dynamic social context of the learning is as significant as the cognitive abilities of the learners. That is, instead of analysing fixed variables, an ecological approach explores possibilities that are supplied in the context. In this sense, van Lier built on Gibson's aforementioned notion of affordances, which he defined as 'relationships that provide a match between something in the environment … and the learner' (van Lier, 2006, p. 92). He, however, clarified that the affordances in language classrooms are not only inherent in the environment, but are also products of an 'active relationship' (van Lier, 2006) within organisms and between each organism and the environment.

The third and final assumption of the ecological perspective, as van Lier stated, is that it considers, 'the perceptual and social activity of the learner, and particularly the verbal and nonverbal interaction in which the learner engages, are central to an understanding of learning. In other words, they do not just facilitate learning, they are learning in a fundamental way.' In this way, ecological perspectives can be seen to make use of all types of communication performed by participants and seem to influence the course of meaning making inside the classroom (Lafford, 2009; Solmaz, 2021).

The relevance of the notion of classroom ecology, which can be expanded to virtual settings (see Section 3.2.1), to my study is that it allowed me to look at classroom interaction as an emergent and nonlinear process. Thus, I did not focus on one aspect of classroom interaction, be it the teachers or the students. In addition, by coming from this perspective, I considered the role of educational policies and materials such textbooks (discussed above), in affording classroom interaction with expectations. Additionally, I considered individuals negotiations and interactions with these affordances to vary based on various experiences, identifications, and beliefs. That is, relying on this perspective, I was considerate of various communication modes, including textual, visual, and audible, as treated by the participants within their classrooms. Thus, I did not rely on what the participants say in their classrooms, but rather, I paid attention to their nonverbal reactions and hesitations. In the following paragraphs, I will review literature on the notion of beliefs.

3.2.1.4   Beliefs

Dewey's (1933:6) defined 'beliefs' as 'the form of thoughts that covers all matters of which we have no sure knowledge and yet which we are sufficiently confident of to act upon and also the matters that we now accept as certainly true, a knowledge, but which nevertheless may be questioned in the future.' Dewey's definition suggested some aspects of the concept of belief. First, it shows that beliefs are dynamic and evolving in response to interactions between individuals and their environments. It also emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals beliefs and actions. That is, beliefs are not just abstract ideas; they are ideas that we have enough confidence in to act upon, which indicates a connection between beliefs and behaviours (Borg, 2015). Finally, this definition accepts the uncertainty and potential for change. In this way, just as ecological systems can evolve in unexpected ways due to their complex interactions, beliefs too can be questioned and revised over time (Barcelos, 2003).

Pajares (1992:309) stated that,

> Defining beliefs is at best a game of player's choice. They travel in disguise and often under alias - attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertories of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in the literature.

Pajares long statement accentuates the multifaceted and complex nature of the concept of beliefs, linking it to a game of players choice. Pajares considered beliefs as mental attitudes we often hold to be true without concrete evidence which shows that beliefs can take many forms and serve different functions. Applying this to our social lives, we can see that our cultural, religious, and political beliefs can impact on how our societies function and how individuals within such societies interact with each other, even if such beliefs are not based on empirical evidence. Furthermore, Pajares suggested that peoples' beliefs are not just abstract notions but can take forms, such as attitudes, values, judgments, ideologies and perceptions, and impact on various strategies and rules to guide individuals' (inter)action. Applying this to educational settings, teachers' and students', and even individuals' beyond language classrooms, beliefs concerning any educational issues, in this case learning about culture, might inform their action strategies, such as the plans they make relating to the notion of culture in order to achieve their goals. Their beliefs also impact on the rules of practices, including the teaching and learning practices within language classrooms. Similarly, such beliefs can contribute to shaping teacher-student, and student-student interactions, positionings and identifications in relation to culture.

Peng (2011:321), from a learning perspective, pointed out that classroom affordances, such as lessons activities and goals, topics, teacher-and-peer interactions, and teaching methods, 'give rise to emergence of beliefs'. Peng highlighted the interconnectedness and development of learners' beliefs. Peng also suggested that classroom affordances do not merely serve as tools for knowledge transfer, but they significantly contribute to the construction and modification of students' beliefs.

Negueruela-Azerola (2011: 368), from a sociocultural perspective, urged any exploration of individuals beliefs to consider 'beliefs as contextually situated social

meanings emerging in activities.' Negueruela-Azerola evoked a nuanced understanding of individuals' beliefs which emphasises the role of context and social interactions. It suggests that beliefs should be approached as constructs that are shaped by and emerge within the context of various social (inter)actions rather than as isolated entities within an individual. Applying this to the context of this study, it means that teachers' and students' beliefs about including culture in their classrooms are significantly impacted by the social environment of the classrooms, which, in turn, is impacted by ecologies beyond the confines of these classrooms.

These views regarding the notion of belief make it relevant to my study. Approaching the concept of beliefs as emergent from the dynamic interactions within the classroom ecology is relevant for this study and its focus on the treatment of culture. This approach accentuates how the teachers and students' beliefs, whether they arise from personal experiences or wider socio-political contexts, engage with explicit and implicit affordances. This mutual shaping process, where beliefs shape, and are shaped by, classroom dynamics, educational policies, and practices, as well as wider religious and political affiliations, is crucial in understanding how culture is treated in language classrooms.

3.2.2   Treatments

Another notion that is of interest to this study, in order to understand how culture is treated and constructed in language education settings, is the notion of treatment itself. This notion is crucial in understanding the dynamic, emergent, but complex relationships among individuals and between them and their perceptions of their environments. It allows for an understanding of how various component parts function within themselves and across 'others'. To fully understand such functions, key notions that are of relevance to the notion of treatment are 'affordances' and 'perceptions'.

Van Lier (2004), in an application of Gibson's notion of affordances (discussed above) from a learning perspective, defines affordances as 'relationships that provide a match between something in the environment … and the learner' (van Lier, 2006, p. 92). Van Lier suggests that educational settings, like natural settings, offer opportunities for individuals inhabiting within them. That is, they possess unique attributes that form an ecosystem of learning affordances, including the resources available such as textbooks and other learning materials, interactions between individuals including peer-to-peer,

student-teacher, and also norms and routines embedded within the space, within and beyond the walls of classrooms.

Kirschner et al. (2004), applying the notion of affordance to virtual settings, suggest three types of affordance, namely technological, educational and social affordances. They explain that technological affordances pertain to the technical of the learning environment that can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of student learning. Educational affordances, on the other hand refer to the innovative learning methods and possibilities that emerge within the context of digital learning. Lastly, social affordances indicate the facilitative aspects of the context concerning social interaction and participation of teachers and students.

The notion 'affordances' and its role in educational settings is, thus, crucial for answering questions about the ways in which culture is treated and constructed through and across language education settings. It allows us to understand how and why culture is framed and oriented to in educational policies, how it is introduced in textbooks, how it is treated withing language classrooms and perceived by teachers and students. A recognition of the affordances of particular educational settings, thus, lead us to critically explore the potential opportunities for (inter)actions they provide to any language education settings.

Another notion that is of interest of this study to unfold is the notion of perception. Menezes (2011) defines individuals' perceptions as ecological phenomena resulting from interactions with environment, rather than merely a mental process, a definition adopted in this study. He suggests that affordances are linked to people's various perceptions and actions and that these affordances emerge from dynamic interactions between individuals and their surroundings, shaping and being shaped by diverse social practices.

Gibson (2014: 119) explained that 'an affordance' 'implies the complementarity of animal and the environment.' An example of 'affordance' that Gibson presented is the terrestrial surfaces and their affordances, such as a surface of water that affords swimming. He also emphasised that 'animal' can reshape the surfaces. For example, a person can clean the surface of the water. However, Gibson reminded us that 'affordances' exist in every context; however, they remain unnoticed until what he called 'ambient light', which he defines as lightning conditions in the environment that enable organisms to perceive affordances, makes them visible (Gibson, 2014). In this regard,

according to Gibson, affordances exist all around us, but they often remain unnoticed until they are lightened/ triggered by ambient light, which makes them perceptible.

Similarly, Van Lier (2006) proposes the notion of 'active relationship'. He clarified that the affordances in language classrooms are not only inherent in the environment, but are also products of an 'active relationship' (van Lier, 2006) within organisms and between each organism and the environment. Applying this to a learning environment, they ways in which affordances within a classroom, for example, differ among the individuals in this environment, including teachers; thus, what an individual might perceive as an affordance in a certain event might not be the same for another individual within the same environment and event.

Drawing on the notions of affordances and perceptions is crucial for understanding the treatments of culture in this study, having in mind its theoretical underpinnings, as it acknowledges the impact of larger systems such national policies and societal norms and values. It also allows for a consideration of the explicit and implicit potentials that are inherited in the settings and contribute to shaping the ways in which culture is treated and constructed. Applying this study, we can perceive national and educational policies to dictate the broad strokes of what can be taught within classrooms, including subjects related to culture. Thus, these policies can afford opportunities to incorporate teaching and learning of culture. Yet, the way in which these policies are enacted and the time of such enactments can significantly shape their impacts. This because policies may be perceived differently by diverse stakeholders shaping its actual implementation from various ecosystems perspectives. Also, policies may evolve over time, reshaping the affordances they provide for the treatment of culture. This may lead to changes in stakeholders' perceptions as well.

Similarly, textbooks can be seen to provide lens through which culture is offered to teachers and students in their classrooms. These textbooks, depending on their content, can afford chances to understand and appreciate culture. However, such affordances are mediated by the perceptions of teachers and students, and even writers. Thus, a textbook may be replete with cultural content, but the way and time teachers and students perceive, interpret, and utilise this content will determine the actual treatment of culture that take place.

Teachers' and students' practices, positionings, and beliefs, on the other hand, create a range of affordances. Pedagogical practices and interaction patterns in classrooms

shape the ways in which culture is presented, explored, and understood in within classrooms. However, these practices and patterns are perceived through the lens of teachers and students, which can either broaden or limit the treatment of culture, depending on the timeframe of their treatments. Similarly, the cultural experiences and backgrounds, beliefs, and understanding of teachers and students of themselves form an integral part of how culture is treated. Teachers' abilities to incorporate culture into their classrooms can afford rich discussions. Simultaneously, students' willingness and abilities to express their experiences can add to the richness of such discussions. However, they ways in which both teachers and students perceive culture and cultural references can impact how these references are negotiated and treated within classrooms. In the following section, I will review literature around the treatments of culture in educational settings.

3.3 Networks of treatments

This section discusses the complex networks though which culture is treated, engaged with, and operationalised in language education settings. First, it delves into a discussion on how educational policies function. Then, it examines the textbooks role as influential tools that mediate the incorporation of culture into language teaching/learning processes. Following, the focus shifts to discussing the interrelationships between language teaching and the treatment of culture. finally, it reviews literature on the notion of beliefs and its relevance to the treatment of culture.

3.3.1 From top-down to complex treatments

There is an agreement in literature that language educational policies are generally designed based on traditional understanding, which often subscribe to a one-size-fits-all approach (Guthrie, 1992). They typically suggest that policies, including language education policies, should adhere to a fixed structure, so that become applicable across a broader spectrum of educational contexts and scenarios. Shohamy, (2006, p. 76) describes language educational policy as 'a mechanism used to create de facto language practices in educational institutions, especially in centralized educational systems.' Shohamy positions educational policies as a system used to establish actual, in-practice language behaviours within any given educational settings. This positioning is applicable to, what Shohamy calls 'centralised educational systems', where control over curriculum and instruction is centrally coordinated.

Weaver-Hightower (2008), from an ecological perspective, criticised this understanding towards educational policies, as they may assume a single policy or solution can be applied across diverse educational settings; thus, oversimplifying the complexity and diversity of such settings and their unique challenges. He, also, considered such understanding to ignore the fact that the same problem can manifest differently across various settings, requiring nuanced and tailored solutions. Weaver-Hightower (2008: 153) proposed that educational policies rather go through a complex process which he described in his 'straightforward model: problem → research → solution → implementation'. In his model, he 'used the 'ecology metaphor' to describe the complexity of the educational policy process (Lenhoff et al., 2022, p. 1, scare quote in original). In this model, Weaver-Hightower suggests that educational problems do not exist in isolation; rather, they are influenced by and influence various factors within their settings. He also considers solutions to such problems are not standalone answer to the problems being addressed; rather they are complex processes of adaptations to these problems. Finally, he considers the notion of implementing solutions to pass through a process of integration within the ecological systems of any educational settings.

This model seems fruitful to understand how culture is treated within various educational policies. However, it has received criticisms in itself. Cushing, (2021) suggests that it appears to treat educational policies as a set of fixed rules, regulations, and directives. Similarly, despite its reliance on ecological paradigm, it still views policies as top-down instruments formulated at macro levels and should be implemented within classrooms. In response to this criticism, there has been calls for more nuanced understandings of how educational planning takes place from an ecological paradigm. For example, Lenhoff et al. (2022) called for a consideration of broadening the scope of educational policies through acknowledging how external processes and features can impact on the structure of classrooms and the educational outcomes being examined. They urged for adopting ecological paradigms, encouraging 'social scientists need to work across and between institutional, practitioner, and political systems' (Lenhoff et al., 2022, p. 2).

Scott et al. (2016:27) reminded us that 'policy ideas are an object of contest and struggle between competing ideologies, education visions, personal interests and political or organisational positions'; thus, changes in education systems often lead to 'abstraction' and 'ambiguities' between policies and practices as well as to lack of guidance because. This is because, according to Scott et al., educational changes are often driven by

overarching visions that await concrete, detailed methodologies and strategies. Such methodologies and strategies often require determining at which hierarchical level they can be created, which often leads to gaps between the policies and practical applications. In the context of teaching culture, they considered that any educational systems that is rooted in its own cultural traditions might face challenges when pivoting towards a more intercultural pedagogic approach. The lack of guidance, thus, might hint at an ongoing internal dialogue or even resistance to defining what this shift should look like in practice (See Scott et al., 2016).

However, Block (2014) reminded us that such abstractions and ambiguities might be deliberate. That is, educational policy makers only provide educators with overarching objectives without prescriptive steps to allow for adaptation at the lower educational levels. While this can foster innovations and flexibility, Block warned us that it might also lead to inconsistencies in that actual delivery of education across various institutions.

Some studies have focused on educational policies in Saudi Arabia (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Barnawi & Alhawsawi, 2017; Barnawi, 2018) and how such policies treat culture (Jamjoon, 2010; Elyas & Picard, 2010/2013; Elyas & Basalamah, 2012; Alshahrani,2016; Aldegether, 2020). These studies in general revealed that there are shifts in the treatment of culture among these policies (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Barnawi & Alhawsawi, 2017; Barnawi, 2018). Such shifts appeared after the events of 9/11, when a shift occurred in the focus of educational policies from promoting Islamic culture towards advocating for national culture. Another shift occurred after the introduction of the Saudi Vision 2030 in 2016, where the policies explicitly began to encourage openness and acceptance among Saudis in various domains including education. These studies, despite their usefulness in revealing information about educational policies in Saudi Arabia and the treatment of culture in such policies, did not explore how these policies are implemented by actual teaching/learning practices inside ELT classrooms.

3.3.2 From teaching resources to ideologically carrying artefacts

The centrality of textbooks in language education classrooms is widely acknowledged in the literature (Kramsch, 1988; Hutchinson and Torres, 1994; Cunningsworth, 1995; Bell & Gower, 1998; Tomlinson, 2012; Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013; Canale, 2016). If we to describe it from an ecological point of view, these views agree that textbooks 'afford' language classroom interaction. In earlier explorations about textbooks,

Hutchinson and Torres (1994:315), for example, pointed out that 'the textbook is an almost universal element of ELT teaching'. A point that has been recently reinforced by Guerrettaz and Johnston (2013), who stated that 'the use of textbooks is extremely widespread; it might even be said to be an almost ubiquitous feature of language classrooms' (p. 783), and Canale (2016), who, yielded 'the pivotal role the textbook has played – and still plays – in formal education' (p. 226). With this in mind, the following paragraphs explore literature around the role of textbooks in language classrooms.

Kramsch (1988: 78) pointed out that textbooks are 'ideational scaffolding' sources for learning. Kramsch's description suggests that textbooks to offer a structured, logical sequence of information supports learner's understanding and acquisition of knowledge. It also views textbooks to allow the learners to learn in a systemic way, starting with basic knowledge and gradually introduce more complex types of knowledge. Similarly, Cunningsworth (1995:7) stated that ELT textbooks serve as a source of 'stimulation and ideas […] for learner practice and communicative interaction'. Cunningsworth evoked an understanding that textbooks can spark imaginations and ideas, contributing to learner practice and communicative interaction, as they provide a rich array of topics and exercises that encourage learners to engage in conversations debates, and other forms of interactive communication, promoting active learning and boosting language boosting language interaction. A view that is also held by Bell and Gower (1998), who asserted that a textbook is a 'route map for both teachers and learners' which provides 'structure and predictability, which help give participants in social interactions like lessons a safe base, a platform for negotiation and exploration' (p. 117, as cited in Tomlinson, 2003, p. 39). Based on such views, textbooks are used to facilitate classroom interaction and, accordingly, knowledge construction.

Such views towards the roles of textbooks, while sound boosting the significance of textbooks, have been under criticisms for a while. Hutchinson and Torres (1994), suggested that such understanding leads to teachers heavy reliance on textbooks as the source of knowledge, as in the context of this study. Thus, they assert that teachers 'just sit back and operate the system, secure in the knowledge that the wise and virtuous people who produced the textbook knew what was good for us'. Hutchinson and Torres reminded us that such reliance on textbooks implies teachers trust in their design, content and selection. It also implies that by doing so, teachers are always confident that by following the using the textbooks, they are providing a high-quality education as such textbooks have been carefully crafted and selected by experienced professionals.

Canale (2016), in his discussion on the roles of textbooks, expanded on Hutchinson and Torres criticism. He claims that textbooks are not randomly designed, but they are organised and pre-prepared materials, thus legitimise some of the social practices and ideologies promoted by the school processes, and before that, textbooks designers. In this sense, textbook use, beyond it supportive role, may also obstruct some interactional aspects that are crucial to the learning process. Bearing in mind the role of textbooks as both scaffolds and potential constraints in language learning classrooms, this study in its adaptation of an ecological framework, takes into consideration the affordances offered by the textbooks and how they are negotiated within the classrooms. In particular, this study examines how cultural representations afforded by the are treated in classrooms.

Other scholars viewed textbooks to carry/commodify implicit agendas. For example, Eliot (1948: 92), in his contribution to defining culture in textbooks, stated that '(e)ven the humblest material artefact which is the product and the symbol of a particular civilisation, is an emissary of the culture out of which it comes.' Eliot suggested that textbooks are not just tools for teaching grammar or vocabulary; they are also cultural ambassadors. They can provide students with insights into the social norms, traditions, and values of the communities where the language is taught, in this case English language. Furthermore, Carrette (2016) reminded us that textbooks, in their presentations of complex ideas and concepts, in this case culture, can sometimes oversimplify or package these concepts in a way that is easier to sell in the commercial publication market. This act of commodification, according to Carrette, treats these ideas as goods that can be packaged, marketed and sold in textbooks.

3.3.3 From within language treatments to beyond language treatments

In one of modelling language educational planning, the label of applied linguistics tended to be taken literally, so that new theories concerning language education suggested the need to change language teaching methods. Spolsky (1979) proposed a language planning model, referred to as contrastive analysis, that emphasises a comparison of grammars. This model employed the contrasting of grammatical structures to amplify the comprehension of languages. Then, based on Chomskyan notion of transformational grammars, some scholars of applied linguistics proposed the

implementation of transformational drills as a replacement for the minimal pair drills. These models in language education tended to marginalise culture. They predominantly focused on language structures, grammatical contrasts and cognitive processes, thus, treating language as an isolated system separate from its sociocultural context, as Newmark and Reibel (1968: 232) described language teaching during this period to have undergone a shift away from "mastery of language use to mastery of language structure".

Rivers (1968) in his modelling of language teaching methodologies, emphasised the psychological and psycholinguistic aspects of language. He invited for a consideration of cognitive processes, like memory, perception, and problem-solving, when planning language teaching methodologies to be used by teachers. He also took into account the significance of examining how individuals understand, produce, and acquire language. This model was criticised by some scholars, such as Spolsky (1999), considering it to be limited to what happens within learners' minds.

Spolsky (1999), shifting towards an inclusion of factors beyond individuals' processes and capabilities, emphasised the significance of social aspects in shaping language education. He reminded us that language education planning is not carried out in a vacuum but within larger socio-cultural and political factors, urging for a consideration of these factors when formulating language educational strategies.

Furthermore, Spolsky (2004), in his view of language planning within language classrooms, posited that the motivations driving formulating policies from this sociocultural perspective, in this case relating to English language, can be put into the following four categories. Firstly, National ideology, which he posited as the set of beliefs and values that shape the identity of a nation and consequently influence its language policies. Secondly, he recognised the role of English as a global language, which often influences the language policies of nations seeking to integrate themselves deeply into global economic, political, and cultural networks. The third factor pertains to the 'nations sociolinguistic situation', a term that encompasses the dynamics of language use within a society. Lastly, he pointed to 'an increasing interest in the rights of linguistic minorities, 'reflecting a growing global awareness and concern for the preservation of linguistic diversity and the rights of minority language speakers.

These models seem fruitful to understand the how culture has been mapped out in language classrooms. However, they have been criticised of contributing to an

educational policy and political discourse that is disproportionately focused on classroom improvement initiatives. The criticism is that these models tend to frame educational problems and their solutions within the confines of language classrooms (Rothstein, 2008; Anyon, 2014; Ewing, 2018; Reardon et al., 2019; Fahle et al., 2020).

Other criticisms of this models suggest that because of adopting this model, language education policies are still primarily focused on language and linguistic aspects, a factor that he considers to promoting standardization (Cushing, 2021). Similarly, Gorter and Cenoz (2017) consider adopting this model to result in prioritising improving assessment strategies. In this way, educational language educational policies appear to focus on measurable outcomes, such as learners' scores, and employ strategies and interventions to improve these scores. This view was reinforced by Rose and McKinley (2018), who consider that such model leads to assuming a linear cause and effect relationship between policy implementation and educational outcomes. That is, it implies that applying a well-formulated language educational policy will lead to desired educational outcomes.

Furthermore, Helal (2023) these approaches towards educational policies and language education policies often overlook the broader sociocultural and political contexts in which education occurs. That is, they tend to isolate education from the surrounding ecology, neglecting the influence of factors outside the classroom environment on educational processes and outcomes. This leads to a narrow, compartmentalised view education that fails to account for its true complexity and the interconnectedness of its various elements (Helal, 2023), including culture and how it should be appropriately treated within ELE settings.

This was introduced as a foundational aspect in many models of intercultural communication which posit that 'awareness of the other' is essential for genius cultural exchange and understanding. Indeed, scholars like Scollon & Scollon (2001), Baker (2016), and Byram (2020), among others, have stressed the importance of not knowing one's culture but also having a profound understanding and respect for the cultures of others. Their works suggest that only by understanding the 'others' can one fully grasp the dynamics of intercultural communication and navigate it effectively (Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Baker, 2016; Byram, 2020).

There are a few studies about the treatment of culture in Saudi ELT classrooms (See, for example, Liton, 2012; Khan, 2013; Ahmed, 2014; Harvil, 2015). For example, Liton's

(2012) study revealed that a considerable number of the teachers interviewed were categorised as unaware of the 'current global trends of ELT curricula and workplace needs' (Liton, 2012, p. 4). Furthermore, the participants of the same study acknowledged that cultural aspects are overlooked in ELT classrooms and more focus is given to linguistic aspects such as grammar. Similarly, Khan's (2013) research revealed that teachers' give more attention to skills like reading and writing than to having discussions about cultural issues. Additionally, Harvil (2015) examined the extent to which Saudi EL students engage in cultural discussions within their language learning classrooms, finding that more than half of her participants reported a lack such discussions. This research, although useful in exploring actual teaching practices in ELT classrooms in Saudi Arabia, did not investigate components that impact on such teaching practices, such as policies. Rather, it was limited to investigating teachers and/or students perceptions regarding their teaching/learning of English language and the role of culture in the English language education.

3.3.4   From teaching methods to teaching approaches

In the early language teaching practices, Based on Chomskyan notion of transformational grammars, some scholars of applied linguistics proposed the implementation of transformational drills. Newmark and Reibel (1968: 232) , criticising these such teaching practices, described them to have undergone a shift away from 'mastery of language use to mastery of language structure.' They predominantly focused on language structures, grammatical contrasts, and cognitive processes, thus, treating language as an isolated system separate from its sociocultural context. In response to these criticisms, Hymes' model of communicative competence and Halliday's models of sociolinguistic semantic, among others, were put forward. These models were criticised for producing, as Diller (1971) suggested, variations in language teaching practices and methodologies. Similarly, Johnson and Brumfit (1979) criticised these methodologies for being too grounded in applied linguistics, arguing they are not practical or adaptable enough in actual language classrooms.

CLT model was introduced in response to these criticisms (Johnson & Brumfit 1979; Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983; Savignon 1983). This model emphasised communications as the primary goal of language education. By applying CLT, students are provided with

communicative tasks that challenge them to stretch their linguistic abilities. CLT was a subject of criticisms (Nunan, 1987; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Nunan suggested that teachers struggle to recreate real life communication scenarios in their classrooms or establish conditions that are favourable for the development of communications. Kumaravadivelu raises questions about the ability CLT to foster authentic communication as various studies have been unable to characterise the interactions within CLT classrooms as genuinely communicative. In response to such criticisms of the CLT method and its applicability and generalisability, a post-methods pedagogy was promoted as a model of language teaching practices and approaches (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Bax, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2014), a key feature of which was its emphasis on the role and responsibility of the teachers. This, in turn, led to having calls for inclusive education that take into account students experiences and backgrounds (Dreyer et al., 2012).

3.3.5   From (meta)cognitive to contextual treatments

Beliefs are complex notion and has been defined and approached in various ways (Kalaja et al., 2016). Based on Horwitz and Wenden model to beliefs, early research on the notion of beliefs in language education perceived them as cognitive constructs. in such research, as described by Negueruela-Azarola (2011), beliefs are seen as representations of knowledge and, in certain cases, they serve as representations of these representations. This model was criticised by recent scholars, like Kalaja et al., (2016), who pointed out that such model has led research in the area of applied linguistics to conceptualise and approach beliefs adopting reductionist methods. Research to beliefs, adopting such methods, as Kalaja et al., (2016) stated, were approached using indirect methods like questionnaires, where they were treated as 'statable, stable, and fallible, or true or false' (p.9). In criticising this methods, Barcelos (2018) suggested teachers and learners' beliefs are not formed in isolation. Rather, they shape and are shaped by the various affordances of the classroom environment and also are related to the wider socio-political contexts. This view is reinforced by Dufva (2003), who claimed that individuals' beliefs are not purely individual, but instead unfold from individuals' voices and thoughts. Such voices and thoughts, as Dufva suggested, 'may seem to be directly related to the individual's own lifespan and personal experiences', whereas others 'would reflect the linguistic attitudes of the community at large and still others would be related to the discourses within language education,

language policies, curricula, syllabi, and teachers' practices' (p. 138). Bearing this in mind, teachers' and learners' beliefs, thus, do not exist in isolation, but are a mixture of personal experiences, societal and religious attitudes and discourses surrounding language education and policies, a position that is taken in this study as well.

Recent studies on teachers' and learners' beliefs are built around are largely impacted by sociocultural theory (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011). The ecological and sociocultural aspect of such studies reveals the cruciality of approaching beliefs as socially established meanings formed through specific sense making activities, as mentioned above. This led to calls for shifting from a focus on individuals to what their environments offer them when investigating their beliefs (Borg, 2018), leading to viewing teachers' and students' beliefs to arise from their environments, in this case classrooms, evolve through interactions, and potentially adjust in response to contextual experiences (Kalaja et al., 2018).

3.4 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter is a continuation of the previous one. It explored literature on the treatments of culture is ELE settings. In light of ecological systems theory, this chapter started with conceptualising the concepts of 'settings' and 'treatments'. It also explored subsequent concepts including educational policies, textbooks, classroom practices, and beliefs. Throughout this chapter, the concepts of 'settings', 'treatments', and other subsequent concepts were portrayed as dynamic concepts that shape and are shaped by each other within and across various educational settings trough complex processes of treatments. The review also showed that there are multiple treatments that occur through and across ELE settings ranging from educational policies to participants beliefs. These treatments, drawing on ecological systems theory, appeared to be complex and emergent.

4 Ecologically guided methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study aimed at investigating the treatment of culture in a Saudi ELE setting and its first overarching research question was: How is culture treated in Saudi Arabia in a HE ELE setting? To achieve this aim, having in mind the complexity of such investigation, the study adopted an ecological framework, which required a holistic investigation of the ways in which culture is treated across various ecological systems. The study attempted to provide answers for questions that could be asked based on various ecological perspectives and directly tap into the treatment of culture. These questions are as follows:

(1) How is culture framed in explicit educational policies relating to ELE in this context?

(2) In what ways does culture appear to be discursively framed in the textbooks exercises observed in this setting?

(3) How are affordances to engage with culture realised (or not) in this setting?

(4) How do English language teachers and students understand and perceive culture, and position themselves in relation to it, in this context?

(5) What factors frame the treatments of culture in this setting?

To address these research questions, it was essential to take into account the unique dynamics of the various ecosystems, as these complex and interconnected systems can significantly impact on the treatment of culture. Thus, I had to approach these systems in a flexible manner. The following sections explains how I flexibly dealt with the contextually emergent issues and discusses the relevance of an ecological framework, appropriateness of qualitative research methods, and case study design to my study methodologies. Then, they discuss the research instruments that were employed to collect data and their suitability in my study. After that, they provide details on the settings and participants in my study. Finally, they shed light on the considerations that I had to adhere to during my fieldwork.

4.2 Applying an ecological framework to the methodology of this study

Creswell (2016) suggests that it is necessary for each researcher to select an appropriate theoretical framework to guide their research journey and ensure a coherent and systematic investigation. In recent years, research paradigms, which Hua (2016, p. 4) defines as 'the overarching constructive framework and meta-thinking behind a piece of research', have been perceived as inconsistent owing to the differences in their underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions. This inconsistency has given rise to 'paradigm wars' (Bryman, 2008) among various research paradigms because each paradigm has been developed either to add opposition or refinement to a preceding one (Hua, 2015). These paradigm wars highlight the ontological and epistemological differences between the major paradigms of positivism on one hand, and interpretivism or constructionism on the other hand. In general, the differences between them are that the positivist, or objectivist, paradigm is often associated with quantitative research methods and, as Bryman (2016, p. 29) notes, it is 'an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors'. Thus, in this paradigm, truth remains independent of both the researcher and the phenomenon under investigation.

An interpretivist or constructivist paradigm, on the other hand, seeks to understand the phenomenon within its context and emphasises that 'social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors' (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). Therefore, in this paradigm, individuals can be seen as active participants in constructing reality. Each paradigm has its strengths and limitations. Yet, to choose among these paradigms, the focus should be on determining which paradigm is more appropriate for addressing specific research question, rather than on which paradigm is better (Hua, 2015, Bryman, 2016).

In my study, framing culture to be continuously treated and constructed through practices, behaviours, and interactions of individuals within their social context makes an interpretive constructionist paradigm more suitable. To achieve this, my study utilised an ecological framework to answer its questions and obtain its objectives. This framework, in an alignment with interpretive constructionist paradigm, acknowledges that meaning and understanding of realities are derived from the interplay between individuals and their contexts. In particular, this framework explores the complexity of

factors between and among various ecological levels, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigations. It, also, acknowledges the interconnectedness and complexity of such factors at various ecological levels, including individuals, interpersonal, institutional, national, and international. Most importantly, it acknowledges that such factors are emergent and can influence each other, leading to complex dynamics not only within language classrooms, but also outside them.

4.3 Appropriateness of qualitative research methods to the present study

Merriam (2002, p. 3-4) notes,

> There are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context. Learning how experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, in considered an *interpretive* qualitative approach (emphasis in original).

The appropriateness of qualitative research methods to my study, then, lies in their ability to provide a comprehensive, in-depth, and contextual understanding of the complex, nonlinear relationships among the participants and between them and their classrooms, societal, national, and international affordances. Qualitative methods' emphasis on exploring interconnected systems and the influence of such systems on individuals lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016) can be said to align with the essence of the ecological framework discussed earlier (section 3.2). Having in mind the focus of my study, culture cannot be reduced into fixed entities or translated into numbers. Similarly, the ways in which culture is treated are complex and nonlinear among various contexts. Indeed, this type of research aligns well with my study because it often starts with the view that classrooms should be holistically examined in order to account for the various variables available in any learning environment (McKay, 2006). Thus, using qualitative methods aimed at investigating the various ecological levels, including classrooms, institutional, and national, that are related to the treatment of culture in ELT in Saudi Arabia. By examining different levels of the ecology, I could capture the complexity of culture and the ways in which it is treated, as well as how they

affect the recontextualisation of culture within ELT classrooms. In addition, as Mack et al. (2005, p. vi) suggest, 'the great contribution of qualitative research is the culturally specific and contextually rich data it produces'. Such feature of qualitative research methods helped me obtain rich and detailed data, which provided me with valuable insights into the complex patterns of how culture is treated in Saudi ELT. This in-depth data helped me identify patterns, themes, and relationships across different levels of the ecology. Additionally, it provided me with a comprehensive understanding of how culture is treated by considering multiple perspectives and the relationships between them. These detailed and holistic traits of qualitative research allowed for methodological triangulation through using multiple qualitative methods to gather data and holistically explore the treatment of culture. This helped me ensure the validity and reliability of my study (see Dörnyei, 2007). Generally speaking, this comprehensive approach aligns with the ecological framework, as it enabled me to explore the interconnectedness of various systems and factors that influence the ways in which culture is treated in in Saudi ELE settings.

4.4 Exploratory case study research design

As discussed above, this study adopts a qualitative approach. In addition, given the objectives and questions (see Section 1.6.1), this study lent itself to a case study design to answer its research questions and obtain its objectives. The suitability of case study design is driven by several reasons. One primary reason can be found in the definition of 'case', which Miles and his colleagues (2014: 28) defined a case as a 'phenomenon of sort in a bounded context'. A case in the context of a case study, then, can be viewed as a specific instance of a phenomenon that exists within a defined context. That is, the research focuses in one particular event, organisation, individual, or situation that is situated within specific setting. In the context of my study, this definition is particularly relevant as it algins with the research objectives and approach. That is, my study employs a case study approach to examine the treatment of culture in an ELE setting in a Saudi university. To do so, my investigation includes educational policies, curricula, and teaching materials, practices, and perceptions related to the integration of culture in ELE. By focusing on this specific case, my study aims to provide contextualised understating of the ways in which culture is treated within the bounded context of this university. Another reason for the suitability of a case study design to my study is that it involves an in-depth investigation.

Robson (2002: 178) defined a case study as a 'strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a *particular contemporary phenomenon* within its real-life context *using multiple sources of evidence*' (my italics). Here, Robson specified that a case study is to be focused on a particular phenomenon. Such focus allows the researcher to dedicate their time and resources to a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter, delving deeply into the various aspects and dimensions of the phenomenon. Additionally, in alignment with the essences of qualitative research discussed above (see Section 4.3), Robson's definition suggests that a case study satisfies triangulation requirements by using multiple sources of evidence, which enhances the validity and reliability of the findings. Case study design involves collecting and relating data from different sources by using various data collection methods. This feature can be seen to satisfy the first part of Robson's definition, i.e. conducting an in depth exploration. Concerning my study, concentrating on a single university is crucial in conducting an in-depth investigation of the treatment of culture in the setting of ELE. Focusing on one university, I could account for the unique ecological factors and circumstances that tap into the treatment of culture within this university. This allowed me a detailed investigation into the relationship between culture and these factors and circumstances. Additionally, investigating one university enabled me to allocate my time and effort more effectively, which allowed me to conduct a comprehensive investigation, ensuring that no significant aspect is overlooked. In terms of triangulating the data sources, my study applied two types of triangulation, namely instrumental and textual. As for the instrumental, it employed triangulation by using different research instruments, involving document analysis, classroom observations, and participant interviews. As for the textual, it explored the treatment of culture at various ecological scales.

Also, a focus on one university allowed me to deeply engage with the participants, establishing more meaningful relationships with the participants. In alignment with the second feature of a case study in Robson's definition, employing multiple sources of evidence is essential for attaining a thorough comprehension of the treatment of culture in a Saudi ELT context. By utilising a variety of data sources, my study can encompass diverse facets of the aspects and dimensions of how culture is treated and include various experiences, beliefs, and practices related to such treatment.

Before I discuss the research tools, I will explain how case study design features satisfy my study theoretical framework. As discussed above, my study adopts an ecological

framework to address its research questions. Case study can be seen to acknowledge the notion of contextualisation. Focusing on one university setting allows for a thorough investigation of the specific context in which culture is treated. In this way, case study can be seen to acknowledge the unique characteristics of the university and its surroundings, enabling me to understand how the treatment of culture is influenced by and embedded in a microsystem level, namely classrooms. Also, a case study design can be seen to agree with the notions of 'nested systems' and 'networked systems' (discussed above). An ecological framework emphasises the interconnectedness of various systems, including microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems (see Section 1.3). Thus, by investigating one university, I was able to explore such nested/networked systems including classroom interactions, institutional, and national factors, and how their interplay, which provides insights into how different levels of the ecology, impact on the construction of the policies, the selection of the teaching materials, and the patterns of practices and perceptions within the university. The following section discusses research tools.

4.5 Research instruments: targeting nested, networked systems

In investigating the ways in which culture is treated in Saudi ELE settings, this study targeted various ecological systems, ranging between macro and micro systems, to satisfy its theoretical framework and answer its research questions. As highlighted by researchers who adopt ecological perspectives (e.g. Weaver-Hightower, 2008), targeting various ecological systems is essential to gain a more holistic understanding of the complex interactions and impacts on the phenomenon being researched. This section outlines the research instruments which I employed in my study. It is intended to give an overview of the research tools for the sake of clarity. However, it is worth noting that my approach to use these instruments was often nonlinear and overlapping owing to the iterative nature of the research process. That is, I often find myself using multiple instruments simultaneously and visiting data obtained by them at various stages of the research process. For example, when I started data collection at the micro system, I found it necessary to obtain data from the macro system to better understand them. On the other hand, examining data related to the treatment of culture that were obtained from the macro system, helped me to pay special attention to how they were applied within lower systems. This overlapping in using instruments also occurred within each system. For instance, at the microsystems, data relating to the practices in relation

to culture were used to examine various perceptions. Equally, data obtained about perceptions were crucial in understanding certain practices. In the following sections, I provide an overview of the research instruments, and then discuss each instrument and explain its appropriateness to my study.

4.5.1 Overview

To answer my study research questions and achieve their aims, the instruments that I used included document analysis, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and field notes (See Table 1). In keeping with the ecological framework, these instruments enabled me to gain a holistic understanding of the complex relationships between and among the teachers and the students and between them and their classrooms, institutional, national aspects. In general, research stages were guided by the treatment of culture outside ELT classrooms and the treatment of it within classroom walls. To gain an understanding of how culture is treated outside classrooms, I analysed policy documents related to education in general and ELE in particular. This step allowed me to examine the broader educational context within which ELE takes place and explore how and to what extent culture is treated in Saudi educational policies. To do so, I first collected various educational documents, including institutional and national educational policies and curricula and guidelines related to ELE. Then, I analysed the documents to identify themes, patterns, and references to culture in the policies. This process involved coding the data and categorising into relevant themes. Finally, I examined the identified themes and patterns to obtain an overall understanding of how culture is treated in Saudi educational policies and what implications such treatment may have on classroom practices.

In my exploration of the treatment of culture within classrooms, I employed classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Classroom observations were meant to explore the actual treatment of culture in ELE within the immediate classroom contexts. This allowed me to examine the practical implementation of curriculum in the classrooms. To do so, I observed a varied range of ELT classrooms, ensuring representations of different practices. During each observation, I paid close attention to various aspects such as classroom interactions, activities, and the explicit and the implicit presence of culture. Also, I took detailed field notes to document observations. After that, I transcribed the recordings to identify relevant patterns and themes. This

process involved coding the data, categorizing it into relevant themes, and interpreting the findings in relation to broader research questions and objectives.

Additionally, I accompanied my investigation of the treatment of culture inside the classrooms by conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers and students. This allowed me to gain insights into individual perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes towards culture. The interviews provided me a more comprehensive understanding of the various practices, conceptualisations, perceptions and positionings towards culture as well as the factors that shape them. To do so, I selected a diverse range of students in addition to the previously selected teachers. Such selection was meant to ensure representations of various experiences and perspectives in relation to culture. Then, like in classroom observations, I transcribed the interviews and analysed the data, identifying patterns and themes in relation to culture, and took field notes.

Table 1: Research questions alignment with datasets

Research Questions	Aims	Instruments	Data sources
(1) How is culture framed in explicit educational policies relating to ELE in this context?	Gathering information about the treatments of culture in educational policies.	Document analysis	Educational policies
(2) In what ways does culture appear to be discursively framed in the textbooks exercises observed in this setting?	Gathering information about the treatments of culture in the selected textbooks exercises.	Document analysis	Chapter from a Textbook
(3) How are affordances to engage with culture realised (or not) in this setting?	Gathering information about how culture is treated inside the classrooms.	Document analysis, classrooms observations and field notes.	Teachers and students

(4) How do English language teachers and students understand and perceive culture, and position themselves in relation to it, in this context?	Gathering information about the participants' perceptions of culture and its role in their teaching/learning practices.	Document analysis, classrooms observations, interviews, and field notes.	Teachers and students
(5) What factors frame the treatments of culture in this setting?	Gathering information about teachers' and students' reasons to avoid/engage with culture in their classrooms.	Document analysis, classrooms observations, interviews, and field notes.	Teachers and students

4.5.2   Document analysis

The document, or content, analysis is one of the most commonly used methods in qualitative research (Elo et al., 2014). Document analysis, as Bowen (2009:27) noted, 'is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic (computer -based and internet – transmitted) materials'. Bowen's definition highlights the comprehensiveness of document analysis as a method as it can be used for examining and evaluating an extensive range of documents, including printed and digital materials. Bowen (2009) also suggested that document analysis provides background information, and points to aspects and questions that need to be observed and asked. Thus, if we accept Bowen's definition and suggestion, document analysis method can be seen to serve as a valuable means of obtaining background information and highlighting aspects and questions that warrant further observation and inquiry. That is, by systemically reviewing and evaluating diverse documents, a researcher can develop a foundational understanding of the topic and refine their research focus

(Schreier, 2012). With this in mind, document analysis does not only help contextualise the study, but also guides researchers in formulating meaningful questions and determining which aspects of the subject matter require closer examination through observations and interviews.

The benefits and suitability of document analysis was clear from the earlier stages of my research, although it was not completely clear which documents I had to analyse until I started my fieldwork. The educational documents I analysed in this study included educational policies and textbooks (see Table 2). The policy documents were selected for their relevance to the Saudi ELE context, their representations of various educational ecosystems and their potential impact on teaching/learning practices and beliefs within the selected setting. Specifically, the selection was guided by the criteria of the influence of the documents in relation to the treatment of culture in this ELE setting and their accessibility (the table below highlights the characteristics of each policy document analysed). They included 'National Framework for Public Education Curricula Standards' from the Education and Training Evaluation Commission (EaTEC), 'Education Policy', 'General Objectives of Teaching English Language' and 'Unified Saudi Standard Classification of Educational Levels and Specifications' from the Ministry of Education, and various institutional policies from the selected setting. In addition, I also selected chapters from two textbooks taught in the observed settings.

Conducting document analysis provided me with crucial background information and highlighted aspects and questions that necessitated further investigations. To put it differently, by systemically reviewing and evaluating various documents, such as educational policies, and national and institutional guidelines related to Saudi ELE, and textbooks, I could develop a foundational understanding of the ways and patterns in which culture is treated and discussed. This approach was instrumental in uncovering commonalities, discrepancies, and inconsistencies in the treatments of culture at various ecosystem levels, as well as refining my research focus on how culture is treated in the microsystems (i.e. classrooms). In this regard, analysis of educational documents and textbooks allowed me to review and juxtapose such policies and expectations provided in the documents with the actual practices within the classrooms. Moreover, the insights gained using this method helped me to tailor my research focus and allowed me to develop more relevant questions. More importantly, understanding the context and content of the documents helped me identify which aspects require closer examination during classroom observations and interviews with the participants.

The importance of this lies in the fact that the participants in my study came from various countries and age groups, thus incorporating policies could better account for the diverse backgrounds and unique experiences of the teachers and students in my study.

Likewise, by using this method with textbooks, I was able to quantify cultural dimensions and discourses in the textbook. These quantifiable representations of culture served as a foundation of classroom observations and interviews methods. Indeed, during the classroom observations, I needed to use the data collected from the textbook analysis phase to explore the participants' practices. Similarly, when conducting the interviews, I used this data to stimulate the participants' explanations of their practices inside the classrooms.

Table 2:   List of educational documents

Source	Policy document name	Note
Ministry of Education	Education Policy (1969)	This document is about education, that was published during the early stages of education in Saudi Arabia.
Ministry of Education	General Objectives of Teaching English (2002)	This document outlines the objectives of teaching English language in Saudi Arabia after 9/11 events.
The Education and Training Evaluation Commission	National Framework for Public Education Curricula Standards (2018)	This document delineates the foundational principles for shaping curriculum standards in Saudi Arabia in line with Vision 2030's educational goals.
Ministry of Education	Unified Saudi Standard Classification of Educational Levels and Specialisations (2020)	This document offers guidelines for progression and transfer within the Saudi educational system, aligning with Vision 2030's objectives and adhering to international standards for educational classifications and fields

English Language Department	Study Plan (2021)	This document outlines the program's vision, mission, and goals, detailing the content topics, student activities, and the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities that English language learners should possess upon completion.
English Language Department	Reading Course Specifications (2021)	This document outlines the anticipated learning outcomes for English language learners upon successful completion of Reading Comprehension 3 course.
English Language Department	Listening and Speaking Course Specifications (2021)	This document outlines the anticipated learning outcomes for English language learners upon successful completion of Listening and Speaking 3 course.
English Language Department	Programme Learning Outcomes (2021)	This defines the knowledge and skills students should possess upon completing their BA degree
Oxford University Press	Trio Reading 3 (2016)	This is a reading textbook taught to level three students at the selected university
Oxford University Press	Trio Listening and Speaking 3 (2016)	This is a Listening and Speaking textbook taught to level three students at the selected university

4.5.3 Classroom observation

The observations were used to explore actual practices in relation to culture at the microsystems (i.e. within the classrooms). This research instrument is crucial in qualitative research because it, as Dörnyei (2007:185) suggested, allows 'researchers to see directly what people do without having to rely on what they say they do'. Indeed, classroom observation assures the accuracy of data because of the high possibility that the participants may say they do something but, in reality, do something else (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Thus, in this study, classroom observation served as a crucial research

instrument to capture the actual teaching practices and to provide a better understanding of the true dynamics and occurrences within the classrooms. The actual advantage for this study is that by using this instrument I was be able to explore how the teachers and students actually negotiate culture and cultural references inside their classrooms. In this sense, my data was based on real practices inside the classroom rather than reported practices.

Crozier and Cassell (2016) and Monrouxe (2009) recommended for classroom observers to audio record the classrooms. Following this, I used audio recorders in each classroom observation, which had some advantages to my study. Firstly, using small audio recorders minimised the influence of my presence on the participants' practices. That is, the small recording devices helped to create an atmosphere in which the participants did not feel overly observed, which allowed them to engage more naturally in their activities and interactions (Musante & DeWalt, 2010). Additionally, using the audio recorders allowed me to limit my movement inside the classrooms, which was also advised by the Saudi Ministry of Health because data collection took place during the COVID-19 crisis (See Section 3.9). In each classroom observation, my presence was limited to short time in the beginning and end of each class to set the recorders, which I sometimes asked either a teacher or a student to do. During real interactions and discussions, I sat at the back of the classrooms, and took notes (more discussion on field notes in Section 3.4.2.4).

Secondly, using audio recorders helped to capture some phenomena that might otherwise be impossible for me to capture. For example, audio recording allowed me to capture spontaneous, unexpected interactions and reactions and enabled me to analyse verbal tones, and pitch and emphasis which can reveal participants' underlying emotions and attitudes. As this study explores how culture is treated in ELT classrooms, there were multiple events in which verbal tones, pitch, and emphasis on the content changed, driven by the complex ideological constructs that accentuated classroom interactions. This was not only because these were language classrooms, but also because there were various cultural references that afforded types of communication in these (language) classrooms. Another advantage for using the audio recorders was that they helped me capture the sequence of interactions, the progression of discussions, and the way in which the participants build on each other's contributions. Indeed, by using the audio recorders I was able to obtain a detailed record of classroom interactions and discussions, which allowed me to better understand how culture is

integrated into teaching practices and how the teachers and students engage with cultural references. This, in turn, allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the classrooms dynamics and identify any patterns related to the treatment of culture in Saudi ELT contexts. Additionally, it allows the me to capture multiple voices and perspectives in every setting.

The last, but not least, advantage of using audio recorders was that they were easily transcribed for analysis. One most useful feature of using audio recorders in my study was that I could play back audio files. This feature was helpful to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions through using precise words, phrases, and expressions used by the teachers and their students during their classroom interactions (more discussions on the transcription procedures are discussed below). This was also useful owing to the complex nature of my study where conducting research instruments overlapped, as discussed earlier. Because of the ease of transcribing recorded data, using audio recording minimised the time gap between classroom observations and interviews. In turn, it helped me to obtain data that were more accurate during the interviews, because the participants would be expected to remember their practices and the motives behind them. More discussion on the interviews is given below. But before I discuss the interviews, it is worth mentioning that during classroom observations, the classrooms sizes were various, ranging from big to small classrooms. Each classroom size was a determinant of the number of students. Accordingly, I had to take enough number of recorders in every classroom I observed. In general, the number of these devices was dependent on the size of the classrooms, but in short, the bigger the classroom, the more audio recorders I used.

Another point to discuss in this section is the weaknesses of classroom observation as a research instrument, which were apparent in my study. One fundamental weakness was that, as Dörnyei (2007) pointed out, classroom observations allow the researcher to observe practices in classroom interaction at a very superficial level without uncovering the factors behind the participants' practices. That is, I was only able to observe classroom practices, interactions, and discussions, but not the meanings and reasons that accentuate them. Indeed, during classroom observations, I was only able to observe the ways in which culture was treated without knowing why it was treated in those particular ways. Another weakness is that it required more time and effort to gain rich recorded data. Owing to the fact that the participant were in different places and that I had to observe particular lessons, I had to make accurate arrangements with the

teachers. In some cases, I had to travel form one branch to another, so I did not miss any lesson because each lesson had to be conducted within a specific timeframe according to the lesson plans. Thus, classroom observations had to be planned more carefully than the interviews, which did not require to be conducted based on any official document, but on arrangements between me and the participants.

A final weakness of classroom observations was associated with the presence of audio recording in my study. Despite the small sizes of the recording devices, their presence (in addition to mine) might have impacted on some participants' practices because they could create an impression among some that their classrooms were 'on display' (Harbon & Shen, 2015). This impact, although not visible to me, might have led to some unnatural practices among the participants. The following section discusses the interviews.

4.5.4 Interviews

Brinkmann and Kvale (2018:11) pointed out that an interview 'provides a unique access to the lived world of the subjects, who in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions'. Also, Cohen et al. (2017) suggested that interviews are intersubjective; that is, they are neither subjective nor objective. In this sense, interviews allow participants to talk about their interpretations of the world. Using interviews, as an instrument in my study, in addition to adding different type of data to the existing ones (Kress, 2011), were meant to allow the teachers and students to explain their practices in relation to culture inside the classroom and what reasons impact on such practices (more discussions about the participants is given below). Therefore, the interview questions were developed to explore teachers' and students' actual practices and treatments of culture in their observed classrooms (See Appendix A for some examples of questions asked).

In this study, the interviews were designed to satisfy its theoretical framework. That is, the design for interviews was meant to be neither restricted, nor limitless. While the former is argued to impose a rigid structure and does not provide flexibility needed to holistically explore participants experiences or perspectives, the latter is noted to pose challenges for the researcher in terms of controlling the direction and focus of the interview (Morse, 2012; Turner III & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022). However, in order to avoid these weaknesses, this study adopted a semi-structured design, which is argued

to allow the researcher to guide the interview and also being open to explore new insights that may arise during the discussions (Brown, et al., 2019). Therefore, using semi structured interviews involved asking questions that allowed the participants to share their experiences and insights about culture and how it was treated in their classrooms in a more flexible way.

This design aligns with the ecological framework because it considers the dynamic and complex interconnectedness among various ecologies that shape classroom interactions and practices in relation to culture. Such flexibility in designing this instrument and preparing its questions helped me to adapt to the evolving nature of the topic. Indeed, despite the focus of my study on the treatment of culture in Saudi ELT, discussions with the teachers and students about culture and cultural related issues were changing throughout the course of my study, each of which was underpinned by complex ideological constructs demonstrated by the participants.

Another benefit of having flexible interviews is that I was able to capture unexpected insights relating to culture. Allowing some freedom for my participants to explain, elaborate, and justify their practices and perceptions enabled me to figure out thoughts that were otherwise inaccessible. For example, some participants added critical points related to gender, religion, etc. without me assigning questions to them. These points helped me expand the scope of the discussions while maintaining the focus of the study. The latter was advantageous to my study because it allowed me to elicit rich and diverse perspectives from the participants.

This design also suited the often 'sensitive' nature of the discussions. Having flexibility in asking questions about culture allowed me to adjust my role according to the context of the discussions. Some participants were reluctant to talk about issues related to culture such as (and mostly) religion. Thus, I was able to construct my questions in ways that did not neglect participants feelings, but also maintained the focus of the study and helped achieve its goals and answer its questions. This in particular was underpinned by my knowledge about such sensitive issues, which was also developed through multiple conversations with the participants, and what common different perspectives and often controversies there are regarding them; therefore, allowing me navigate through various discussions.

Additionally, flexibility of questions and discussions helped establish a friendly atmosphere with the participants, who communicated with each other about the flexible

nature of the questions and the relaxed tone of the conversations. Because of the nature and settings of my study, this was of a particular significance. That is, this atmosphere allowed interview arrangements to happen in an efficient way. As I had to transfer between places to meet interviewees, such friendly atmosphere made it possible to freely discuss concerns about the interviews time and locations. For example, some of the participants had to reschedule their interviews because to personal reasons. When they contacted me to do so, I was able to openly ask questions about their reasons and the best time to meet. This allowed me to interview a larger number of participants, which, in turn, helped me broaden the scope of my study and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives within the research context. The interviews were conducted in various locations such as classrooms, university offices and study rooms in the university library based on participants' preferences and convenience. In total, I conducted 49 interviews with the teachers and students (more details are given below).

On average, the interviews lasted approximately one hour, which allowed the participants to engage in more in-depth discussions and share their experiences, thoughts, and insights in a more relaxed atmosphere. Some of the interviews however lasted longer than one hour with some of the interviewees not only because they were more into discussions about culture, but also owing to the flexible nature of the interviews in terms of means and focus.

The interviews were conducted in participants preferred language. As the participants were able to speak either Arabic or English (I was able to communicate in both), I gave the participant the chance to choose between them (or sometimes both language were spoken). This allowed 'better' communication as the participants and me were able to express our thoughts and experiences more naturally and comfortably. This led to a smoother flow of the interviews allowing for richer and more authentic data. It also reduced potential misunderstandings and misinterpretations that could arise from language barriers. Like classroom observations, the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed (more discussion on the treatment of spoken data is given below). However, conducting the interviews was more flexible as I did not have to stick to particular timeframe, although I was keen to conduct them immediately following the observations to ensure that the participants recollections of their practices remained fresh and accurate. The maximum time gap between classroom observations did not exceed two days.

Like classroom observations, using interviews as a research instrument in this study had some disadvantages. One of which was that despite all the efforts that I made to make the interviews successful, I noticed that a few of the participants, including teachers and students, were concerned about their participation due to the sensitivity of the topic especially during the earlier interviews. Such participants were quite reluctant to openly talk about their experiences or discuss their perceptions in relation to the notion of culture and their teaching/learning of culture. This could have impacted on the validity of their contributions; it, however, was beneficial for my study, as knowing about these issues helped me refine my questions to be considerate of such issues. As mentioned earlier, my knowledge about the sensitivity of some issues allowed me to manoeuvre in the discussions. This however was time consuming as I had to read about these issues from various resources.

4.5.5 Field notes

 In this study, the compilation of field notes was incorporated and utilised throughout the research journey, from initial stages of fieldwork to the end. Making field notes is argued to be a crucial element of rigorous qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This cruciality of this research instrument stemmed from the functions of field notes in in my study. Firstly, they were used to capture contextual information, informal conversations, and some other relevant aspects that were not covered by other research aspects. Indeed, as Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018:381) point out, they 'aid in constructing thick, rich descriptions of the study context, encounter, interview, focus group, and document's valuable contextual data'. Therefore, field notes helped me keep a record of contextual information including the setting, participants, lessons times and places, interviews, and policy documents and textbooks. This was crucial due to the nature of the study and the various data resources that were used to answer my research questions, which required detailed written notes.

Also, field notes presented supplementary relevant data for the research. This allowed me to document my observations, reflections, and emerging insights at multiple levels of my data collection process. This was obvious at various research phases in this study. For example, in collecting policy documents, I took notes focusing on the key aspects that were relevant to the treatment of culture. Taking notes of such aspects allowed me to track how culture is treated and expected to be treated in Saudi ELT in the numerous educational policies which I collected from almost all the relevant

systems. Similarly, in classroom observations and interviews, note taking played a crucial role in documenting nonverbal interactions and occurrences that were not detectable through audio recordings. For example, in some of the classrooms, some of the participants exhibited clear facial expressions, such as laughing, and some other nonverbal forms like nodding and shaking heads during discussions related to culture. Observing such subtle expressions and forms were vital in selecting participants who would feed the study with more useful data.

Adopting a method from Phillippi & Lauderdale (2018) during classroom observations, the application of the field notes method in my study took place as follows: Before each observational session, my notes included information about the context and the content of the lesson. First, I wrote general information about the context in my notebook, including the basic information about the classrooms, such as teacher name, dates and time of observing this classroom, location and number of the classroom, course name, and so on. This information was obtained from the department chair on the first week of my fieldwork. Furthermore, I identified the cultural references and issues present in the textbooks so I could easily track them and monitor classroom discussions relating to them. Secondly, during the observational sessions, I divided my notes into classroom episodes, questions, and inaudible occurrences. In the classroom episodes section, I documented the actual practices that occurred inside the classrooms, including the ones that occurred in relation to culture, including verbal and nonverbal expressions. In the questions notes, I wrote questions that require clarifications from the participants. In the inaudible occurrences, I wrote down any occurrence that I noticed during the classroom observation but could not be heard by a recording device. Finally, after the observational sessions, I wrote details of the students who wanted to take part in the follow-up interviews, and initial information of the location and time of the interviews. Additionally, I integrated my notes with the audio recordings to create a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the occurrences and discussions that took place during the observation.

During the interviews, I adopted the same method used in the classroom observations. Prior to starting each interview, I referred to the notes that I wrote at the end of the classroom observation. I also wrote any updates to the interview information I had already gathered. This was crucial because some of the participants had to change either the location, date, or time before the interviews started. During the interviews, I took additional notes on the interviewees, including their educational and travel

experiences, both within Saudi Arabia and abroad. In addition, I also took detailed notes during the discussions, focusing on any new insights they added to the topic. This was crucial because it enabled me to approach the recordings with clear ideas and a better systematic understanding. My notes were also extended to include clarification needed from the participants, as well as hesitation moments and nonverbal occurrences exhibited by the interviews throughout the course of the interviews. Finally, after each interview, I took overall notes about the discussions and any issues to consider in the following interviews. I also took notes about any observations about the interview setting or environment, such as background noise or interruptions, which could affect the quality of the recording or the interview responses. This allowed to better prepare for following interviews.

Like other research instruments used in this study, using field notes had some weaknesses, especially at the first stages of my fieldwork. First, it was challenging for me to capture every detail and keep up with the pace of interactions and discussions. Indeed, I had a difficulty writing every nonverbal occurrence and facial expression that occurred. Another weakness that using this method exhibited in my study was that they did not capture the dynamics of the interactions or the tone of the discussions. This was another challenge to convey the atmosphere or the emotions of the participants. This was obvious when I juxtaposed my field note with the recordings, which led to incomplete or sometimes inaccurate information. However, as I became more familiar with the classroom interactions and dynamics as well as interviews' flows, I was able to take more notes about more relevant data. Indeed, I was able to focus my notes on the episodes of classroom discussions in relation to culture and cultural references relying on my initial notes that I wrote prior to each classroom observation session. Also, I was able to gain an overall understanding of interviewees reactions to multiple cultural issues and where the focus of my notes had to be.

4.6 Treatments of data

In the previous section, I discussed the research instruments used to collect data in this study. Saldana (2021) says 'start coding *as* you collect and format your data, not after all fieldwork has been completed', suggesting to '[c]ode only the data that relate to [our] research questions of interest' (p. 28). Following Saldana, I started transcribing the data from the earlier stages of my data collections. Also, guided by my study aims, my focus was centred on classroom treatment of culture. Having this in mind, I was able to make

some initial themes and codes based on each observation and interview. With this in mind, this section presents the methods that I used to treat different types of data.

In total, this study utilised two methods to analyse its data, including data obtained from educational policy documents, classroom observations and interviews, and textbooks. As for the data obtained from policies, classroom observations, and interviews, the primary analytical method that I used was thematic analysis, drawing on Braun & Clarke (2006), King (2004), and Nowell, et al. (2017). These scholars recommend that thematic analysis be used in relation to different epistemologies and research questions for searching for themes, analysing these themes, and reporting them. In particular, they suggest that the thematic analysis process involves procedures such as recognising, analysing, and reporting on thematic patterns within data and organising themes into the categories of analysis. To achieve this, I followed Braun and Clarke (2006) six steps to analyse the obtained data. The steps are:

1. Becoming familiar with the data
2. Generating initial code
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing the themes
5. Defining the themes
6. Producing the report

To apply these steps, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that such application should be recursive and overlapping. Drawing on this, throughout the analysis, I did not follow a strict linear progression, but rather I moved back and forth between these steps to refine and develop the themes and produce the report. Therefore, my intention to discuss the treatment of data here was just to provide an overall of how I analysed the data at each step. Also, drawing on Braun and Clarke (2006), I analysed these data, employing both analytical perspectives, i.e. semantic and latent, in relation to the treatment of culture in the policies. That is, while I explored the explicit references of culture, where culture or any phrase that is synonymous to culture is written, I also considered contextual factors that accompanied the data and appeared to have accentuated its content.

Additionally, Braun and Clarke proposed that there are two levels of document analysis which are called semantic level and latent level. While the former is used to explore the surface meaning of the data, the latter aims to 'identify or examine the *underlying* ideas,

assumptions, and conceptualisations - and ideologies - that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84, emphasis in original); thus, the researcher has to be considerate of contextual factors in which the documents were constructed.

Another significant point to establish here is that, as some of the data obtained from these resources were in written or spoken Arabic, I coded them in this original language. Saldana (2021:54) suggests that, when coding in the data same language, 'the culturally specific syntax and nuances of a language are maintained for this a more trustworthy analysis.' Indeed, coding in Arabic allowed me to preserve not only explicit meaning but also implicit 'cultural' and contextual nuances. This was also in line with Braun and Clarke's notion of laten analysis (discussed above). Upon completion of the translation process, I consulted a translator from the same university who helped me to verify the accuracy of my translations and ensure that the translated versions maintained a meaning aligned with the original documents.

Also, I should mention that my treatments of the data were done manually. Despite the usefulness of using coding software, such as NVIVO and CAQDAS, Saldana (2021: 44-45) told us that he requires his students to 'first perform 'manual' and qualitative data analysis using paper and pencil on hard copies of data entered and formatted with basic word processing software only' warning us that using coding software could result in '[researcher's] mental energies will be more focused on the software than on the data' (p. 44-45, scare quote in original).

Drawing on Saldana, I manually assigned labels to segments to explain their relevance to my study. I created tables in Microsoft Word files for coding based on the type of the data. Then, I used a pencil to label data with codes. For example, I designed a table for coding classrooms observations data. I divided this table into two columns. In the first column, I included segments about what happened to culture inside the classrooms when cultural references were discussed. In the second column, I wrote down what happened when culture was not the focus of classroom discussions. During each data coding phase, I continuously coded the data, revisited and refined my codes several times. This allowed me to work out patterns and relationships between the codes and combine, split, or modify them, to ensure they were clear and accurately represented the data (see Appendix B). After completing initial coding processes, I created a codebook, including descriptions of the codes in each type of data.

As for my treatment of data from the textbooks, taking into consideration the multimodal nature of the textbook in my study, where meaning is generated not only through linguistic, but also from visual and audible references/affordances, I used Moran's (2001) and Van Leeuwen's (2008) analytical frameworks. Moran (2001) described culture learning as 'a lived experience, as a personal encounter with another way of life' (p.3). Furthermore, Moran divided cultural references in textbooks into five dimensions; that is: products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons (see Table 1). To illustrate how the dimensions work, Moran uses the term cultural phenomena, which he suggested involves 'tangible forms or structures (products) that individual members of the culture (persons) use in various interactions (practices) in specific social circumstances and groups (communities) in ways that reflect their values, attitudes, and beliefs (perspectives)' (p. 25-24). In fact, this depiction of culture ensembles how culture is framed in my study as it considers the multidimensionality of culture.

Table 3:   The five dimensions of culture (adopted from Moran, 2001)

Dimension	Examples
Products	They refer to tools, clothing, written documents, buildings, written and spoken language, music, and complex institutions of family, economy, religion, education, and politics.
Practices	They refer to forms of communication, self-expression, and actions associated with social groups and the use of products. Verbal and non-verbal interactions
Perspective	The perceptions, beliefs, values, and attitudes that underlie the products and guide people's behaviour in the practice of culture. They provide meaning and constitute a unique outlook or orientation toward life – a worldview.
Communities	Specific social contexts, circumstances (e.g., religious ceremonies), and groups (e.g., different social clubs, organization) in which members carry out cultural practices.
Persons	They refer to individual members who embody the culture and its communities in unique ways.

However, it is worth mentioning that Moran's framework explores cultural references only focusing on linguistic representations. Indeed, in his account of his framework, Moran considered that language describes, interprets, and responds to culture (Moran, 2001, p. 36). Moran's framework, thus, portrays written language as the only generator of cultural meaning, which does not fully satisfy my view of the role of the textbooks in language classrooms. To avoid this shortcoming, I also used Van Leeuwen's (2008) framework, to analyse cultural discourses in the textbooks. Van Leeuwen proposed his framework based on Foucault's notion of discourse and Bernstein's theory of recontextualisation (discussed above). However, Van Leeuwen extended Bernstein's view and used it in a more general sense (see Figure 1).

Van Leeuwen, in his social actors framework, proposed that ten elements of social practice can be observed in language texts. These elements are participants, actions, performance modes, eligibility conditions (participants), presentation style, times, locations, eligibility conditions (locations), resources (tools and materials), and eligibility conditions (resources). Moreover, Van Leeuwen suggested that these elements are recontextualised through processes of substitutions, deletions, rearrangements/role allocation, and/or additions (van Leeuwen, 2008). Furthermore, Van Leeuwen proposed his framework be used to 'represent' social actors. This framework focuses on the portrayal of social actors and their semantic roles in the texts. Moreover, van Leeuwen (2008) emphasised that although this framework 'is grounded in linguistics', 'meaning belongs to culture rather than to language' (p. 24-5). Thus, van Leeuwen explained that his framework is suitable for analysing visual references of social actors.
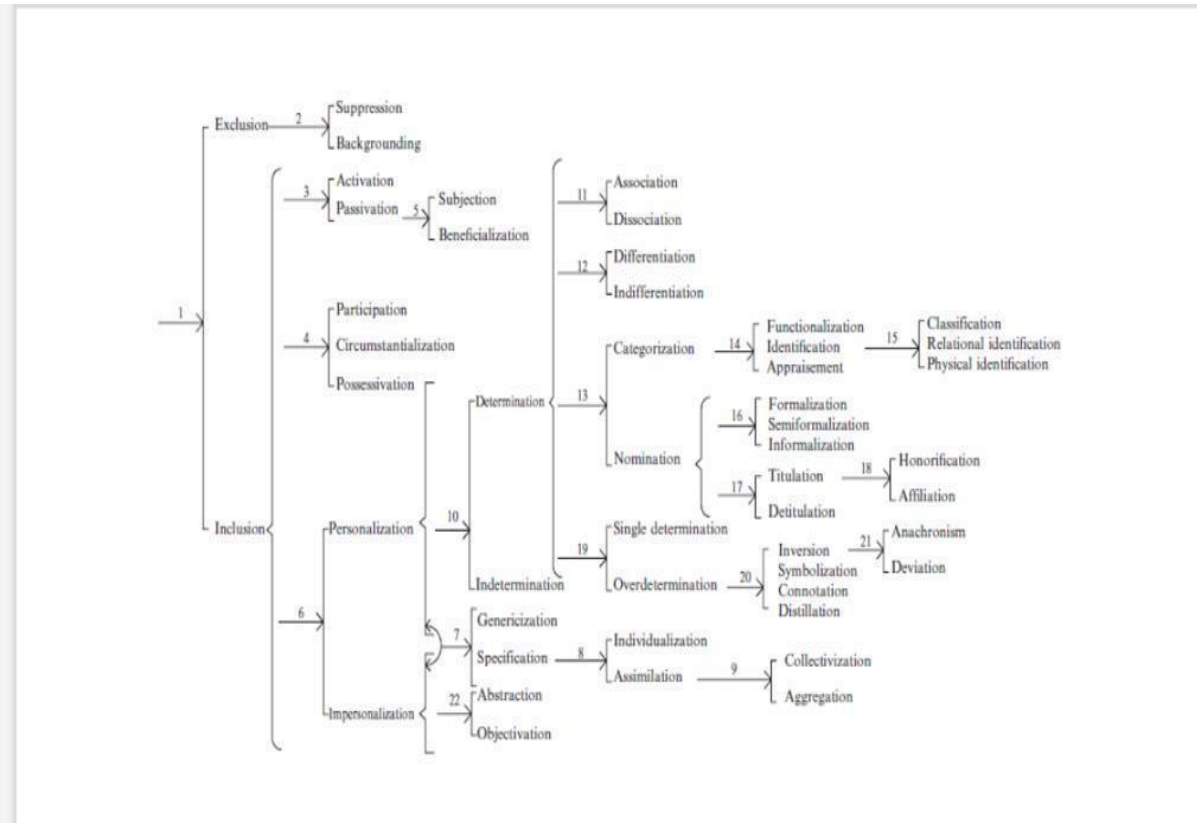
Figure 1:   Representational categories of socio semantic inventory (van Leeuwen, 2008)

4.7 The micro settings

Prior to deciding upon who would take part in this study, it was important to decide where the study should take place. Such decision was guided by my study theoretical perspective, questions, and objectives. As these elements required expanding the scope of the study, in order to gain as rich data as possible, I had to choose my study settings which would satisfy such requirement. Thus, it wasn't only the setting that I had to choose, but also I had to consider how such setting would benefit my study. The first choice I had to consider was selecting the appropriate level of education for my study. At such level, my primary selection criterion was that English should be the language of instruction to avoid language barriers that could affect the treatment of culture, or at least to minimise their effects. Due to my knowledge of the Saudi educational system, I decided that my study had to focus on English language teachers and students at the tertiary level of education (university). After I decided this, I had to choose which university should I select as there are 28 public universities and 10 private ones. As

such, selecting a university appeared to be an easy task. However, I had to be considerate of the same key aspects of my study, i.e. it's theoretical framework, questions, and objectives, which drove me to narrow my selection criteria. There were various features within Saudi universities that were available to satisfy such focused criteria including their rankings, sizes, and geographical locations. However, because there were no significant differences among them in terms of their ranking and sizes, having in mind they all 'follow' the same macro educational policies and are, mostly, designed according to the Ministry of education's (MoE) criteria, I decided to focus on the geographical differences. I chose a university in the southern region of Saudi Arabia. This university's location is distributed between mountainous and flat areas. Although such features were not significant to the focus of the study, nor were they meant to aid the generalizability of the research, it still made this university unique. Like other universities, English language is taught and used as, or at least it should be, the medium of instructions in ELDs. I decided to collect data and select participants from the ELD at the university main campus as well as included two other university branches. These branches are located in different geographical locations; however, they utilise the same policies and teaching materials as those implemented at the main campus. They also implement the same admission criteria for the students and employment criteria for the teachers.

At this university, the ELD arranges and conducts ELE for various programmes, including Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programmes. As for the status of English language, all of the students, irrespective of their chosen major, must study at least one module in English. The students who apply to major in English language have to study for three to four years. To be accepted into the ELD, these students must pass an entry test administered by the department. During the course of their study, students are offered modules that vary from basic to advanced. In the first two academic years, the students intensively study the four language skills, i.e., reading, listening, speaking, and writing. These skills are taught separately by different teachers. Later, as they move on, students take courses in applied linguistics, translation, and literature. After successfully finishing these modules, students are awarded a BA in English language.

4.8 The participants

From the early stages of data collection procedure, the recruitment of the participants was meant to be as inclusive of various socio-cultural backgrounds as possible to satisfy

my study theoretical framework, research questions, and aims. To be specific, as this study purpose was to explore the treatment of culture, utilising an ecological perspective, I decided to employ a purposive sampling method. This method, as Creswell and Poth (2016) suggested, enables the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of the researched settings, allowing the selection of the participants that would enrich the study. Indeed, by selecting the participants based on specific criteria relevant to my research questions, I was able to gather in-depth data. That is, from an ecological standpoint, purposive sampling allowed me to focus on the participants who were most likely to provide valuable insights into the various nested systems that shape and are shaped by the treatment of culture in Saudi ELT. Also, by using this sampling method, I was able to ensure that the selected participants represented a range of experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds, which contributed to a deeper understanding of how culture is treated.

However, and before I discuss how I applied a purposive sampling method, it is worth mentioning that there were certain challenges associated with selecting participants based on their demographic features, particularly in terms of gender. There is no doubt that addressing these challenges would have contributed to the depth and richness of my study, providing a more holistic understanding of the treatment of culture; however, with segregated education between genders in this national context, including males and females would have meant including different institutional contexts, and my position would have been different in relation to the participants, particularly as an observer. Despite these challenges, applying a selection criterion enabled me to assure the various range of experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds of the participants that still allowed for valuable insights to be gained the selected participants. More importantly, such challenges occurred in the recruitment process, yet the collected data involved various gender related discussions and perspectives.

In addition to their willingness to take part in my study, the selection criterion of the participants in my study occurred in two phases. First, I chose the teachers and the students based on their courses. To do so, I contacted the ELD chair and other departmental committee members to identify the teachers who were teaching the specific course that I had previously selected for my study and were prepared for their participation. Then, I arranged meetings with these teachers as well as their students to give them information about my study and ask them to take part in my study. Talking to teachers, and even to students, about the study helped me to gain insights into how

they operate within their classrooms. This understanding was essential for me to plan how I would conduct my study and tailor it to suit the classrooms' (inter)actions. Indeed, engaging in conversations with teachers allowed me to choose the appropriate time for classroom observations, where the lessons are planned to have intensive classroom discussions. For example, one of the teachers, in a listening and speaking class, told me that there was a section titled 'speaking' in each lesson, and suggested that this section would be the most suitable one to observe because it comprises speaking activities where the students are expected to speak and engage in discussions.

In the second phase, I wanted to have extended discussions during the interviews about my topic with both the teachers and the students. Because the teachers had already been selected, my selection criteria in this phase was specifically tailored to the students. Taking into account that this study purpose was to investigate how culture is treated and discussed, which requires classroom interactions, the selection of the students was based on their participation in their classrooms. Creswell (2005: 204) notes that, to apply a purposive sampling, 'the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristic or trait'.

Following Creswell, and keeping in mind the ecological framework of my study, I found it necessary to select participants that would feed the interviews and discussions with different perspectives. Thus, I chose students based on their amount of participation in their classes, ranging from not active to highly active participants. As White (2011: 1) asserts, '[b]ecause of cultural and linguistic variances in student populations, not all students are equally adept at class participation nor are all students equally prone to participate'. Drawing on this assertion, I assumed that students' levels of participation were influenced by some cultural reasons. In particular, I assumed that the more a student was willing to take part in the classroom discussions, the more he had positive attitudes towards the topic. This, however, was not to neglect the linguistic variances among the students as they are also a determining factor. But, bearing in mind that all the students are at the same language level, I assumed they all should have had a level of competency that would allow them to engage in classroom discussions and express their attitudes. Therefore, the sampling method in this phase was based on the assumption that students' levels of participation may be more influenced by some ideological constructs and perspectives towards culture rather than their abilities to their inability to effectively communicate their experiences and perspectives. In the following section, I will discuss how I saw my role in the current project.

4.9 My role as a researcher

Researchers should recognise that their role, identity ,and agenda can impact on the data they collect (Holmes, 2020; Heffernan, 2022). Thus, as Starfield (2010) recommends, they need to account for their potential impact on their study by reflecting on their own positioning and subjectivity within the research process and offer a clear and contextualised account of their role in the project and how it influences the findings. Such reflection is crucial as it makes researchers conscious of the impacts of their own ideology, culture, politics, and those of their participants on the findings (Etherington, 2004).

This study did not hinge on preconceived ideas. Instead, I strived to provide insights based on the participants' own terms and experiences by adopting a flexible approach during data collection processes. As a result, as mentioned in section 4.2, the focus of my study was changed from being only on how culture is negotiated within classrooms to considering wider treatments of culture that occur outside the confines of language classrooms and impact on such negotiations. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that my perspectives, experiences, and beliefs have had an impact on my role as a researcher during the data collection processes, which included document analysis, classroom observations, and interviews. Such impact presented benefits and drawbacks to my study.

During document analysis phase, my perspectives and beliefs influenced the present research process in several ways. For instance, my own background and understanding of the field shaped the selection of the documents I chose to analyse. Thus, I was more inclined to choose documents that provided insights into how culture was treated or represented. This inclination, although it could lend depth and nuance to my analysis, could limit the breadth of the study and lead to a neglect of other significant aspects that are equally significant. To mitigate this bias, I made every attempt to diversify my document selection, which included relevant educational documents from all educational resources.

During classroom observations, my presence as an external observer could have influenced the dynamics of the class. As Monahan and Fisher (2010:357) note, 'the presence of a researcher will influence the behaviour of those being studied'. Thus, when I observed classrooms, it is possible that both teachers and students might have altered their behaviour due to the awareness that they were being observed. Teachers

may have modified their teaching practices and focus towards a consideration of culture. Similarly, students may have participated more actively in the classrooms. Having this in mind, I attempted to minimise the effects of my presence. To do so, I did not actively participate in classroom activities, ask questions, or provide feedback during the observations. I also conducted multiple observations to allow for teachers and their students to become accustomed to my presence.

During interviews, my observations of the classrooms could have an impact the interviewees responses. As the interviews were conducted to allow the participants to reflect on their observed practices, the interview questions were more inclined into such practices, which may have directed or limited the participants responses. To alleviate this, I listened to each interview immediately after I had finished to locate where such influence occurred, and how to avoid it in future interviews. I also prepared additional questions based on participants' responses, in addition to questions about classroom practices, to allow for flexibility in the direction of discussions.

4.10   Coping with emergent, unexpected data

Creswell (2017) emphasised the importance of adapting research methods to address emergent data and unexpected events during the research process. To achieve this, he suggested that researchers should remain flexible and open to modifications in their research methods and design, including data collection, analysis, and reporting, in response to new insights or changes in the research environment. This study was not an exception, and to achieve its objectives and answer its questions, I had to adapt to new insights and unexpected data that emerged during the research process. That is, I did not enter the field with a rigid pre-determined approach.

Such flexibility allowed me to adjust my study to the context. For example, my study's primary focus was originally intended to explore the treatment of culture, at one ecosystem, within Saudi ELT classrooms only. In particular, I intended to examine the ways by which teachers and students enact and negotiate various textual, visual, and audible cultural references afforded from the textbooks, which was planned to be the focus of the entire research project. Saying this should not leave the impression that I was not considerate about other ecosystems from the beginning. When I entered the field and began to collect data, my focus started to shift towards a more comprehensive

exploration of the treatment of culture at various educational ecosystems. For example, I expanded the focus of document analysis from identifying cultural references from the textbooks to exploring the treatment of culture in educational policies at both micro- and macro- ecological systems. Such a shift was significant, as the data revealed that, in addition to exploring how teachers and students negotiated culture within their classrooms, it was necessary to examine what reasons impacted on such negotiations. However, having in mind the complexity of such reasons, it was necessary to conduct an investigation of educational policies based on the reasons projected by the participants. Such investigations were crucial in achieving a comprehensive understanding of how culture is treated outside language classrooms, and allowing me to gain in depth details and insights of such treatments. For example, by analysing educational policies, I was able to discover new insights concerning the orientations towards culture that would directly impact classroom practices and frame their foci and dimensions.

In addition, the shift towards a more balanced consideration of various ecosystems allowed me specify selection criteria of the teachers. At the beginning, selecting teachers was based on them being teachers of advanced English language learners which allowed to find a high number of teacher participants. However, as the research went on, I expanded my focus to include teachers who had other responsibilities including membership in institutional policy, course specifications, and lesson plan committees, in addition to the teachers I had had selected at the beginning. Including such teachers allowed me open discussions relevant to the policies adopted within the research settings.

Being in the field also changed my view towards the teaching materials that I had to use in my study. Initially, I intended to observe reading classes only. However, during the first week of classroom observations, I noticed that the classroom discussions were not rich. In such classes, the student were typically assigned written texts and were expected to read and comprehend them. The teachers appeared to take on a more traditional role as the primary source of knowledge and instructions, talking most of the class time. Therefore, I decided to expand my classroom observations to include listening and speaking classes, focusing on discussion sections in the textbooks. In these classes, student had more chances to speak and engage in discussions about culture, while the teachers' primary role was facilitate classroom discussions.

The flexibility in approaching the field led also to constructing my study in a specific way. For example, the finding chapters were constructed in a way that went beyond merely including data based on observations from classrooms and accounts from teachers and students. As the focus of the study expanded, it was found that there were policies that included significant data that directly related to the ways of how culture is treated within Saudi ELT classrooms. These findings in addition to others made me to mention these policies in the findings chapters, as they were considered findings themselves.

4.11 Ethical considerations

For any research that includes human participants, it is important for the researcher to be considerate of the ethical issues to assure that the participants' rights are protected (Cohen et al., 2017). This study obtained ethical approval from the University of Southampton. Cohen et al. (2017) suggested anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw at any time during the research and avoiding causing harm to the participants as important ethical issues in educational research. With this in mind, and following ethical procedures at the University of Southampton, I provided the participants' consent and information sheet forms prior to conducting the study (see Appendix C). The forms included detailed information about the aim of the study, the criteria for recruiting the participants, the data collection methods, anonymity and confidentiality issues, and the right to refuse or withdraw from the study. In addition, I made sure that taking part in this study would not cause any harm to the participants, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. That is, I ensured that during classroom observations and interviews, I adhered to the rules given by the Saudi Ministry of Health, such as wearing masks, using sanitisers, and keeping a sufficient distance from others to avoid causing any harm to the participants or to me.

Fulfilling my promise in the consent forms, I ensured that my study participants privacy is protected. I first ensured that their data were secured. The participants data were securely stored on a university password protected computer. As the research process went on and after data analysis with very thick descriptions and interpretations (which made me apply for a new university laptop), I stored the data on my University of Southampton OneDrive account. Then, only the de identifiable data were deposited in the University of Southampton repository so they can be used for future research and

learning. Teachers' and students' data maintained secured throughout whole study processes including data collection, analysis, and reporting. That is, I paid a special attention when using to information about their names, positions, level of education, or locations. For example, I replaced personal and educational information with unique codes. I replaced teachers' and students' names with codes such as ELT to refer to teachers, S to refer to an individual students, and Ss to refer to groups of students. These codes were also used to replace real names quoted in participants practices and responses. For example, If during classroom observation or interview, the real name of a student or a teacher was mentioned, I replaced it with its code. I also used codes to replace classroom details. For example, instead of mentioning what classrooms I observed, I used codes such as Extract with a number (e.g., Extract 1, Extract 2, Extract 3, etc.). In addition to using codes, I avoided using any identifiable details of the participants. For example, when I described the participants, their practices or their perceptions, I excluded any information that could potentially identify them such level of education including teachers degree and students year of study, actual nationality, teaching or learning experience or specific university branch.

5 Educational documents analysis findings

5.1 Introduction

As discussed above, the findings included data that went beyond observations from the classrooms and accounts from the participants (section 3.2). The current chapter presents details of the type of documentation that formed this part of my data collection, how I analysed them, and what findings emerged in relation to culture. In particular, it presents the selection and analysis processes and the findings from Saudi ELE educational documents, including educational policies and textbooks. It aims to answer the initial examinations on how culture has been treated in educational policies at different scales in Saudi Arabia, as well as what cultural references and framing can be identified in the textbooks. That is, this chapter is intended to contribute to a holistic image of the status of culture by analysing general educational policies as well as ELE policies that relate to the context of this study (an ELE module in a Saudi HE context).

With this in mind, this chapter begins with the section 'documents selection' (5.2), which presents the educational documents used in my study, and discusses the selection criteria. The second section, 'approaching written data' (5.3), explains the preparatory processes that the selected educational documents went through as well as the analytic approaches that were used in this study for analysing them. The fourth section, 'findings from educational documents' (5.4), presents the results of the analysis. The last section, 'summary of the findings from educational documents' (5.5), provides an overall overview of the findings.

5.2 Documents selection

Considering the flexibility that was maintained throughout the course of this study, it was obvious from the beginning that, in order for this exploration to be able to uncover the ways in which culture is treated in Saudi ELT classrooms, it had to trace as many relevant policy documents as possible in addition to the textbooks (See Table 2 above). This required an exploration of the treatment of culture at various ecologies and ecological levels. In terms of the educational policies, an in-depth exploration was meant to identify commonalities, discrepancies, and inconsistencies towards culture in the contents of these documents, which was significant to account for teaching practices observed within Saudi ELT classrooms. Indeed, As Cardno (2018: 629) notes, '[p]olicy

documents are often sandwiched between the higher-level strategy tier that sets direction for policy formulation from within or beyond the organisation, and the operational tier of policy implementation that is concerned with procedure and process'. With this in mind, the selection of policy documents was meant to be inclusive of multiple Saudi educational policies at various ecological systems. Thus, this study included educational policies ranging from the national level, including the Education and Training Evaluation Commission (EaTEC) and the MoE, to the institutional level, including the College of Languages and Translation and the ELD.

The EaTEC is a government body in Saudi Arabia that is responsible for evaluating and accrediting the education and training institutions in the country. It was established in 2017 as a specialized authority in accordance with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Including data from this agency was instrumental in my study because of its functions. First, this agency accredits and evaluates educational and training institutions in Saudi Arabia, including schools, universities, technical and vocational centres, and language centres. Second, it develops and implements policies and standards for the quality assurance of education and training programmes. Third, it is responsible for conducting research and studies to improve the quality of education and training in the country. These functions together have significant implications for the way culture is generally treated at the macro level in Saudi Arabia.

The Ministry of Education, on the other hand, is the government body responsible for the overseeing and regulating the education sector in Saudi Arabia. It is responsible for developing educational policies and strategies in accordance with the Saudi national development plans and vision, developing and approving curricula for all levels of education, and ensuring that educational institutions comply with quality standards and regulations, including those set by the EaTEC. Using educational policies from the MoE was significant in this study because its policies are shaped by both the Education and Training Commission and other relevant agencies, and they in turn shape the policies and practices relating to culture that should be applied within the institutions (universities).

Finally, institutional policies, such as college and department policies, include the rules, guidelines, and procedures that govern the teaching practices within a particular university. In the context of my study, using institutional policies were important because they directly impact on the way that culture is taught inside classrooms. Most importantly, policies exhibited at the institutional level are closely linked to policies

developed by the EaTEC and the MoE. Thus, they were a link in the chain that could lead to a holistic understanding of how culture is treated in Saudi ELT classrooms.

The documents analysed in my study were selected based on their relevance to my research topic, their potential to provide insights into the ways in which culture is treated in Saudi ELE settings, and their potential to influence practices and perceptions in the setting of the study. I collected documents from the three educational bodies related resources mentioned above. In total, the documents analysed in this study included documents titled 'National Framework for Public Education Curricula Standards', 'Unified Saudi Standard Classification of Educational Levels and Specialisations', 'Course specifications', 'Study Plans', and 'Programme Learning Outcomes'.

The first document, 'National Framework for Public Education Curricula Standards', is available at the EaTEC website. This framework outlines the general principles and key elements for developing curriculum standards in Saudi Arabia, which align with the educational objectives set out in Vision 2030 (Education and Training Evaluation Commission, 2018). It was approved by the Board of Education and Training Evaluation Commission in 2018, prepared in collaboration with the MoE, and 'has been guided by the contents of the MoE strategies.' (p. 11).

The significance of this framework in relation to education, as stated in this document, is that it:

1. is a fundamental document that paints an overall picture for curricula, including a comprehensive structure for the Saudi learner's general and specialised learning experiences. It comprises values and skills that enable learners to create their present and prepare for a promising future.
2. is based on a group of pillars linked to Islam, the Arabic language, national identity, the Kingdom's geography and history, its religious, civilizational, and economic components, and its aspirations drawn from its vision, plans, and strategies. It is also based on the fundamental requirements of education and knowledge in the present, and the horizons of knowledge and technology in the future.
3. reflects the foundations, foci, and objectives on which the Kingdom's Vision 2030 is based. The vision and its objectives revolve around pride in religion, identity, moderation, avoidance of extremes, positivity, continuous development of capabilities, and acquisition of skills and competencies. The

Framework determines the values, skills, and experiences that a Saudi learner should acquire in order to contribute to the country's programmes and objectives, and efficiently fulfil its vision.

4. takes into consideration modern global trends that emphasise the learner's role in building knowledge and skills, and the education system's role in providing a safe learning environment supportive of creativity, and diverse educational resources that cater for individual differences.

(EaTEC, 2018, p. 12)

This document helped me in recognising the ways in which culture is treated in the overall educational objectives, with particular attention given to what is expected from educational programmes, curricular designers, as well as teachers and learners in relation to culture.

Another national educational policy document that I analysed in my study is titled 'Unified Saudi Standard Classification of Educational Levels and Specialisations'. This document was published by the MoE in 2020, and it provides detailed guidelines for progression, transfer, and pathways within the Saudi educational system guided by the objectives of Vision 2030, and based on unified standards that are structured in line with international standards for classifying levels and fields of education (Ministry of education, 2020). It is considered as 'a unified reference and standard framework for planning educational programmes, levels and qualifications that they gained and educational and training institutions rely on when planning their educational programmes, levels, qualifications, development and evaluation.' (MoE, 2020, p.13).

In addition to this document, I also included educational policies that were published by the Ministry of Education, representing the period from 1969 to 2002. These documents outline the objectives of teaching the English language in Saudi Arabia over this period. The significance of these documents in my study come from the idea that they helped me in understanding the aims of ELE and, more specifically, the treatment of culture in them over a period of time.

Other documents that I included in my study, as discussed earlier, were the institutional documents uploaded in 2021 by the ELD at the university where I conducted the current study. These documents include course specifications, which outlines the expected learning outcomes that should be demonstrated by all English language learners who successfully complete a course, study plans, which states the program vision, mission and goals, as well as content topics and the activities that the students will engage in

throughout the course, and program learning outcomes, which specifies the knowledge, skills, and abilities that English language learners are expected to acquire at the end of the program. These documents are of a particular significance in my study, as they helped me to understand how culture is treated within institutional policies and draw a picture of what is expected from teachers and students inside their classrooms in relation to culture.

In addition to selecting educational policies, I had to select the textbooks that were used in the context being investigated and observed. Textbooks inclusion in this study, however, was decided from the beginning, despite the change in the types of textbooks that was responsive to the contextual factors. In general, the textbooks used in this study were meant to be multimodal, which incorporate textual, visual, and audible modes. Such textbooks were significant to this study because they exhibit culture through a combination of texts, images, and audios which is argued to enhance classroom interactions and discussions (Choi & Yi, 2016). Such variation was significant in enabling the participants, teachers and students, to engage with cultural content in a variety of ways, and allowed me, in observations, to see how these opportunities for engagement with culture was performed.

The textbooks are titled, 'Trio Reading 3', by Kate Adams and 'Trio Listening and Speaking 3', by Daniel Hamlin. The textbooks are published by Oxford University Press. Trio Reading 3 textbook consists of nine chapters, which cover various topics from a wide range of sources such as the Internet, newspapers, and academic articles. Each chapter from the textbook comprises vocabulary, grammar, and reading activities and two reading texts. This textbook actually satisfies the criterion used in this study because of its multimodal nature, as it includes various elements such as written texts, images, and diagrams. In addition, it uses pre-, whilst-, and post-reading activities that promote students' engagement, not only so they may recall information from the textbook, but also to provide an opportunity for them to express their own experiences and interpretations in relation to the content.

 Trio Listening and Speaking 3, on the other hand, consists of three units, which cover topics such as personal and professional experience, food, and science and technology. Each unit from the textbook comprises chapters that include further topics related to the unit main topic. Each chapter from the textbook comprises vocabulary, listening, and speaking sections. In addition to including elements in the Trio Reading 3, Trio Listening and Speaking 3 also include audios about music and general conversations. The chapters I used in this study are titled 'How We Fit In?', which comprises 2 reading texts

and 11 images, and 'How Do Eating Habits Differ?', which comprises 18 images and 24 audios.

5.3 Approaching written data

Preparing the educational documents for analysis was not a straightforward process, especially the policy ones. This was because some of these documents were written in Arabic. To deal with such documents, I applied the 'act of coming clean twice' method (Kutsyuruba, 2017). First, I assured that the meanings of these documents in the original language was clear to me at the very start. So, I read and reread the documents many times to gain an overall understanding of their content and, more importantly, the terminology and genres of the documents. During this stage of my research, I was fortunate to have had opportunities to discuss elements of these documents with colleagues who are aware of the context, which was helpful in validating my understanding and interpretations of the content. Then, I started the analysis of the documents in their original written language.

As discussed above, I used Braun and Clarke's analytic tool to analyse the educational policy documents, and Moran's and van Leeuwen's frameworks to analyse the textbooks chapters (see Section 4.6). To apply Braun and Clarke's framework, I first familiarised myself with the data. That is, I immersed myself in the data to gain initial deep understanding of the content before I delved into more detailed analysis. As the data were written, I conducted iterative readings of the documents by reading back and forth, and within and among them multiple times. I took notes about my impressions and any questions that popped up about the data, and wrote down the emerging ideas that came to my mind every time I read through them. To better familiarise myself with written data at this stage, I wrote any thoughts, feelings, and impressions I had every time I read them. This allowed me to familiarise myself with the data, and, most importantly, identify initial patterns and trends from the data. As I reached a satisfactory level of understanding in relation to the data, I had already started coding the written data. Thus, I generated initial codes based on the general patterns and trends I identified as I read through the documents. These codes were relevant to the study focus, i.e. the treatment of culture.

After I coded the written data, I began to organise the codes into broader themes. I reviewed the codes and paid attention to the frequency, relevance, and meaning of each code. Also, I looked for patterns and relationships among the codes and grouped them accordingly together. Then, I started to develop initial themes relying on the

patterns and relationships I observed earlier. Like with the codes, I had to refine and modify the initial themes every time I visited them. After that, I defined the themes by giving names and descriptions that capture their essences and scopes and linking them to my research questions. I revisited the final themes and refined them to ensure they were coherent and distinct from each other, and provided extracts from the data that were suitable with their essences and scopes. Such rigorous treatment of data was essential to my study owing to the complexity of its data. For example, I had to ensure that the themes were well defined because they were overlapping, especially in terms of the extracts I used under each theme. Finally, I reported my findings, linking the themes together and supporting them with extracts from the data.

As for my application of Moran's and van Leeuwen's frameworks, I also followed specific steps. That is, I, first, analysed the selected chapters using Moran's framework to analyse the cultural dimensions. Then, I applied van Leeuwen's framework to identify the discourses into which cultural references are recontextualised. Due to the nature of the current book, I analysed this chapter focusing on three aspects adapted from Rashidi and Ghaedsharafi (2015). The aspects are gender, age, and race/ethnicity. To analyse how these three aspects are represented, I placed my analysis on the visual representations using two of the representational categories: Inclusion and exclusion, and role allocation. Inclusion and exclusion are the first representational categories in van Leeuwen's framework. Inclusion refers to the process of showing and presenting the actor of a particular social action. Exclusion, on the other hand, is the process by which the actor is omitted from the image. Role allocation refers to the process of allocating social roles to particular actors. Role allocation takes place in two ways: activation (the social actors are represented as active and dynamic) or passivation (the social actors represented as the recipient of an activity) (van Leeuwen, 2008).

Before I present the findings, I should clarify that the extent of textbook analysis in this thesis is confined to one chapter from the Trio Reading 3 textbook (see Appendix D). This textbook was selected because it is widely used across various higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia, including male and female campuses, which can be seen to offer an insight into the standard ELE practices across the country and the limited autonomy that HE institutions in Saudi Arabia have in choosing their textbooks and curricula. The decision to select and analyse one chapter from the textbook was driven by its relevance to the classroom observations which I conducted during the practical phase of the present study. This chapter was the one that I observed being taught in the selected classrooms. Through this process, I recognised that the textbooks value

for analysis is limited if viewed as a static artefact possessing inherent meanings. Instead, their worth lies in how they are used by teachers and students as tools to construct meanings inside their classrooms. Thus, my analysis shifted from analysing the chapters used in my study in isolation to understanding their roles in shaping observations and interviews. My analysis of this chapter serves as an example of how I analysed cultural references in the other chapter from the other textbook, as I consistently employed the same analytical tools and methods throughout the entire textbooks analyses. In the following section, I present the findings of educational documents.

5.4 Findings from educational documents

5.4.3 Framing culture

An emergent theme in the document data was about the framing of culture and cultural practices which includes the patterns in which culture has been framed across and through the educational policies. This theme reports on 'explicit' semantic analysis that looks at instances in which the term culture is explicitly written in the documents. The analysis revealed that the conceptualisations of culture have taken different shapes. A common framing of culture is primarily associated with a group of people. For example, the national framework document includes this phrase, 'understanding the country's *cultural* norms' (EaTEC, 2018, p. 11, emphasis added). Based on this phrase, one may assume that culture is defined by the shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts.

Another similar framing refers to the 'opening up Islamic civilisation to other cultures' (EaTEC, 2018, p.17). Here, again, someone may understand that Islamic civilisation and culture take one form and, as a result, Saudi Muslims do not differ in their practices and beliefs. Additionally, the phrase 'other cultures' here may imply that there is a difference between oneself (a common Islamic civilisation with shared characteristics) and others (who share different characteristics) based on their cultural backgrounds.

 The notion of 'otherness' is also promoted in the educational policies published by the MoE. For example, Article 50 of Education states one of the objectives of language learning as to 'interact with people of other cultures' (MoE, 1969, p.8). This statement, like the previous one, can be seen to portray interactions among Saudi learners of the

English language to have one predictable form. Consequently, someone may understand that interaction between a Saudi and a non-Saudi in English should happen in a particular way. In another example, to declare the objectives of teaching English language, the MoE (2002) states 'the culture and civilization of their nation' (Al-Hajailan, 2005, as cited in Elyas & Badawood, 2016, p. 31). Here, this phrasing may suggest that a nation can be defined by a specific culture. Therefore, considering that the word 'nation' may mean more than one country, and in this case, it means 'Islamic nation' as it referred to Islam in an earlier sentence. Therefore, one may understand that Muslims are equivalent in their beliefs from the way this is presented.

A second common framing of culture, revealed by the analysis, is closely associated with language. In such reference, language and language learning are seen as vehicles for transmitting culture. One of the examples of this type is mentioned when explaining the aims of ELE in the Ministry of Education, which states that,

> This specialization aims to provide the student with the knowledge and skills of learning English grammar, structures, culture, and literature. It also seeks to provide the student with advanced skills in communication by writing and speaking in English (MoE, 2020, p. 217).

Here, this statement specifically uses the singular term 'culture' in conjunction with 'English', which can imply an overarching, unified culture associated with a fixed form of English language that is spoken by certain people. Therefore, Saudi learners of the English language may be positioned to learn a certain static 'English culture'.

In a third type of framing culture, culture is mentioned in relation to intercultural communication. One of the statements in the institutional policies mentions a promotion of 'skills necessary for … intercultural communication' among Saudi English language learners, which suggests a recognition of the dynamic and interactive nature of culture. The inclusion of the term 'intercultural communication' acknowledges a recognition of diversity and complexity of cultural practices, beliefs, and values, and emphasises the significance of communication and interaction between people of various cultural backgrounds.

5.4.4 Orientations towards culture

This theme reports on various orientations towards culture in Saudi educational documents at different educational scales. In particular, it includes instances related to

the ways in which culture is oriented to in the role and purpose of education and English language teaching/learning in relation to culture.

The analysis revealed that some policies, especially relating to macro educational scales, explicitly and openly explain the importance of culture when discussing learning objectives. For example, the EaTEC refers to the purpose of education in relation to culture on the first pages of the national framework, stating:

> Excellent, quality education is the starting point of this journey. It is the first means of forming a generation that understands the country's cultural norms and noble virtues' (EaTEC , 2018, p.11, para.1).

This statement highlights the critical role of culture and the importance of promoting cultural awareness among Saudi learners in education. Additionally, it assumes that education functions as a powerful tool in relation to learners' cultural identities and in transmitting learners' cultural traditions, values, and virtues.

Maintaining the same view towards the role of culture, the EaTEC includes an emphasis over the importance of culture in relation to curricula standards in its framework, stating that:

> The Kingdom places high importance on the principles of human co-existence and international security and peace, as these build positive global partnerships and serve humanity. It commits itself to international conventions and norms, and supports the principles of dialogue, peace, and understanding among followers of divine faiths and global cultures. These commitments are reflected in the curricula standards, which focus on developing human interactions based on collaborative relationships, consolidating cultural and civic communication (EaTEC, 2018, p.17, para. 5).

Here, this statement shows the importance of culture and promoting learners' intercultural communication and awareness among Saudi young learners. It also suggests that education through curriculum standards aims to promote skills for cultural interactions among Saudi learners. Additionally, the use of the phrase 'followers of divine faiths' is significant. In this context, 'divine faiths' likely refers to the major world religions that believe in a divine entity or entities. Using this phrase here may imply an emphasis oonver religious tolerance, understanding, and dialogue. Furthermore, the phrase 'global cultures' is wide and connotative. It implies an acknowledgement of the various cultural backgrounds that exist beyond the borders of Saudi Arabia. This phrase

may suggest a willingness to engage with and diverse cultural practices, beliefs, and values. It also, in terms of conceptualisations, emphasises the idea that cultures are not static.

When delving into the words 'cultural' and 'civic', these terms, especially when translated to Arabic, carry nuanced meanings. In Arabic, 'cultural' often refers to matters related to knowledge, arts, beliefs, costums, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society. 'Civic', on the other hand, typically pertains to matters related to the city, citizenship, or civil affairs. This distinction may suggest that the curriculum standards aim to cultivate both an appreciation for arts, traditions, and societal customs, and an understanding of one's responsibilities and roles within one's societies.

A similar orientation towards culture in Saudi education policies was also apparent in the objectives of ELE. The MoE policy documents include statements about the objectives of ELE, one of which, as the MoE indicates, is to 'raise [the learners'] awareness of the cultural issues' (MoE, 2020, p. 216.). Here, this statement shows how the MoE perceives the role of culture in ELE. By stating this objective, the MoE may be positioning ELE as more than just linguistic proficiency. It becomes a tool through which learners can understand and navigate the complexities of global cultures. The underlying assumption here might be that as English is a global lingua franca, and therefore learning it provides opportunities for Saudi learners to interact with diverse populations, hence the need to be culturally aware. Moreover, the context of Saudi Arabia – a country undergoing rapid socio-cultural and economic transformations and attempting to position itself more prominently on the global stage – may add another layer of significance to this objective. It is possible the MoE aims to foster global citizens who can 'represent' Saudi Arabia 'effectively' in various international arenas, a notion that is promoted in the Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Yet, the emphasis over 'cultural issues' raises several questions: What specific cultural issues does the Ministry have in mind? How do they envision these issues being taught? Is there a specific cultural framework being promoted for ELE in Saudi Arabia?

A different positioning towards the role of culture was clear in institutional policies addressing the micro systems, which, unlike other policies, did not place the same level of emphasis on the role of culture in ELT. Analysis of departmental policy documents revealed only one explicit reference to culture in the programme learning outcome documents on the ELD website, which explains one of the English language learning values as to 'communicate appropriately, accurately and effectively as *intercultural*

leaders and contributing citizens who value diversity' (ELD, 2021, my emphasis). Here the term 'intercultural leaders' is particularly significant. 'Intercultural' suggests a capacity to navigate, understand, and thrive in multiple cultural contexts. The use of 'leaders', on the other hand, may indicate not just passive participation, but active leadership roles in 'intercultural' contexts. This may mean the ELD aims to equip its English language learners with the skills not only to understand and interact with various cultures, but also to lead and influence in diverse settings.

The phrase 'contributing citizens' can be seen to offer another layer of depth. Being a 'citizen' may imply a sense of belonging to a community, nation, or even the global society. The mentioning of 'contributing' may suggest an active role in that community, indicating that learners should not just belong but play a role. The phrase 'who value diversity' adds another layer, emphasising an ethos of inclusivity and respect for diversity. It can be seen to suggest that the ELD ideal graduate is someone who does not merely tolerate diverse cultures and perspectives but actively values and seeks them out. Linking it to the general picture, the whole statement can be seen as a response to the country's ambitus vision; yet, as with the Ministry of Education, there is no proposed teaching framework that translates such objective into practice. More importantly, this is the only instance in all the departmental policies that explicitly mentions culture.

Other emergent themes in educational documents related to historical changes in the treatment of culture in the documents at various educational levels. As the documents used in my study were published between 1969 and 2021, it was not surprising to be able to have a theme on historical shifts in orientations to the treatment of culture. This emergent theme is about the scope of the word culture and what happened to it over time in Saudi educational policies.

Data analysis revealed that, in earlier treatments, culture was primarily associated with Islam and Islamic values, which was promoted in educational objectives in Saudi Arabia. That is, education and intercultural communication was established in order to serve Islam, as it played a central role by intervening in cultural practices and beliefs as discussed above. This was obvious in the objectives of learning a foreign language in early Saudi educational policies. For example, in Article 50 of Education that was published by the MoE in the early years of language education in Saudi Arabia, it is stated that 'Students should learn at least one foreign language so that they may interact with people of other cultures for the purpose of contributing to *the message of Islam* and serving humanity' (1969, p.18, emphasis added).

Here, this statement might suggest that an overt reason for learning a foreign language in Saudi Arabia was for leaners to better communicate with people from diverse cultural backgrounds in order to promote and spread the message of Islam through that foreign language. It also entails a promotion of 'one-sided essentialist ideology' in which communicating with non-Muslims is meant to promote how Islam is the right religion regardless of their cultural and religious affiliations. The latter can be inferred from the phrase 'serving humanity'. This can be seen to reflect an era in the kingdom when foreign language education was first introduced into the country. It also reflects how education has traditionally been firmly rooted in Islamic principles, with subjects designed mainly to promote the Islam occupying a central role at various educational levels (Jamjoom, 2010).

Another emergent orientation towards culture in Saudi educational policies during the early 2000s, revealed in the analysis, was less affiliated to Islam. In such orientation, there is a shift in the policies towards promoting learners' awareness of their national culture and identity. This orientation is accompanied by explicit prioritisation of promoting students' language skills and abilities. For example, in a statement about the general objectives of teaching English in Saudi Arabia, The MoE framed two of them as follows: 'to [d]evelop the linguistic competence that enables them to be aware of the cultural, economic and social issues of *their society* in order to contribute in giving solutions', and ' to [d]evelop the linguistic competence that enables them, in the future, to represent *the culture and civilization of their nation*.' (Al-Hajailan, 2005, as cited in Elyas & Badawood, 2016, p. 31, emphasis added).

This statement shows another shift in the aims of learning the English Language in relation to culture, from only spreading Islam and Islamic culture to raising Saudi students' awareness about the cultural issues in their society, and preparing them to reflect on their cultural heritage and to be representatives of 'their nation's culture'. This statement, although entailing disassociation with religion, can be seen to still implicitly promote a similar essentialist ideological construct towards culture, in which Saudi learners of English language should be aware of their 'own cultural identities' only, a notion that contradicts with recent models of intercultural and transcultural perspectives to language (discussed above). Thus, by placing emphasis solely on understanding one's culture, there might be missed opportunities for Saudi students to develop deeper, more meaningful intercultural exchange.

Another point that this statement entails, which is directly linked to culture, is that learning about culture is achieved through appropriate language teaching, which entails

a need for a promotion of ELE policies and practices. This shift from focusing on Islam and Islamic values towards national values can be attributed to the global context in which educational policies were developed. In particular, the events of 9/11, and the subsequent pressure from the international community to address the perceived link between Saudi Arabia and extremism, prompted a renewed emphasis on national culture and identity (Elyas & Picard, 2013).

In recent years - since the introduction of the Saudi Vision (2030) - the analysis revealed a new shift in the writings of Saudi educational policies towards framing culture. This shift shows a recognition of the importance of promoting cultural diversity and engagement among Saudi learners. For example, the EaTEC website includes the following statement:

> The kingdom commits itself to international conventions and norms, and supports the principles of dialogues, peace and understanding *among followers of divine faiths and global cultures* (…) [and] *opening up Islamic civilization to other cultures*, and accepting diversity and difference among people in religion, thinking, behaviour, and their nature' (EaTEC, 2018, p. 17, emphasis added)

Here, this statement reflects the new shift in Saudi educational policies towards the importance of promoting cultural diversity and global understanding among Saudi learners. It suggests a promotion of students' awareness that culture is not limited to religious or national boundaries. This can be seen in other occasions in this document, where there is an emphasis on promoting such understanding towards culture. Another statement states that:

> One of the priorities of Vision 2030 focuses on developing learners' awareness of the Kingdom's efforts in promoting the values of … moderation, tolerance, communication between countries, dialogue, global peace, and understanding between cultures (EaTEC, 2018, p. 24, emphasis added).

Here, although this statement does not literally include the words 'Islam' or 'religion', it can be seen to reinforce ideas such as moderation and tolerance, not only within the country borders, but also beyond them. It also can be seen to show a tendency towards promoting tolerance and acceptance among learners. Here, like in other quotes above, this statement can be perceived as both vague and superficial. It does not include any clarification or examples of the knowledge that Saudi learners should be exposed to inside their classrooms, nor does it provide teachers with suggestions on how they can

teach culture in a way that promotes such values, which could be deliberate (Block, 2014).

As with other shifts in Saudi educational policies, the move towards an emphasis on tolerance and openness towards 'others' can be attributed to a range of contextual factors. In particular, the terrorist events that Saudi Arabia has witnessed in recent years have had a significant impact on educational policies. For example, the latest ISIS-linked terrorist attacks that targeted Shia communities and mosques, and Saudi officials, apparatus, and cities such as Jeddah and Madinah in 2016 (Bazzi, 2015; Qurtuby & Aldamer, 2021). This attack can be seen to have driven Saudi educational policymakers to reevaluate the content and pedagogies in place, aiming at fostering an environment of tolerance, understanding, and mutual respect among the youth.

 Additionally, the emphasis on tolerance and openness towards 'others' can be driven by a desire to increase its economic status as an objective of the Saudi Vision 2030. That is, by promoting tolerance and openness towards 'others', Saudi Arabia may be positioning itself as an attractive destination for international business and investment, which is a goal in its Vision 2030.

Ramifications of this shift were found in English educational policies. The analysis revealed that recent educational policies promote a similar orientation to culture. For example, the MoE states in its national curricula document that:

> English language education aims to provide the student with the knowledge and skills of learning English grammar, structures, linguistics, culture and literature (MoE, 2020, p.217).

This statement reinforces the same tendency towards culture. Unlike in its earlier treatments of culture, here, the MoE documents, or to be more specific, the selected ones, do not explicitly mention Islam, nor do they make contributing to the message of Islam as an objective for English language learning. Rather, it focuses its ELE objectives on English language aspects and dimensions, including 'culture'. Yet, like in other educational policies that were published over time, the MoE does not provide guidelines on what actual learning and teaching practices should be like for such objectives to be achieved. Such ambiguity can be seen to have implications in education policies and practices at lower levels in micro systems of ELE, as will be discussed below.

5.4.5 Expectations from teachers and students in relation to culture

This subsection presents another frequent theme in the selected documents, namely the expectations relating to culture that are placed on the teachers and students in Saudi educational policies. In particular, this theme includes the ways in which teachers and students are expected to contribute to teaching and learning of culture in their classrooms. The analysis revealed various expectations for teachers and students in relation to culture. A common subtheme in this regard is that these policies place an emphasis on the development of Saudi learners' cultural competence and communication. This emphasis is reflected in multiple Saudi educational policies in various ecological systems. For example, in its national framework, the EaTEC, states that:

> One of the priorities of Vision 2030 focuses on *developing learners' awareness* of the Kingdom's efforts in promoting the values of … understanding between cultures (EaTEC, 2018, p. 24, emphasis added).

This statement can be seen to underscore not merely the promotion of cultural understanding among Saudi learners but more specifically emphasises learners' awareness of the country initiatives in fostering such understanding as a priority of its development plan in Vision 2030. Thus, instead of a direct call to promote understanding among cultures, there is a highlighted focus on the country efforts in this regard. Such a distinction might hint at the country open endorsement of values like tolerance and intercultural understanding in a manner that may not be an assumed default in Saudi context. This priority is explicitly linked to education, which through 'the curricula standards', as stated in the same document, 'focus on *developing* human interaction … consolidating cultural and civic communication' (emphasis added), which displays the aims of such standards in promoting positive human interactions and cultural understanding among Saudi learners. This emphasis is also maintained in the policies relating to ELE. For example, the MoE unified framework document states that one of the objectives of teaching English language for Saudi learners is to '*develop* linguistic competence that enables them to represent the culture and civilization of their nation' (MoE, 2020, emphasis added). Here, this statement shows an emphasis in ELT educational policies on the importance of developing Saudi learners' linguistic competence in English language so they can engage in cultural discussions.

 Similarly, the institutional policy documents also refer to learners' cultural development. For example, The ELD website states that one of the objectives for learning English

language is '[t]o *develop* the skills necessary for … intercultural communication' (PLOs, 2021, p. emphasis added), which displays an awareness among educational policy makers at <u>meso</u> educational levels of the fact that English language learning is not only about acquiring linguistic competence, but also developing the skills necessary for 'effective' intercultural communication.

However, despite the obvious emphasis on promoting Saudi learners' intercultural competence in various educational policies, there is a lack of guidance on how to achieve this objective. In other words, while Saudi educational policies recognise the importance of intercultural communication and cultural understanding, they did not include any details on the strategies, methods, or tools that can be used to develop learner's intercultural competence. One possible explanation for this abstraction is because the Saudi educational system might still undergoing the transition instigated by the introduction of the Saudi vision 2030, acknowledging the value of promoting intercultural competence among Saudi youths, but still navigating the strategies and considering at which educational layer to form it; or it might be faced with challenges or resistance to defining strategies for promoting this competence (Scott et al., 2016).

Another common subtheme that the analysis reveals is concerning the roles of the teachers in relation to curricula implementations. Although previous statements from the above section can be applied to teachers as well, the analysis reveals specific orientations that are meant for teachers, specifically, in relation curricula implementations. More importantly, though this subtheme does not directly mention the word 'culture', its presence can still be inferred, especially considering the emphasis on culture in previous statements and the mentioning of words such as 'discuss(ion)', 'encourage', and 'monitor', which imply negotiation of culture and cultural references.

As with the previous subtheme, the analysis showed that this subtheme is also recurrent in Saudi educational policies at various educational tiers. For example, at the macro scale, the MoE states that English language teachers are expected 'to provide the students with the knowledge and skills … and implement [curricular] processes' (MoE, 2020, p. 174), which can be seen to show that the significant role of teachers is in promoting students learning and success, by helping them develop their knowledge and skills. While the statement does not include an explicit reference, when considering the curriculum content, it becomes evident that intercultural communication forms part of the 'knolwedge and skills' referred to. This aligns with theoretical understanding that language and culture are intertwined (Kramsch & Zhu Hua, 2016; Risager, 2018),

suggesting that the promotion of language skills should inherently involve cultural discussions and awareness.

This role of teachers is reinforced in institutional policy documents. For example, the analysis revealed institutional policies depict teachers to play a critical role in promoting collaborative learning in their classrooms, which includes cultural exchange. This role is emphasised in the course specifications at the ELD, where it is stated that teachers are expected to 'encourage students to participate in pair and group work activities' (ELD, 2021). Similarly, another statement indicates teachers' role is to 'monitor students in the classrooms and encourage them to work in groups to assess their communication skills' (ibid). Here, this statement can be seen displays the role of teachers in creating spaces for their students to participate and share their ideas. This point is reinforced in the same document asking teachers to engage their students in 'discussions' so they can 'use English appropriately in social communications.'

Like in the previous subtheme, these accounts about the role of teachers in Saudi educational policies can be seen somewhat superficial as they do not provide specific and practical recommendations for teachers, although this can be deliberate as discussed above. This may cause uncertainty among teachers on how to teach their students (Block, 2014), especially in a context with more rigid treatments of some elements of language and cultural engagement than many other ELE contexts. In the following section, I will report my analysis of cultural references in the textbooks.

5.4.6 Affordances to engage with culture in textbooks

The previous sections have addressed the treatment of culture in educational policies. This section will present dimensions and discourses of culture in the selected chapter. As mentioned above, the focus of analysis was on both the textual and visual references. In the following paragraphs, I present the analysis of the dimensions and discourses of culture in the selected chapter.

Table 4:   Affordances to engage with culture in the selected chapter

Dimension	Examples
Products	tea, money, soccer, jeans, chopsticks, shirt, pants, business suit, silk, velvet, coat, bus, cup, clock, school bags, teapot, soccer, soccer kit, school uniform.

Practices	'drink tea', 'save money', 'children begin school around age of five', 'playing soccer', 'to eat with chopsticks', 'many people talk to the person wearing clothes like theirs', 'follow the traditions of the past', 'try out new designs', 'change who you are to fit in', 'we all buy clothing from many of the same stores', 'ordering food', 'shopping', 'using the train', 'how close people stand to one another', 'how people wait in line', 'how long people pause in conversations', 'wear the same styles for hundreds of years', 'follow a fashion trend', 'share many of the same values as my parents about money',
Perspective	'To try on clothes is to try on another identity, to become different', 'A popular fashion trend is to wear jeans', 'it is a human nature to laugh when others do', 'not everyone likes to say they follow fashion trend', 'We want to be accepted in that group', 'We want to be seen as young, rich, or smart', 'we have a deep need to belong', 'doesn't belong in a new country', 'lonely people often see other people as a danger'.
Communities	brother's friends, my parents, your friends, wealthy men, designers, Americans, the United Nations Population Fund, England, university, clothing stores, school, homes, bank, architecture, restaurant.
Persons	Bank teller, investor/depositor, pupils, footballers, shop-worker, a customer.

Table 3 shows that the selected chapter comprises multiple examples of all the cultural dimensions proposed in Moran's framework. Obviously, *practices* is the most represented dimension. The *products, perspective, and communities* dimensions are equally represented. Finally, the last dimension in Moran's framework, i.e., persons, is the least represented one. Furthermore, this dimension is only visually presented.
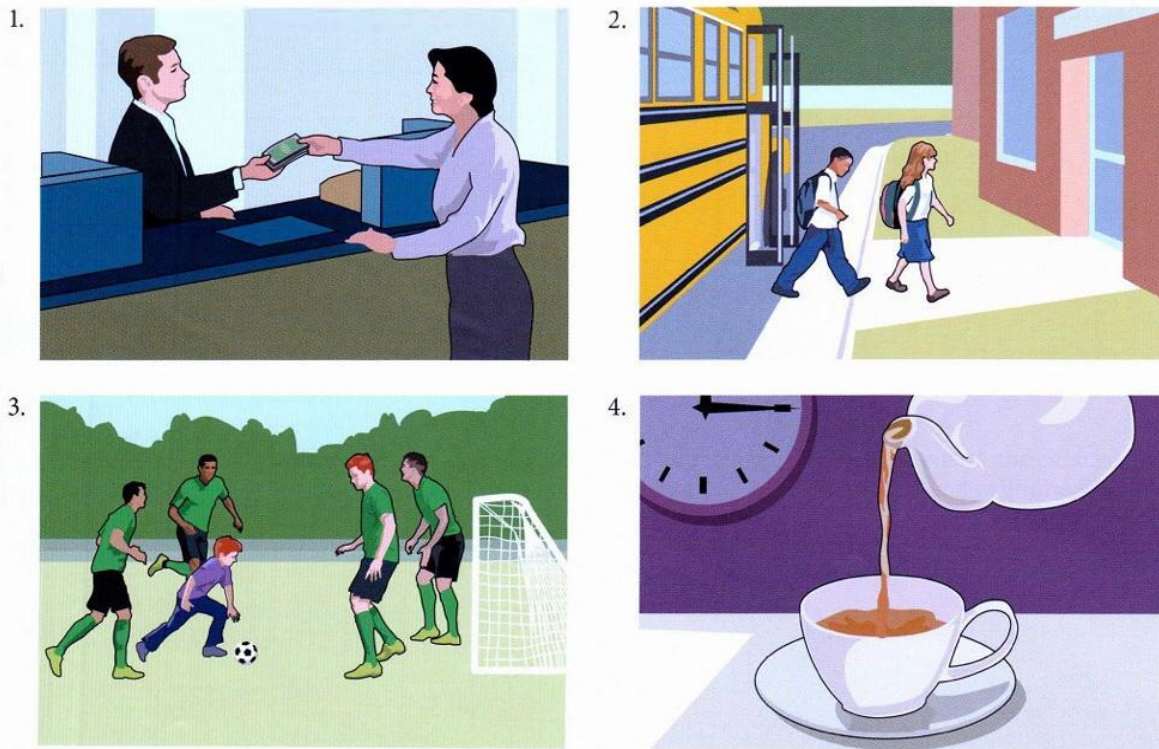
Figure 2:   Images (Trio Reading 3, p. 70)

Figure 2 comprises of four images. Social actors are represented in three of these images. Applying the two representational categories to gender, the following is noticeable: regarding inclusion and exclusion strategies, this figure shows that both male and female social actors are included, even though male actors are more frequently represented, with female actors represented in two images, while males are represented in three. As for their role, image 1 represents the woman actor to be active and the man passive. That is, the woman is giving money, while the man is represented as a recipient of the money. Image 2, on the other hand, represents both social actors to be active.

As for the second aspect, i.e., age, Figure 2 shows the social actors to either be adults or children. Applying the first category, we can see that both broad age groups are represented. However, adult social actors are slightly more frequently represented than children. As for their roles, Figure 2 shows a clear distinction between them in images 1 and 2. That is, adult social actors are shown to be exchanging money, while children are depicted as going to school. Image 3, however, depicts a group of both ages playing football. In this image, the child is more active.

Considering race, there are different representations of racial groups in this figure. However, white social actors are more represented than others, with black actors being

present, and some actors who could be white, East or Central Asian, or Hispanic. As for the allocated roles, two images represent different races sharing roles such as going to school (image 2) and playing football (image 3). Caucasian actors, however, are allocated more roles, as they are the only group present in all images with people (images 1-3). Furthermore, although different races are represented to be active in image 2, the black actor is more passive in image 3. That is, the other actors are more active and engaged in the game.

Figure 3:   Images (Trio Reading 3, p. 71)

Figure 3 includes four images. Social actors are represented in all four of the images. Regarding gender, it is obvious that both male and female social actors are represented in Figure 3; yet female actors are more frequently represented than males. Indeed, only images 1 and 2 comprise male actors. As for the roles given to them, male and female actors appear to be allocated with different social roles. Image 1, for example, shows a female actor in a school uniform. Images 2 and 3 show male and female social actors to be playing and having fun. Finally, image 4 shows female actors in a store.

Regarding age, this figure represents both adult and children social actors, even though child actors are represented more frequently than adult ones. As for their roles, child actors are represented to be eating, having fun, or playing outdoors. Adult social actors,

on the other hand, are represented to be buying clothes from a store. Regarding their race, figure 3 shows social actors from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Image 1, for example, represents one East Asian social actor, while image 2 represents social actors of predominantly white and black racial backgrounds, with one actor who is difficult to categorise racially. Images 3 and 4 only represent white social actors.

Figure 4:   Images (Trio Reading 3, p. 74)

Unlike Figure 2 and 3, Figure 4 is limited in terms of its representations. It comprises two images. As for gender, this figure includes two images of male actors. As for the roles allocated to the social actors, the figure shows the social actors to be rich. Regarding their age and race, both social actors represent white adults.

Applying Moran and van Leeuwen's frameworks shows that this chapter comprises multiple dimensions and discourses of culture. Indeed, this chapter includes examples of the five dimensions of culture suggested by Moran. In addition, this chapter includes multiple representations of social actors. These representations vary in terms of gender, age, and race.

As for gender, this chapter represents male social actors more than female ones. However, the roles allocated to male actors are not significantly different from those given to female actors. That is, both male and female actors are represented to have money and practise social activities. Yet, male actors are the only actors who are represented as football players, while female actors are represented as being eaters or shoppers. In images with a single focus on one actor, female actors are associated with

consumption in the forms of eating and shopping, while male actors are associated with power and wealth.

Regarding age, adult and child social actors are equally represented, yet adult actors are allocated more serious roles such as giving/taking money, buying from stores, and enjoying status and wealth. Child actors, on the other hand, are represented as having fun and attending school.

Finally, in terms of race, this chapter represents both white and black actors most distinctly, with one clear East Asian representation too, although the white actors are more represented than the black or Asian ones. In addition, white actors are given more roles than black or Asian actors, who are represented as school attendants, football players, or people who eat in a different way. There are other actors who are hard to assign a racial category, but these are rarely foregrounded in images.

To conclude, the multimodal analysis of this chapter, through the lenses of Moran and Van Leeuwen, revealed various cultural dimensions and discourses, and highlighted the rich affordances of the selected chapter for (inter)cultural engagement in the ELE environment through the use of both textual and visual signifiers. This analysis has exposed a diverse range of cultural dimensions including products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. For instance, the textual description of practices like 'drinking tea' or 'using chopsticks' is complemented by images that visually depict these actions in diverse cultures. Additionally, it has identified how textual and visual cultural references work together to construct ideological discourses relating to gender, age, and race, emphasizing the textbook's potential for (inter)cultural engagement in the selected ELT setting. By considering both image and text, as well as the ways in which these elements are positioned and presented alongside each other, the analysis reveals how multimodal signifiers can create nuanced meanings that are not achievable through linguistic or image-based elements alone. For example, the inclusion and exclusion strategies in image representation where male and female actors shown in various roles, alongside text, can be seen to challenge or reinforce certain gender specific roles in societies.

5.5 Summary of the findings from educational documents

The primary aim in this chapter was to examine and understand the treatments of culture across and through multi-scale educational documents, including policies and textbooks. The analysis was intended to provide a holistic image of how culture as a

concept is actually treated in educational documents, and what potential implications the treatment of culture in Saudi educational documents may have on classroom practices. The educational policies analysis sets the stage by identifying overarching orientations and expectations in relation to culture. To achieve this, I employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) analytical framework to uncover both the explicit and implicit treatment of culture in policy educational documents in the selected HE setting. I also used Moran's (2001) and van Leeuwen's (2008) frameworks to identify potential affordances to engage with culture in one of the selected textbooks.

As for the educational policies, the analysis revealed three broad themes about the treatment of culture that resulted from the analysis of Saudi educational policies. These themes found in these policies included the framing of, orientations towards, and expectations from teachers and students in relation to culture. The analysis showed that the framings of culture in educational policies involved framing it as a defining factor of social groups. Another framing linked culture to language suggesting that the English language has its own culture. The third framing, which was mentioned only once in institutional policies, was in alignment of recent trends towards culture using the concept of intercultural communication.

As for the second part of this theme, the analysis revealed various orientations towards culture. These orientations were in relation to education in general or ELE in specific. Similarly, the scope of the concept of culture has witnessed a change over time owing to events that occurred in and beyond Saudi Arabia. The orientations towards culture have shifted from focusing on religious, national culture to embracing intercultural perspectives and awareness. It has been expanded from primarily focusing on religion to promoting openness and tolerance towards 'others'. As a result, the analysis shows that the purpose of learning culture in policies has been expanded from only serving national, religious purposes to opening up 'local culture' to 'international cultures', or even, learning about 'English culture'.

As for the second theme, the expectations from learners in relation to culture, the analysis revealed that cultural learning and teaching has been consistently promoted in some selected educational policies. The analysis revealed that such educational documents encourage Saudi learners to develop skills, knowledge, and awareness around culture. This was visible in the findings which displayed that learners are expected to be able to engage in cultural discussions. Similarly, the analysis revealed that educational policies place some expectations on teachers with regards to addressing cultural issues in their classrooms. The analysis indicated that teachers are

expected to support and encourage their students so they can develop their cultural skills and knowledge. They are also expected to monitor their students' learning and allocate more time for them to participate. Additionally, the analysis displayed that teachers are also expected to open discussions with their students about culture.

The utility of the chapter analysis, on the other hand, serves as a precursor to classroom observations, aiming to pinpoint potential cultural discussions. For example, it offers insights into cultural debates that might arise within the Saudi educational settings, especially considering discussions about gender in a gender-segregated setting or topics about race in a system that emphasises tolerance. As of the affordances to engage with culture in the selected chapter, the analysis, through the lenses of Moran and Van Leeuwen, highlighted nuanced cultural dimensions and discourses within the selected chapter. This chapter included various affordances including products, practices, perspectives and communities. Additionally, it encompassed specific ideologies relating to gender, age and race.

In the following chapter, I will present the findings obtained from observing English language classrooms and interviewing teachers and students, drawing on the foundational understanding established through the analysis of both educational policies and textbooks.

6 Classrooms observations and participants' interviews findings

6.1 Introduction

Analysing educational documents provided me with an insight into the ways in which culture is framed in Saudi educational documents at various scales, and what expectations are placed upon English language teachers and learners in relation to culture inside their classrooms. It also offered me insights into cultural representations and dimensions that exist in the selected chapter from the textbook. Drawing on my study's theoretical framework, which recognises the independent and dynamic relationships between individuals and various ecological systems with which they interact, practices and perceptions towards culture may vary widely and may be inconsistent, like in educational documents. Thus, this chapter presents classroom observation and interview data analysis and findings to answer my enquiries about how culture is treated inside these classrooms, how the participants position themselves in relation to culture and cultural affordances, and what ecological factors affect such positionings. This chapter begins with the section, 'participants selection' (6.2), which details the selection and recruitment procedures of the participants. Then, the section, 'approaching spoken data' (6.3), which outlines various moves that data went through as well as the applications of the used analytical approach. After that, the section 'findings from classroom observations and participant interviews' (6.4) presents the findings of my analysis. The final section, 'summary of the findings from classrooms observations and participants interviews' (6.5) offers an overall summary of the findings.

6.2 Participants selection

In the first week of my fieldwork, I chose classes and participants that satisfied my selection criterion discussed above (see Section 3.9). In total, I conducted 11 classroom observations (4 were in the main campus, and 7 were in the two university branches). Also, I conducted 49 semi-interviews (40 were with students, and 9 were with teachers). Yet, due to some technical reasons including issues with the recording devices and inability to always have the same number of participants, especially in semi-interviews, I did not use all the data that I obtained from the 49 interviewees in this report. In

reporting the findings (section 5.5), I used codes to maintain participants' anonymity. I referred to teachers as T with a number (e.g., T1, T2, T3, etc.), to an individual student as S with a number (e.g., S1, S2, S3, etc.), and to a group of students as Ss.

Additionally, I incorporated field notes into observational sessions and interviews as a process of selecting participants. I started writing down notes about teachers and students and details about classes right after I received participants approval to take part in the study. In particular, I wrote down notes for classrooms observations and interviews. As for notes relating to classroom observations, I wrote down information relating to classroom details such as time, place, and dates of selected lessons. Also, I prepared a separate sheet for me to record students' level of participation in every classroom observational session. Then, while conducting observations, I wrote down codes for each student. These codes were about student's name, if known to me, or the place where he was sitting during the lesson, including the row and column numbers of his desk.

In addition, I wrote down details for the interviews. I started by writing down details about the interviewees including their names, mobile numbers, emails, and availabilities for interviews. I asked the students for their mobile numbers and emails so that if I could not reach them via their phones, I could still contact them by email. I also created WhatsApp groups for each set of groups. This made it easy for me to contact the participants of each group by sending one text to their WhatsApp group instead of sending the same text to each and every individual student. This helped me save time and become assured that I did not miss any student.

As mentioned above, I had to include two other ELDs in two university branches in my study. These departments use the same teaching materials and follow the same policies applied to ELE in the main campus. I also selected teacher and student participants from the three campuses applying similar criteria. For the teachers, they had to teach the same course that I chose to use in my study. As for the students, I applied a purposive sampling technique to recruit participants. I also decided to choose as many students as I could, applying the same criteria to assure that, if a student refuses to take part in the interviews, I still have enough number of students to select from. In total, I was able to have an average of 5 student participants from each classroom observation to take part in the interviews.

6.3 Approaching spoken data

My initial approach to raw data from the recordings took three emergent moves: conversion, transcription and, like with educational documents, translation. The first move, conversion, happened in two steps, namely uploading/downloading and editing. During the first step, I uploaded the raw data and converted them into a text immediately at the end of each observational session using Sonix voice to text software. As Saldana (2021, p. 27) notes, 'software programs for voice to text transformation … have become more readily available, thus alleviating the burden of manual transcription'. Indeed, I found Sonix useful for the nature of data collected for my study as it converts spoken scripts in many languages, which allows me to convert speeches in both English and Arabic languages. Also, it recognises different accents, especially in English. It also automatically generates details such as speaker, time span, and duration of each turn taken; this helped me to save time in labelling texts with details about speakers, classes, and lessons. Then, after each recording conversion, I named the texts using codes referring to either classroom or interview group.

After I finished the uploading/downloading step, I started the second step of this move, the editing. Here, I listened to the recordings and edited the texts using Microsoft Word and Soundscriber software. To do so, I, first, downloaded the converted texts from Sonix software into an editable Word document. Then, I uploaded the raw data recordings to Soundscriber and used features such as pausing, playback and walking to assure that I did not miss any part of the speech. Then, as the listening went on, I edited all spelling errors and added any missing words to the Microsoft word file.

In the second move of spoken data treatment, I revisited the converted data and listened to them multiple times. I paid particular attention to the tones of the interactions and conversations in both classrooms and interviews. I also referred to the notes I took during classroom observations and interviews to better understand the recorded data. After that, I selected the chunks that were relevant to my study adopting Braun and Clarke (2006) recursive six steps (discussed above). First, I familiarised myself with both types of data by rereading the data, relistening to the audio recordings, and revisiting my fieldnotes multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of the data. and which helped me make initial codes. A noteworthy point here is that due to the nature of this data, i.e., observations and interviews data, I used different methods to create codes and themes guided by the topic of my study. As for classroom observation

data, which was meant to answer my inquiry about the treatment of culture inside the classrooms, the treatment varied from a focus on language aspects to discussions about culture. Thus, I divided the coding sheets into two columns. In the first column, I included the actual pedagogical practices that happened inside the classrooms. That is, I included teaching practices that were more dominant in the classrooms in terms of what the teachers focus on and what they ask their students to do. In the second column, I included what happened to culture when it is discussed. Then, I created themes for these codes. As for the data obtained from interviews, I listened to the recordings and read and reread the transcriptions to build an understanding of the whole data and interviewees' lived learning and teaching experiences as well as their positioning towards culture. Focusing on phrases and sentences from the data, I created codes and linked these codes into themes following the same steps in policy documents discussed above.

In both coding procedures, I gave references to the coded data based on the type of data, course name and level, location, and sequence, and then to the interviewees. For example, I put COR3M1 to refer to data collected from the first classroom observation that I conducted in one of the university branches, the course was reading which is taught to students in level three. For the participants from the same classroom, I put FGR3M1 - S# to refer to the first focus group that I conducted in same branch for a student studying reading course, level three, and TIR3M1 to refer to the first teacher interviewee from the same branch who teaches reading course to third level students. I applied the same labelling procedure with the data that I collected from the listening and speaking courses by replacing R with LS. After creating initial codes and themes from classroom observations and interviews, I revisited them applying latent content analysis and categorised them to themes.

As the treatment of culture was embedded in language, it was crucial to highlight relevant speech features as they serve the purpose of representing intended meaning of the speakers and useful to maintain the oral communication in writing (Dörnyei, 2007). These included such features as pause and pause length, overlapping, and rising intonations. Although the whole transcription was meant to make the meaning clear, an emphasis on these features was crucial in relation to the actual treatments of culture within the confines of language classrooms. Having this in mind, I transcribed spoken language using the following transcription conventions:

- T with a number refers to a particular teacher

- S with a number refers to a particular student
- Ss a group of students
- (…) marks a pause
- (( )) marks added information from my notes
- [ ] marks clarifications
- CAPITAL LETTERS marks emphasis
- ? marks asking a question

Finally, the third move of classrooms and interviews data treatment was translation. The data I collected from classroom observations and interviews were in English and Arabic. As for the data that were in English, I used participants' own words so there was no need to include these data in the third move. On the other hand, I had to translate all the selected chunks that were in Arabic to English. To do so, I, first, made an initial translation of all the selected chunks based on my understanding of data. Then, I consulted a translator to verify my translations and make sure they were both accurate and presented in a satisfying conversational style.

6.4 Findings from classrooms observations and participants' interviews

6.4.3 Muting culture and cultural references

This theme refers to classrooms episodes where culture was avoided. It ,however, does not overlook the fact that culture and cultural references are always available in language classrooms (Kramsch, 2003). Rather, it describes actual teaching practices in relation to these available references in terms of their predominantly pedagogical focus and directions. In this regard, the analysis revealed that some teachers' practices seem to overlook, or even block, meaningful focus on culture and prioritise instruction on language. These patterns of teaching practices were obvious in multiple occasions in the classrooms data.

For example, T3 started the lesson telling his students he expected them to learn vocabulary, and enhance their critical thinking and reading skills by the end of the class. He reminded them that such expectations are not limited to this lesson, the class I observed, but also in every reading lesson, as he mentioned (Extract 1). Also, he explained the objectives of learning this unit to them, and highlighted the linguistic

features that they are expected to learn such as spelling, phrasal verbs, and learning how to make inferences.

Extract 1:

T: So, ((reading the title of the unit)) how do we fit in, in this unit, you know, in our reading class, we have three things that we study (…) vocabulary, critical thinking and reading, so in the unit, in addition to these things, you have to, you are supposed to, you are expected at the end of the class to know something about spelling patterns, to understand phrasal verbs, [to make] inferences from the reading text itself, and then to know something about present progressive and, you know, present perfect

Then, T3 moved on to do one of the exercises where his focus was predominantly on reading and vocabulary acquisition as well as on pronunciation (Extract 2). Such instructions are focused on language reading and pronunciation, despite all the potential cultural discussions in the activity (Figure 3). This was obvious in T3's encouragement of his students to read, and his explicit attempts to correct their pronunciation. This, however, means that cultural nuances and discussions, which could arise from the task were largely muted. For example, while the task, with its textual and visual elements, might establish discussions about such topics as students' popular fashion trends and their experiences in trying such fashions, their eating habits and practices, and their gatherings and shopping activities, such discussions were muted by an emphasis on linguistic elements. Therefore, when T3 gives more attention to language and linguistic features, he limits their chances to express their lived experiences.

B. Match each sentence to the correct picture.
1. A popular **fashion trend** is to wear jeans.
2. It's **human nature** to laugh when others do.
3. In my **culture**, everyone learns to eat with chopsticks.
4. I feel **lonely** at my new school.

Oxford 2000
Use the Oxford 2000 list on page 133 to find more words to describe the pictures on these pages. Share your words with a partner.

Figure 5:   Task B (Trio Reading, p. 71)

Extract 2:

T: ((reading from the book)) match each statement to the correct picture, we (…) have how many pictures?

Ss: four

T: four, one [of the statements] is done for you, ok, number one, who can read it? So, please, just give more attention to the words which are in bold, there are some words written in bold, just try to understand the meaning of these words, ok, who can read number one? ((talking to S1)) yes, please.

S1: a popular fashion trend is to wear (…) joans.

Ss: jeans, jeans

T: a popular fashion trend is to wear JEANS. Ok, which picture you think, which picture is matching this statement?

Ss: last picture

T: last one, is done, right? Ok, number two, ((talking to S2)) yes, please

S2: its human nature to laugh when others do

T: yes, which one [picture] you think?

Ss: the second one / the second picture

T: second picture, ok, nice, nice, yes, please, who can read number three? ((talking to S3)) can you [read it]? Yes, please

S3: in my culture, everyone learns to eat with chipsticks

T: CHOPSTICKS, yes, ((reading from the book)) in my culture, everyone learns to eat with CHOPSTICKS (…), yes, number four, [who can read it?] ((talking to S4)) yes please

S4: I feel lonely at my school

T: I feel lonely at my school, yes, which picture?

Ss: three

T: picture number three, is it true?

Ss: yes

T: yes, it is true, it is true.

Similarly, T2 paid undivided attention to reading and other linguistic features, including vocabulary. For example, on one occasion, after he completed an exercise and before he moved to another exercise, he went back to check his students' understanding of new vocabulary using students' first language (i.e., Arabic) (Extract 3). This can have an impact on students' intercultural competence and their ability to communicate in multicultural settings. Although learning vocabulary is an important aspect of language learning, avoiding discussions in classrooms may limit students' abilities to discuss cultural issues or express their lived experiences using such vocabulary.

Extract 3:

T: ((talking to Ss)) now, do the same with the exercise b [next exercise] on page seventy one, but before we go to the next page, is there any word from here [previous exercise] you don't understand? tradition, you know tradition? What is it?

Ss: taqaleed [meaning of the word 'traditions' in in Arabic]

T: ok, values?

Ss: (…)

T: values, means? giyam [meaning of the word 'values' in Arabic], society?

Ss: mojtama'a [meaning of the word 'society' in Arabic]

T: mojtama'a, yes, ok, now move to page seventy one.

Another common teaching practice that was revealed in the analysis was a focus on grammar. For example, T3 stopped reading from a text to ask his students about a grammatical aspect (Extract 4). He then went on reading without having any discussions on cultural issues. Allowing students participation to be centred on a grammatical aspect can be seen problematic. This is because language learning is not only about knowing grammatical rules, but also about using such rules to navigate cultural variations and communicate effectively in culturally diverse contexts. In this context, and as is shown in interview data that follows below, this issue is particularly interesting given the goals

of the textbook and tasks, and the policies on teaching and learning English analysed above.

Extract 4:

T: ((reading from the book)) there are groups who have worn the same styles for hundreds of years. There are groups who HAVE WORN the same styles for hundreds of years. ((talking to the students)) What type of tense is here in this sentence? What tense is it?

Ss: present perfect.

T: present perfect, very good. ((reading from the text)) have worn, have worn the same styles for hundreds of years.

The analysis also revealed a practice where cultural topics and affordances are excluded. In this practice, teachers are overtly directed to avoid teaching specific cultural issues, which will be discussed later (section ecological affordances). Yet, this finding revealed that some teachers avoided culture in their teaching, even though there was no explicit policy mandating such avoidance. For example, T4, who is a member of the Course Specifications Committee, chose to avoid playing music to his students. In that, he skipped an entire exercise that starts and ends with short music**.** When I interviewed him, I asked T4 why he did not play music to his students, he replied:

> *Before designing course specifications, we skip the chapters which are all about music, fashion designing or something like that, which can be a bit sensitive (…) so we try to avoid that chapter about music for example* (T4)

The use of the pronoun 'we' could entail that he perceived that this is a common practice or belief among his colleagues. That is, all teachers do the same thing when it comes to playing music inside the classrooms. However, some other teachers have expressed contrasting views, mentioning that they do incorporate music in their teachings.

These specific instances show the complexity of classrooms practices, and how some of that complexity is not visible across actors. While some teachers may mute affordances for engaging with culture by prioritising language skills such as reading, or emphasise linguistic features like pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar, others might mute cultural topics and references by skipping tasks and sections of textbooks, even when not expressly instructed to do so by educational policies. Such varied practices

serve as just a few illustrations of the broader complexity and emergent nature of the classrooms. Furthermore, they highlight the interconnected factors that shape teaching practices in relation to culture, and it's worth mentioning that other similar observations were also made throughout the study.

6.4.4 Recontextualising culture

Another theme that emerged from the qualitative data is patterns and forms of recontextualisation that culture takes in classrooms. This refers to patterns in which teachers and students interpret and discuss cultural issues and references. The analysis of classroom observation data revealed that, in actual teaching practices, teachers' treatment of culture took specific patterns. Yet, it is worth mentioning that these patterns of recontextualisation are emergent and inseparable in many instances, and only for the purpose of clarity they were categorised. One common pattern is treating culture as declarative knowledge. In this pattern, culture is 'transmitted' as a set of facts or information that can be memorised and recalled by the students (Larzén-Östermark, 2008). For example, in T5's class, there was an activity where the students were supposed to match between various statements and images (Figure 6).

Figure 6:   Task A (Trio Reading, p. 70)

T5 started by explaining the activity to his students, then asking them to do the activity (Extract 5). In this exercise, as the figure shows, there are multiple potential discussions

that can be opened about various cultural issues. These include the notions of tradition, values, and the idea of fitting in; yet, when reading through the sentences and asking his students to answer, these cultural references were transmitted as fixed facts and behaviours of a specific cultural groups or countries. For example, the statement 'it is a tradition to drink tea in the afternoon in England' was transmitted as a fact about British people. This was explicitly the answer of S3, in the following interview when I asked him what he knows about English people, to which he answered, 'they love to drink tea in the afternoon' (S3). Actually, such practices happened without engaging the students and asking them about their lived experiences and understandings of such issues and whether they think they have traditions and what traditions they could think of. Similarly, in the second statement which talks about values, the teacher did not elaborate on this issue, nor did he allow for discussions from the students' side on their experiences in saving money, for instance. He also did not allow his students to talk about their values and what values they think they have in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the teacher did not ask his students about their age to start school, as children start school at a different age from the UK. The teacher, who is not Saudi, could also have talked about his experience in his country, but his own background was never referenced.

Extract 5:

T: ok then, let's start. go to page number seventy. You have pictures and you have, you know, statements, four pictures and four statements, match each picture to the correct description. Ok, who can read number one, ((looking at S1)) yes please, read number one.

S1: a tradition is something that people in a specific place have done or believed for a long time, it is a tradition to drink tea in the afternoon in England.

T: Ok, which picture you think,

Ss: number four

T: is matching this statement, this description?

Ss: four, four, four, four, number four, number four

T: Ok, come to the next one, yes, the next one is done for you, the third one, yes, please, who can? ((looking at another S2)) Yes.

S2: society is a large group of people who live in the same area and have same ideas about how to live. In many societies children begin school around age five.

T: ok, which picture you think matches this stamen?

Ss: picture two

T: yes, number two, ok, the last statement, yes please ((talking to S3))

S3: to fit in is to be able to live in an easy and natural way with other people. I fit in with my brothers' friends, they like playing soccer too.

T: ok, which picture you think is matching this statement?

Ss: three

T: yes, ok, yes, you are right.

Similarly, T6 explained an activity at the beginning of the class and then asked his students to work out the answers (Figure 7). This activity includes various potential discussions on topics about culture and cultural practices, such as a discussion on various types of diets and whether the teacher or a student was on a diet, with continued discussion of this topic, reflecting on it from their lived experiences. However, in this T6 classroom, no such potential discussion took place (Extract 6). Rather, the interaction and instructions were for the students to select three statements and put them in one sentence, which can be seen as to evaluate students' linguistic competence as discussed above.

C. Check (✓) the items that are true for you. Then share your answers with a partner.

1. _____ I follow a vegetarian diet.
2. _____ I usually have a cup of coffee in the morning.
3. _____ I usually eat three meals a day.
4. _____ The main meal of the day for me is breakfast.
5. _____ I enjoy trying different types of food.
6. _____ I get food delivered to my home once a week.
7. _____ I usually eat my meals with a fork and knife.

Figure 7:   Task C (Trio Listening and Speaking 3, p. 73)

Extract 6:

T: Ok, hello everybody, open your books page seventy three, exercise C, please (…) you have seven sentences, in these sentences you are going to read and you check the sentence you find it is true, for example, the first sentence says, I follow a vegetarian diet, do you follow a vegetarian diet, if you follow this, you can check it, not only this [statement], you are going to read the whole items [the rest of the sentences], and at the end, you are going to summarise them and say them orally, number two for example, I usually have a cup of coffee in the morning, if you do this, you do this, you will say, I follow a vegetarian diet and I usually have a cup of tea in the morning, you have three minutes to read, think, and summarise. Please start … ((after three munities, talking to his students)) who is ready to tell us, ((talking to S1)) yes, sir, raise your voice.

S1: I usually have a cup of coffee in the morning

T: Aha, what else?

S1: yes, yes

T: do you have a cup of coffee in the morning, what else? Do you eat three meals a day?

S1: yes

T: so, say this, say a complete sentence.
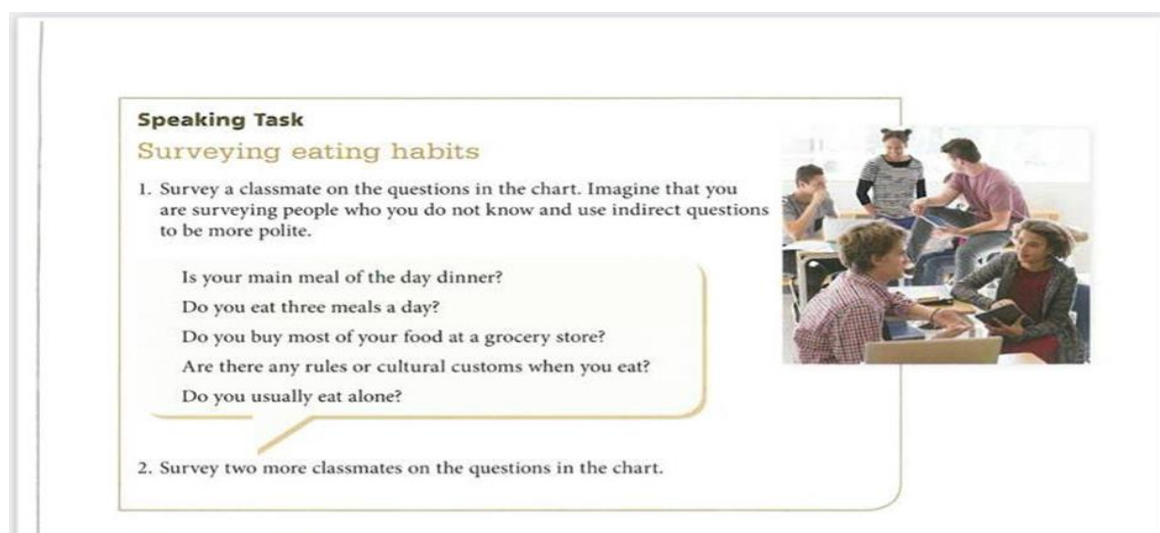
S1: I usually eat three meals a day, I enjoy trying different types of food, and I get food delivered to my home once a week

T: thank you, who else [can tell us what he chose]? ((talking to S2)) yes, please

S2: I usually have a cup of coffee in the morning, I usually eat three meals a day, and the main meal of the day for me is breakfast.

T: ok, very nice

Another common pattern of recontextualisation of culture, as revealed in the analysis, refers to culture as characterised by distinction. In this pattern, culture is referred to, focusing on differences and contrasting aspects among diverse cultures. That is, teachers put an emphasis on cultural comparisons, with more attention to differences. Qualitative data revealed that, in such episodes, teachers refer to cultural references and practices from the textbook as different from students lived experiences, and, in some cases, they ask their students to provide examples, which entail that such practices are different from theirs. For example, in T3's class, the lesson was about eating habits. In the last section of this lesson, there was an activity about asking people about their eating habits (Figure 8). T3 took the role of asking his students questions from the speaking task. At the beginning he reminded his students about their last lesson and what they studied about eating habits and how such habits differ according to culture. Then, he asked them questions about eating practices in Saudi Arabia, including times of meals and types of food they eat. After discussing this, the teacher compared it to Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean eating habits and practices, and confirmed to his students that their eating habits are different from those that can be found in China, Japan, and South Korea. Additionally, he agreed with one of the students that students' eating practices are learnt from Islamic teachings, with more discussion on the impacts of religion on practices and perceptions (discussed below).

Figure 8:   Speaking Task (Trio Listening and Speaking 3, p. 81)

Extract 7:

T: you know in our last class, we finished a listening section for this chapter (…) and the chapter is about how do eating habits differ, I mean eating habits and how there are

differences according to the culture, according to the practices, you also learn new vocabulary for the meals, I told you from the morning to the late night, we take different types of meals (…) ((talking to S1)) so would you please tell us about how many meals actually you take in a day, so how many times you take your meals?

S1: maybe two to three times

T: and what are the times?

S1: after 7 am

T: after 7 am you go for breakfast?

S1: yes

T: ok, then, ((talking to S2)) the next meal?

S2: and maybe afternoon

T: what is this?

S2: lunch

T: Ok, so I want to ask you also another question … in our food, in our food as you listen after some time, you will find different cultures, different nationalities, for example, in South Korea, when they serve food, the old people eat before the young people, and when the boys or the young men give anything to the old people, they have to give them [with] two hands not one hand… if I give them [with] one hand, this is an insult, this is not good, this is bad... I want to know some traditions or customs about the habit of eating food here in Saudi Arabia, who can tell me? ((talking to S3)) yes sir, tell me.

S3: guests sit first, so, if we have guests, they should sit and eat first, before us (…) we have to eat with our hands

T: you mean you don't have to use a spoon or a fork?

S3: yes, most of the time we don't use spoons or forks and we eat with our right hands.

T: why?

S3: it is our culture.

T: and, this culture came from where?

S3: from Islam, Muslims should eat with their right hands and they don't use spoons or forks.

T: very nice, and we eat three meals a day.

Another notable pattern that emerged from the analysis is the tendency to treat culture based on generalisations, a clear demonstration of decontextualisation. In such a pattern, teachers appeared to substitute or script culture in a way that appeared to oversimplify or homogenise diverse cultural practices and beliefs. As feature of this pattern, cultural references and affordances, whether textual, visual, or audible, are negotiated not only as facts, but also are generalised to an entire country or a group of people. Similarly, cultural practices are also overscripted to entire countries and people. In such episodes, teachers tend to import their own personal knowledge about culture and cultural practices, most of which are based on stereotypes. Also, these generalisations of culture can be about cultural references from the text or about practices that Saudi people are thought to do. What differentiates this theme from the previous two themes is the absence of addition, in which culture is neither transmitted as a list of facts without any further discussions, nor are there discussions about how it is different from students' lived experiences. For example, T7, like T6, taught the chapter of eating habits (mentioned earlier, Figure 3). He, unlike T6, allowed for discussions on culture and cultural practices. In one instance, he told his students that Chinese and Japanese people do not eat heavy meals. Rather, they eat light meals eight times a day. He also mentioned that because Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country, Saudis follow Islamic teachings when they eat food. One of these teaching is that Saudis eat with hands, and not with spoons. Yet, his discussions were mostly based on his personal knowledge and beliefs, as he mentioned in the interview when I asked about these two points, saying 'this is a common belief among Bangladeshi people'.

Extract 8:

T: I know, It is a kind of common behaviour (…) say for example, I told you in the last class, you know, considering Japanese people, or considering Chinese people, they are not taking heavy meals, they are always taking some light meals, they are taking food generally eight times or ten times a day (…) so do you have this kind of practice, like Japanese or Chinese people?

Ss: no

T: so do you have your own customs, ok, now as you know, Saudi Arabia is [an] Islamic country, and we have Islamic customs also for eating (…) for example, we are using our hands, not [using] spoons or forks.

A final pattern that emerged from the data was the normalisation of culture. This pattern refers to episodes where cultural references were normalised inside the classrooms. In these episodes, teachers tend to utilise their power and personal knowledge and preferences to interpret and make sense of culture and cultural references. Accordingly, students' contributions and lived experiences are overlooked and/or excluded. This pattern of recontextualisation of cultural references occurred during discussions about culture and cultural references from the textbook or when talking about Saudi people practices. For example, T9, when discussing the eating habits in Saudi Arabia with his students, asked them about the main meal, thinking that dinner is the main meal (Extract 9). The students gave various answers, including dinner. After he repeated the word 'dinner', he asked again about the main meal in Saudi Arabia. One of the students said 'lunch' and the teacher with a clear loud voice replied saying, 'DINNER' and asked what type of food Saudis eat at dinner time.

Extract 9:

T: I want to ask you a question my friends, what is the main meal here in Saudi Arabia?

Ss: Kabsah

T: not the main food, I mean the main meal, how many meals we have?

Ss: three

T: three meals, what are they?

Ss: breakfast, lunch, dinner

T: And dinner, ((talking to S2)) here in Saudi Arabia what is the main meal?

S2: lunch

T: DINNER, what we eat in dinner?

Ss: kabsah, different food, kabsah

In another example, T5, in his reading class, taught the same chapter taught by T3. T5, however, allowed some time to talk about culture in his class (Extract 10). He discussed the idea of eating with chopsticks. Among the images, there was a little girl eating with chopsticks (see Figure 3). T5 opened a discussion about the nationality of this girl. The students gave different answers including Asian and Japanese. The teacher replied, like in the previous example, with loud clear voice saying 'CHINA'. After that, a student answered saying 'South Korean' and the teacher replied to him 'maybe China'.

Extract 10:

T: yes, in my culture, everyone learns to eat with chopsticks. Ok, ((looking at the picture)) from where, you think, this one [girl] is?

Ss: Asia

T: yes, from?

Ss: Asia

T: from?

Ss: China

T: CHINA, maybe China where people eat by using chopsticks

Ss: South Korea

T: maybe China, so you know now that you can know people by their culture, yes, that's it. ok then this is the meaning of culture, this is how people fit in.

In this example, T5, after all the attempts that were made by his students to tell the nationality of the girl, insisted that the girl was Chinese. It is marked here that no reasoning is given by the teacher, which is the case with many examples above. The students saying South Korea and teacher insisting on China offers the chance for a more detailed look into deconstructing how similar cultural habits might differ, e.g., dress, types of chopsticks, or aesthetics, but, here, the teacher pushes the idea that the answer to his question is China and not South Korea, but is not prepared to open that to extended reasoning. Despite differences in the ways affordances for cultural engagement were blocked in examples here and above (focus on language, declarative knowledge, etc.), a unifying practice in these examples is a focus on correct responses,

with the teacher having control of the discourse around that. An accompanying tendency here is for the teacher to explain that something is the answer and not why, which naturally shuts down dialogue over culture and students' experiences.

6.4.5   Conceptualising culture

This theme is about teachers and students' understanding of culture inside their classrooms. The significance of this theme became clear right from the beginning of my fieldwork journey. Participants' early discussions on the topic of my study gave me the impression that they have various conceptualisations and understandings of what culture means in their classrooms; thus, I purposefully asked them about how they would define culture in their classrooms. The participants gave different conceptualisations, most of which seem to have impacted the overall teaching/learning practices. Some participants' conceptualisations, such as S1, highlighted that culture, in English classes, is more linked to English language 'native' speaking countries.

S2: I think culture in this book, in our textbooks, it is the culture of native speakers of English language.

From a similar perspective, some participants agreed that learning a language brings culture of that language's speakers with it. However, it is obvious that some participants, such as T1 and T4, perceived culture, although inseparable from the English language, as an added element to English language learning, and not embedded in the learning process.

T1: learning English opens a window to other worlds (…) this is what I believe, you cannot learn another language without knowing a lot of cultural issues about it, it is difficult to separate language from what belongs to it, teaching culture is important, especially because one of the student may need to travel, so he will need to know about the place (…) almost, the culture we learn through English language learning is the English culture.

T4: language learning can be separated from culture, but this is may not be a proper learning, and when you are learning a particular language, say for example Japanese, Turkish, or English, whatever it is, we have to have to some extent, you have to be exposed to that particular culture, [otherwise] learning cannot be fulfilled (…) I found a few students are very much interested in the western culture, while learning English,

but very few, most of them are interested in learning the language, not exactly, the culture.

From a similar perspective, i.e., culture as an added element, some participants, such as T3, noted that culture is now easily accessible because of globlaisation, and teachers should not teach it to their students because they already know about culture and cultural practices of 'the West'.

T3: As for culture, I don't think the students need me to talk about culture, this was possibly the case in the eighties, when there was not communication between the West and the Arabs, and there was a gap and broken bridge between the two cultures [i.e. Western and Arabic cultures], we did not know what they have, neither they knew what we have, at that time, it was necessary to tell your students that 'they' have this and have that, but now because of globlaisation, everything is open, with movies, the students can see new [cultural] things.

Some participants were more specific in their conceptualisations of culture. They, like T8, perceived culture in their textbooks to be British because these textbooks are published in the UK by British writers.

T8: I believe the culture that is in the textbooks is the culture of the person who wrote the textbook, and he reflects his culture in the book, and I feel that the difference is massive between the British culture and the Saudi culture, Saudi society is a conservative society (…) but now because the world has become a small village, maybe the student is able to differentiate between the western culture and the Saudi culture

Some other participants, in their explanations of the origin of culture in their classrooms, such as S4, perceived culture to come from different countries. Yet, the view that culture is an added element still exists.

S4: I think it is mixed, there is no specific culture, for example, in eating habits chapter, we have different cultures, we have Asian culture like eating using chopsticks, so it is not specific but at the same time it is not so deep, so we have only the basics of many cultures.

These conceptualisations of culture indicate that the participants do not have one rigid perception and understanding of culture in their classrooms. Despite this, their conceptualisations mostly entail that culture is an added element in their language

teaching/learning. Also, their conceptualisations of culture inside classrooms reflect their understanding of the notion of culture in general. In such understandings, culture is perceived in an essential way based mainly on differences and stereotypes.

6.4.6 Perceiving culture

This theme, continuing from the previous one, is about teachers' and students' views on the types of cultural affordances, be it textual, visual, or audible, that exist in their classrooms. As the previous theme explored how the notion of culture in general is conceptualised and understood, it oriented to another recurrent theme that looks at how cultural affordances, in particular visual and audible references, are perceived by the teachers and the students. By following on from participants conceptualisations of culture, I thought this focus would help build a holistic understating of participants' conceptualisations and treatments of culture. This is because participants' perceptions were found to be inseparable from their conceptualisations and treatments of culture in this study. In this theme, like in others, the data revealed various perspectives and interpretations towards cultural references.

A recurrent theme in the interviews was music, reflecting the broader controversy around music within Saudi Arabia (see Section 1.5). Here, the interplay between personal beliefs and pedagogical choices is visible. Evidently, for some participants, their religious affiliations, particularly their understanding of Islam, act as a crucial lens through which they perceive and engage with culture in their classrooms. Building on this perspective, some participants, such as S9, noted that listening to music is against the teachings of Islam.

S9: It [music] is forbidden in Islam.

Similarly, T4, agreed that listening to music is forbidden in Islam and he avoids discussions superstars and celebrities with his students. This perception is reflected in his teaching practice because he did not play music in one of his lessons (see Section 6.4.1).

T4: when it comes to entertainment, we are very careful about what to talk about, for example, we in general avoid asking them [the students] the favourite superstar or favourite celebrity … when it comes to music, definitely we are careful as well

In contrast to the previous perspective, some participants, like T3, stated that listening to music is not forbidden in Islam, and in contrast to T4, he discusses music with his students from a religious perspective, even though some students do not agree with him.

T3: I had a lesson about music in my reading class, and I told my students that music, I asked them about music? They said, music is haram [forbidden], and I said, no it is not haram, and discussed this with them based on religious evidences, some of the students totally rejected the idea that music is halal [not forbidden], they were rejecting it and some of them showed me hadiths [Islamic statements], they were so conservative, and I told them that it is a debateable issue and asked them to read more about it

In the same vein, T9 mentions that he plays music to his students in their classrooms whenever there is music in the lesson.

T9: we do not ignore it [music], we do talk about music, I believe that in discussing music, we must not ignore it, we must teach the students that these things do exist and there are beautiful musicians around the world, right, and we can talk about music

Another emerging perspective coming from the data analysis regarding music was of the two previous perspectives, in that although some participants, such as S2, agree that music is forbidden in Islam, they believe that it is appropriate to play it in their classrooms.

S2: As for me, at the end of the day, music is forbidden in Islam, but in order to provide students with different activities, I think playing music gives energy to the students and make the class more active

Another prominent emergent theme regarding cultural references was the inclusion of female images in textbooks, having in mind the all-male micro setting of this study. This established discussions on how the participants view having female images in their textbooks. Some participants noted that images in texts are not permissible from a religious perspective. They, like S6, suggested that textbooks that are taught to Saudi male students should not include females' images.

S6: I prefer, honestly, I prefer not to have female images in our textbooks because this is against our religion

This perspective was reinforced by T8, who suggested that these images are not appropriate to be in textbooks that are taught to Saudi students because they include cultural practices that are irrelevant or unfamiliar within in students' contexts, including images of unrelated men and women walking together or women who are not in their hijab and abaya.

T8: I see, for example, there are images of a girl and a boy walking together, these things do not exist in the Saudi culture (…) also, for example, some of these images are for women in western clothes without hijab, these images are not for women wearing abaya with which the student is more familiar.

This statement shows the perceived role of male (teachers) in shaping and transmitting cultural norms and values within the educational settings of Saudi Arabia. T8' statements, '*the images of a girl and a boy walking together*' and '*some of these images are for women in western clothes without hijab*', can be seen to highlight a tension many teachers may feel. On one hand, they may feel they need to navigate the evolving curricula that are becoming more inclusive of diverse cultural references and national initiatives that call for openness and tolerances towards 'others'. On the other hand, they still grapple with their responsibilities as guardians of culture and values within their classroom settings.

Some other participants, such as S16, also held a similar perspective, i.e., rejection of having female images. They, however, do not see that female images as inappropriate owing to their religious affiliations, rather their rejection is because these images are provided to explain topics that are not of interest to them as male students.

S16: to be honest, I think the book should have only male images as it is taught to male students, most of the images are for females, if you open two pages in the textbook, you find only one image for a man, and the rest are for women, and they are about female make-up, everything belongs to women, and we are boys

From a different perspective, some participants, such as S7, mentioned that having female images in their books is fine, even if these females are wearing hijab. They even linked this to lessons that are not English and said that such books include women not wearing hijab.

S7: *for me having female images is normal, it does not make a difference, all the images are very normal and decent, and as for wearing hijab, sometimes, in Arabic textbooks, there are female images and, sometimes, they are not wearing hijab.*

These accounts suggest the multifaceted nature of perceptions towards cultural references, such music and female images, among teachers and students in Saudi ELE settings. This is because of what can be seen as spectrum of, and sometimes contradictory, interpretations the teachers and students displayed in this study. One way to understand this dynamic is through the lens of linearity and nonlinearity, given that there are common elements being referred to in explanations of participants' perspectives, particularly around religion, and what is permitted according to Islamic rules. In a linear perspective, one might expect uniform reactions to cultural references based on these shared cultural or religious backgrounds. A linear view might also anticipate that teaching practices and materials are received and interpreted consistently across language classrooms. However, the reality is more nuanced and complex, as shown in this study, exhibiting nonlinearity. Classrooms, by their very nature, are shaped not just by the curriculum or teaching materials, but also by the unique lived experiences, beliefs, and interpretations of individuals within them. Thus, as the data shown, while some participants find music and female images in the textbooks to be appropriate, others might consider them inappropriate or even offensive. This nonlinearity underscores the challenge in assuming that there is a one-size-fits-all approach or response to cultural references in education, a notion that was put forward in the early stages of this study (see Section 1.2).

6.4.7 Positioning towards culture

A frequent theme emerging from the interviews is how the participants position themselves in relation to culture. It is worth mentioning here that this theme does not highlight the participants conceptualisations of culture as this is discussed earlier (section 5.5.2.1). Rather, it discusses participants' perceptions of the role of culture in their teaching/learning practices and how they identify themselves in relation to this role. The participants' positions towards the role of culture in their classrooms were, like other themes, complex and nonlinear. For example, T1 suggests that culture is not part of their teaching/learning responsibilities, as language learners can easily learn about 'culture' outside their classrooms. Thus, he considers himself to be a language teacher.

Their positionings can be seen to draw distinctions between language and culture in their classrooms.

T1: if the students do not learn [about culture] from classrooms, he will learn from other sources, satellite is there, movies are there, so, as a teacher, all you do is, you teach language

This position towards the role of culture in classrooms was also taken by S4, when he talked about his experience in learning English. When I asked him about how he learns about culture, he mentioned that he does thos by communicating with native speakers through online chatting and gaming.

S4: I try to talk to native speakers from different countries through games and voice chats (…) I also learn about culture through social media.

One common theme in the interviews, especially among teachers, is to limit their roles as language teachers to preparing their students for their future careers, communication with native speakers, and assessment. For example, T7, perceives his primary role as an English language teacher is to prepare learners for their future careers focusing on language skills. T7's perspective is profoundly influenced by his personal experience as a language learner. He recalls,

T7: In fact, students learn language basically, basically, like myself, when I was a student, and most of the students who learn a foreign language, for one reason …that is language as an instrument, I mean they learn language to achieve a goal, and basically, and usually, it is to get a job.

This statement emphasises the influence of teachers' lived experiences as language learners in shaping their stances towards the role of culture in their teaching practices.

From a similar perspective but different focus, some respondents, such as T6, felt that their teaching/learning of English is to prepare students to sound like native speakers.

T6: In my opinion, students need a lot, first they have to be exposed to the English language by encouraging them to memorise a lot of words, second, encourage them to participate in the classrooms, by putting them in groups, for example … Third, expose the students as much as possible to listen to native speakers.

According to T6, his role maybe seen to help his students achieve a high level in English language, with a specific emphasis on speaking skills. This, however, may lead teachers like T6 to prioritise linguistic aspects at the expense of cultural ones.

Similarly, T3 suggests that his primary goal is to prepare his students to pass their exams, even if he has to teach in students' first language, and, thus, he does not consider negotiations about culture as a priority in his teaching. He recalls,

T3: I focus grammar, and I explain grammatical structures in Arabic, and I notice that my students understand them (…) even though the policy insists that we speak only in English, (…) I talk to myself, leave me alone and see how my students perform on unified exams (…) it is obvious that my students were better than other students because I always explain grammar in Arabic.

This emphasis by teachers on linguistic proficiency over cultural integration can be seen as a reflection of the broader tensions in language education. While teachers like T3 view the mastery of grammatical structures, particularly through the medium of Arabic, as paramount to students' success, this practice of focusing only on grammatical structures can marginalise the equally significant facet of cultural integration in language education. This pedagogical inclination, while aligning with some studies that underscore the importance of utilising one's primary language in the learning process, also draws parallels with the emerging notion of 'translanguaging', which emphasises the fluid use of linguistic resources available in a classroom setting, including the students' L1 (discussed above). However, solely focusing on 'sounding like native speakers' and mastering grammar nuances may not necessarily lead to a holistic understanding of the English language. The phrase 'English' … 'culture', as mentioned in policy documents above, underscores the understanding among educational policy makers of the mutual relationship between 'English language' and 'its cultural manifestations'.

Thus, while teachers might see their role as to facilitate their students to communicate effectively with 'native speakers', having in mind that listening to native speakers is not just about imitating their accents or vocabulary, the question is to what extent they are actually equipping them with the cultural sensitivity and awareness to navigate the diverse contexts in which English is spoken? This highlights a potential disconnect between top-down educational reforms and the on-the-ground practices and beliefs of individual teachers.

In addition to teachers, some students, such as S8, seem to prioritise improving their language skills over learning about culture in their English language learning.

S8: As for my experience in learning English language, I think language learning is not memorising grammatical rules (…) it is better that you combine all the four skills together, as you know, writing is the outcome of reading, and speaking is the outcome of listening, so it is better that you work on the four skills, and you will notice that your English is improving.

For S8, the emphasis is clearly on the linguistic aspects as mentioned above. According to him, the development of language learning comes from a holistic focus on the four skills. Yet, he did not seem to give importance to integrating cultural aspects into such holistic learning. From similar perspective, S13 felt that, as an English language learner, he needs to learn accents and advanced grammatical structures and vocabulary. He also suggested that Saudi learners should not limit their learning of English accent, grammar, or vocabulary to what they learn from classrooms, but rather they need to watch movies and video games.

S13: I think that learning of English language in Saudi Arabia, I think it is kind of slow because you learn the basics of the language (…) you never learn about the accent, or the advanced grammar, also your vocabulary, you will not have the greatest vocabulary by just studying

Despite the above positionings, some other participants display a recognition of the role of culture in their English teaching/learning. They, such as S12 and T2, feel that culture is an integral element of their teaching/learning of English.

S12: because we are learning English, we should learn about the culture of the language we learn.

T2: you cannot teach English language without discussing many things about it, it is difficult to separate the language from its culture.

Yet, there is still a dichotomy between the S12 and T2 statements. S12's choice of the phrase '*we should* learn' may reflect a call for culture to be integrated into language learning, which may acknowledge that culture is not always in not integrated in their classrooms, according to S12. On the other hand, T2's assertion, '*you cannot teach English language without discussing many things about it, it is difficult to separate the*

language from its culture.' seems to suggest an inherent interconnectedness between English language and 'its associated culture'. Thus, the teachers' opinion may indicate that teaching the English language involves incorporating cultural components. This dichotomy between student's and the teacher's perceptions which can be seen to shed light on possible classroom dynamics. That is, while T2 might believe that he is incorporating cultural elements into their lessons, S12 might still feel a void or an inadequate representation of culture. This can be seen to result from various understandings of culture both teachers and students hold.

These accounts show that there is no consensus on the role of culture in Saudi ELT classrooms. While some participants do not appear to perceive culture as an important component in their classrooms by prioritising language proficiency over discussions on culture and cultural references, others view culture as an integral and inseparable component of their language teaching/learning. This reflects the complexity and diversity of teachers and students' positionings in relation to the role of culture in their classrooms, which are shaped by several factors including their understanding of 'culture' and its relation to language education settings.

6.4.8 Ecological impacts on teachers' and students' practices and beliefs towards culture

This section reports on the final recurrent theme of the spoken data. This theme includes contextual factors that are reported by the teachers and the students to have impacts on their practices and perceptions towards culture. One common reported impact is related to the micro-systems. This type of impact refers to the factors that occur within the classrooms, where the participants interact on a daily basis, and which were reported to impact on participants' teaching/learning practices and perceptions in relation to culture.

One common theme that emerged from the analysis in these micro-settings is based on teachers' and students' views towards each other. Some participants, including S4, felt that teachers do not allow discussions on culture in their classrooms.

S4: actually they [the teachers] don't usually do it, they don't usually discuss cultures, and I think, in my opinion, this is not good, and when they talk about culture they talk about their culture instead of asking us about our culture.

S4's assertion, '*when they talk about culture they talk about their culture instead of asking us about our culture'* shows a crucial dimension of the interplay between culture and language teaching. From his perspective, there seems to be a clear border line between 'our culture', which can be seen to reflect younger generations' lived experiences, and 'their culture' as that of the teachers, which can be seen to align with older or more traditional cultural viewpoints. This can be seen as signs of adequation and distinctions, where teachers, by prioritising one cultural narrative over another, might be creating barriers in their classrooms through fostering views of adequation with their own cultural perspectives while making others as distinct.

As for some teacher participants, such as T2 and T3, when justifying their avoidance of discussions about culture in their classrooms, they indicated that students are not interested in having discussions about culture, and they want to learn language. Although this reflects teachers' understanding of culture as an 'added element' and their understandings of their careers as language teachers (discussed above), it also reflects teachers' perceptions towards their students and their learning needs, and their idea that learning language and culture cannot happen together, as learning about culture is something overt, noticeable, and different from learning language.

T2: I believe that if the student does not have interests in learning culture, it is hard for the teacher to open discussions about culture.

T3: wallah [by god], to be honest with you, I don't think the students are passionate about learning culture (…) I feel that my students do not want to learn about culture (…) I notice when we finish a lesson, the students leave the class quickly without asking [about cultural issues] this is a sign assures me that the student does not have the passion even to ask about culture (…) thus I deploy the philosophy that says 'the fewer, the better, [i.e.] I focus on the basics, I don't want to burden the students with massive [cultural] details (…) so, when he graduates, he will still have these basics.

From a different perspective, some participants seem to have certain assumptions about the cultural openness of Saudi students in general. For example, T8 who is non-Saudi Muslim teacher, noted that Saudi students are intolerant about having discussions about cultural issues such as music. Interestingly, he mentioned that if he taught English language to non-Saudi students, he would freely discuss cultural issues.

T8: 'to be honest with you, as for teaching culture to non-Saudi students, there is more freedom and the level of tolerance towards cultural differences is high among non-Saudi students (…) and if music was given in a lesson, it would be taught [to non-Saudi students].

T8's assertion sheds light on a complex interplay between national identity, cultural perceptions, and religious sensitivities within the context of ELT in Saudi Arabia. T8's statement, wherein he suggests a greater tolerance and openness towards cultural discussions among non-Saudi students, especially when touching upon potentially sensitive subjects like music, brings forth an interesting dynamic. While other teachers' assertions above, such as T4, might have implied that teachers exercise caution primarily out of a perceived duty to protect religious and moral values, T8's assertion hints at a different narrative. He seems to suggest that the perceived intolerance or apprehension stems from the Saudi students themselves.

Viewing a correlation between nationality and teaching culture is also reinforced by S6, who felt that Saudi teachers allow for discussions on culture more than non-Saudi teachers. Although this is not meant to generalise that teachers'/students' nationality has an impact on their practices inside the classrooms, this was mentioned in the data.

S6: I feel that non-Saudi teachers, especially Arab teachers, are interested in opening discussions on culture, but they are afraid of crossing the borders and they do not want to talk about cultural taboos.

S6's assertion may imply that while there is an inherent interest among non-Saudi, particularly Arab teachers, in delving into cultural conversations, there is also a profound hesitancy, possibly stemming from concerns about unintentionally breaching cultural sensitivities or norms. The hesitancy of those teachers to delve into cultural discussions, as asserted by S6, can have a significant impact on not teaching culture in the classroom. Their concerns about "crossing the borders" and avoiding "cultural taboos" may imply that they might choose to avoid cultural topics altogether to prevent any potential misunderstandings or conflicts, which could lead to a limited cultural exposure for students, thereby depriving them of a holistic understanding of the English language and its cultural nuances.

Another common theme is the impacts of participants' personal preferences. Some participants, like S10, acknowledged that their personal preferences and biases play a role in shaping their practices and perceptions towards culture.

S10: my personal preferences, so if like for example Japanese culture, I will be wanting to learn it more than other cultures because I like it personally maybe because I like their food or their animations.

This statement may suggest that, beyond broader socio-cultural and educational contexts, personal affinities, such as a fondness for a particular country's cuisine or media, can serve as motivating factors. Such personal biases can inadvertently influence the lens through which students and possibly educators engage with and prioritize certain cultural materials over others. It also underscores the importance of recognizing and navigating these personal preferences in the classroom to ensure a more holistic and unbiased approach to teaching culture.

Another impact that emerged from the analysis is related to meso-systems. This impact is related to the institution. Here, a common reported theme is the impact of university policies in relation to culture in participants' viewpoints. Although these policies can have impacts on both the teachers and students, it was the teachers only who referred institutional policies. For example, T9 mentioned that he is not allowed to discuss specific cultural issues with his students, and in terms of what he teaches, it is the policy makers who decide on what lessons are to be taught regardless to what the teachers beliefs and opinions are.

T9: As for my experience in teaching English, I notice that some lessons and maybe whole units are skipped in the course specifications without a clear justification, other than they seem to be culturally unacceptable, they contradicted with the culture of Arabic language and Arab students.

When examining T9's statement concerning the omission of certain lessons or entire units as they are 'culturally unacceptable,' it is essential to contrast the actual practices with the written institutional policies. While the written institutional policy documents clearly present a broader, seemingly inclusive vision of cultural teaching, through frequent mentioning of phrases such as 'encourage' 'discussion' and even 'intercultural communication', the on-the-ground decisions might be more conservative, prioritising the cultural sensitivities of the region, which can be seen to highlight a tension between

the intent of educational reforms and their translations into actual classroom practices. This comparison sheds light on the intricate dynamics between overarching educational policies, specific curriculum guidelines, and the ground realities teachers face.

From another perspective, some participants noted that the policy on teaching culture is not clear, which makes them uncertain about what to teach and what to avoid. For example, T1 said that,

T1: sometimes we are told that a particular unit should not be taught to the students, and usually there are no explanations for this, and there are no explanations for the teachers on how to teach culture to their students (…) this creates confusion among us regarding culture.

From a different perspective on institutional policies, some participants, including T6, seem to have complete confidence in the policy makers and they believe that their role as teachers is to follow what they say.

T6: whether we need to teach culture, wallah, we have course specifications and we follow what is in the course specifications, these course specifications are written by curricula committees, and they know what to teach and what to avoid (…) we teach what is in the course specifications only

This view was not maintained by T3, who felt that the department administration does not allow teachers to open discussions about culture and make them concerned about teaching culture.

T3: the administration rejects the idea that we talk about something that is not included in the lesson, even if that is something cultural and maybe the students need to learn, it says no, teach them this way because we are Muslim (…) the administration is a factor that stops us from talking about culture.

A final reported impact is related to the macro-systems. This impact represents the larger contextual factors reported by the participants to impact on their practices and perceptions towards culture in their classrooms. One common theme here is religion. Some participants, like T4, felt that their religious beliefs influence how they approach culture in their classrooms.

T4: This is the first time I am teaching in the middle east, so we need to be very careful about what to talk about and what to avoid … as far as culture is concerned, there are

number of things we are careful and conscious about, we avoid talking about religion, for example.

Another reported impact on participants' practices and perceptions in relation to culture, in relation to religion, is their 'cultural heritage'. Some participants, like S1, felt that a reason underling their reluctance to have teaching/learning about culture is that that culture should not impact on their cultural and religious identities.

S1: *I think students should focus on their learning of English language, learning about culture is not always a good thing because if you learn something new it might change the way you think, it might make you against your own culture so if you learn the American culture you might change some perspectives and you might deny something that is in your religion or your culture, and that won't be good to you.*

These multifaceted factors, spanning from the intricacies of micro-interactions within classrooms to overarching macro-level influences, collectively illustrate the vibrant tapestry of ELT and learning in Saudi Arabia. Personal predilections, deeply-rooted religious convictions, allegiance to cultural norms, and evolving cultural identities all play pivotal roles in shaping the dynamics of these classrooms. Such multifaceted factors can be seen to reflect the complexity of classrooms in this context.

6.5 Summary of the findings from classrooms observations and interviews

This chapter set out as a continuation of my investigation into the treatment of culture in an ELE setting in Saudi Arabia. It delved into a multiscale investigation of ELE aspects including educational documents, actual classroom practices, and teachers' and students' beliefs towards culture and its role in their language classrooms, in order to establish a holistic understanding of how culture is treated within such settings. This section is meant to summerise the main findings in this chapter.

In general, classroom observation and interview data analysis revealed three emergent themes. These themes reflect classroom practices such as mutation/avoidance and recontextualisation of culture and cultural affordances. They also reflect patterns from the interviews data that include participants' conceptualisations of, and perceptions and positionings towards, culture and, as well as the factors that impact on their practices and beliefs towards culture, its role in their learning and teaching settings. These

themes provide valuable insights into my research questions about how culture is treated in ELT classrooms, how the participants conceptualise, perceive, and position themselves in relation to culture and cultural references, and what factors influence the teaching/ learning of culture.

The analysis revealed that there were two broad types of treatment of culture inside the classrooms. In the first type, discussions about culture are avoided, and, as a result, language receives a great amount of attention inside the classrooms. Here, teachers appear to mute affordances for engagement with culture through a teacher-controlled focus on promoting reading skills in general, and language aspects such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. In the second type, the analysis shows various patterns of recontextualisation of culture and cultural references across the classrooms, including teaching culture as declarative knowledge, as characterised by distinction from the prescribed norms of the 'local culture', as well as generalisation and normalisation of culture more widely.

As for the second theme, participants' positionings towards culture and cultural references, the analysis reveals that there were different, and even contradicting views between the participants. Concerning their views towards culture, some of the teachers did not think of it as a significant dimension in language learning classrooms. Rather, they believed that their focus should be on teaching language, which was mirrored in their teaching practices: preparing their students for their future jobs and exposing them to the language of native speakers. Other teachers, however, showed an interest in having discussions about culture with their students. As for the students, they also had various views regarding learning culture. However, the majority supported the idea of having discussions on culture in their classes. Some of them also considered that learning about culture promotes their learning of language.

Regarding participants' views of cultural affordances from the textbooks, the analysis showed that teachers and students' views are not consistent, as well that some of the participants were against having images of women in general or women without hijabs. Similarly, some of them considered listening to music inside the classroom to be inappropriate, or prohibited, from a religious perspective. However, some others considered both female images and music to be acceptable, appropriate, and even potentially valuable, emphasising that everyone sees constructs and affordances represented within these classroom artifacts, such as female images and music,

differently in this context, perhaps reflecting their views, practices, and beliefs outside the ELE classroom setting.

As for the final theme, factors influencing the teaching/learning of culture, the analysis reveals that the reported factors vary from micro to macro, including personal preferences, religious affiliations and beliefs, cultural adherence, cultural identities, and institutional policies. Such variations in the treatment of culture within language classrooms, along with different conceptualisations, perceptions, positionings towards culture, and the various other factors reported by the participants in my study, impact on their practices and perceptions in relation to culture, demonstrating that classrooms are complex and nonlinear settings.

7   Conclusion

7.1 An overview of the study

This study set out to explore the treatment of culture in ELE settings in Saudi Arabia, drawing on an ecological perspective. Relying on this perspective, culture has been approached in this study as a complex social phenomenon, avoiding oversimplifications and reductionist descriptions that can distance the idea of culture from the contextual reality of cultural practices, identities, and constructs. Applying this perspective to ELE settings enabled me to view culture as interconnected with other elements across and though language learning ecosystems, such as individuals' personal experiences, teaching/learning practices, learning materials, as well as policies and religious aspects, both within the classrooms and in broader socio-cultural contexts. Thus, this approach allowed me to conduct a holistic exploration of how culture has been treated, taking into account not only the observed teaching practices in relation to culture, but also what implications teachers' and students' experiences and other ecological elements had on such treatment.

 To achieve this aim, this study utilised a qualitative research methodology. This choice was based on the perception that exploring treatments of culture with the aforementioned conceptualisation of culture, as well as exploring experiences of teachers and students and relevant ecological elements in the setting, necessitated a method that could provide an in depth exploration into the treatment of culture in Saudi ELE settings. To achieve this, this study utilised qualitative document analysis, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and detailed field notes. The document analysis helped uncover how culture has been treated in educational documents, while classrooms observations provided me with insights into the actual teaching practices within language classrooms. The semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, allowed me to explore personal experiences, perceptions, positionings, and attitudes of both teachers and students in relation to culture. Such exploration was important in understanding how these individual factors impacted on the treatment of culture in the selected ELE settings. Each of these qualitative research instruments was coupled with detailed field notes. The field notes provided additional context and helped to facilitate the interpretation of the data. In the following section, I will discuss the findings from the lens of the used ecological framework.

7.2 Applying the ecological framework to the findings

This study adopted an ecological framework in its investigation into the treatment of culture in Saudi ELE settings (see Section 1.3). Drawing on this framework, the study targeted various dimensions that appeared to tap into the treatment of culture, including educational policies, textbooks, classrooms, and actors (teachers and students). Throughout its investigation, the study investigated an interconnected network of factors, such as time, framing, conceptualisations, perceptions, positionings, and identifications, among others, to holistically reveal how culture, in its multifaceted nature (see Section 3.2), is treated in the selected settings.

The findings show that the treatment of culture at various Saudi educational scales is inconsistent. Interestingly, this contrasts with a simple interpretation of Weaver-Hightower's ecological model of educational policies, discussed above (see Section 3.3.1). The findings show that, as we navigate across the layers of the ecology, we can see that the treatment of culture across and through the Saudi educational policy layers does not follow a straightforward, predictable trajectory. Instead, there are shifts in focus, revealing the intricate and multifaceted nature of cultural treatment within the Saudi educational landscape.

The document analysis shows that the framings of and orientations to culture in Saudi educational policies exist along a continuum. Culture has been framed in different ways, ranging from a static entity to a dynamic and interactive one. Indeed, the findings revealed that within these policies, there were multiple framings of culture, linking it to religious and national scales. For example, there are references to Islamic culture, Saudi culture, and others' culture. These findings are echoed in other studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, which indicated that there are shifts in the treatment of culture in educational policies in Saudi Arabia (discussed above). Also, there were some framings of culture from an intercultural communication and interactional lens, although the term 'intercultural communication' has been hardly used, which does not yet align with calls for intercultural education to be promoted in such policies (Byram, 2014; Glisan, 2012; Liddicoat & Sarino, 2013).

The findings also show that the orientations towards culture in Saudi language education policies were inconsistent on different scales. That is, educational policy contents did not reflect the same interest in teaching culture. Rather, the findings reveal that the orientations to culture are more prevalent within the macro-level educational

policies than in the micro-level ones in Saudi Arabia. It shows how policies do not actually follow the same signification of the role of culture in ELE settings. That is, while there many references to the role of culture in macro-level Saudi educational policies, at the micro- level, culture is explicitly mentioned only once. This pattern aligns with findings from another recent study on the treatment of culture in Saudi ELE settings (Aldegether, 2020). Aldegether's (2020) study revealed that the manifestations of openness and tolerance towards 'other' cultures is still at the macro educational levels in Saudi Arabia, and that a possible explanation for this trend may be the relatively recent introduction of cultural education in the Saudi educational system.

Similarly, the findings reveal that the scope of culture, as portrayed in Saudi education policies, has expanded over time, although this is not reflected in all selected policies. Initially, culture was primarily linked to religion, but it has evolved to be associated with openness and tolerance towards 'others'. That is, the findings show that the purpose of learning culture in the educational policies has shifted from serving solely national and religious purposes to opening up 'local culture' to 'international cultures', or even, learning about English culture.

This finding algins with previous studies that suggested this shift might have happened owing to events that occurred in and beyond Saudi Arabia (Jamjoon, 2010; Elyas & Picard, 2010/2013; Elyas & Basalamah, 2012; Alshahrani,2016; Aldegether, 2020, discussed in the literature chapters above). These studies, in alignment with my study, found that the recognition of culture has shifted from focusing on religious, national culture to embracing intercultural perspectives and awareness. Particularly, the findings from these studies revealed that education in Saudi Arabia has traditionally been rooted in Islamic principles and Arab nationalism, limiting Western influence in education until the events of 9/11, which prompted changes in the educational contexts (Jamjoon, 2010; Elyas & Picard, 2010/2013; Elyas & Basalamah, 2012; Alshahrani,2016). These changes towards culture were recently reinforced by the Saudi Vision 2030, which calls for more tolerance and acceptance of diversity (Aldegether, 2020).

As for the second theme, within the selected educational policies there were some expectations that were placed on both the teachers and the students. This aligns with findings of other studies within Saudi settings (See for example, Hamdan-Alghamdi, 2014) and wider settings (See for example, Sun, 2013; Lavrenteva & Orland-Barak, 2015) that revealed such expectations in educational policies. Yet, the findings revealed

that the level of clarity with which the expectations from the teachers and the students were explicitly communicated within Saudi educational policies was inconsistent. For example, at the macro-level of Saudi educational policies, it is not directly explained how teachers and students are expected to treat culture within their language classrooms. Rather, they include generic statements showing the necessity of developing skills, knowledge, and awareness around culture. For example, in relation to its expectations for Saudi learners, the national framework of the EaTEC states that '*developing learners' awareness* of the Kingdom's efforts in promoting the values of … understanding between cultures' (EaTEC, 2018, p. 24, emphasis added). On the other hand, educational policies at the micro-level explicitly used words such as 'monitor', 'encourage', and more frequently the word 'discussion'. However, none of these policies have provided instructions or guidelines for how to teach/learn culture within language classrooms, which can be seen to have led to further inconsistencies in the treatment of culture within language teaching classrooms, a result that has been proposed in literature in the field (Block, 2014).

The findings show that there are various patterns in which culture is treated within language classrooms in Saudi Arabia, which agree with previous literature such as Van Lier's (2004) view of language classrooms and, later, in Guerrettaz and Johnston's (2013) view of textbook use. The treatment of culture in Saudi language classrooms, according to this study findings, was superficial, as more time and effort are given to language aspects and skills. This focus on language is acknowledged by several scholars, such as Kramsch (1993), Kidwell (2019) and Byram (2020), who point out that language teachers often prioritise linguistic aspects to discussions on cultural topics in their classrooms. Similarly, this study agrees with the findings of previous research in Saudi ELE settings, which revealed the focus of English language teaching/learning is on linguistic aspects, as opposed to having cultural discussions (See for example, Liton, 2012; Khan, 2013; Harvil, 2015, discussed above).

Thus, the findings show that primarily teaching practices were oriented towards enhancing students' pronunciation and grammar, increasing their vocabularies, and fostering their reading, listening and speaking skills at the expense of engagement with culture. With this being the case, culture and cultural references from the textbooks were recontextualised as general knowledge, or as implicit references for making distinctions between, or solidifying stereotypes about, people of various sociocultural backgrounds. When appearing, culture was largely generalised and normalised by the

teachers, in their own attempts to conduct successful teaching practices, as there were no guidelines on how to teach culture in the educational policies. Such attempts, as the findings show, were driven by various understandings of, and positionings and identifications towards culture, the students, and Saudi ELE settings more broadly.

7.3 Addressing the research questions: Insights from the findings

The research questions in this study were structured around one overarching question and several subsidiary questions that were intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the treatment of culture within Saudi ELE settings. The overarching question is: How is culture treated in Saudi Arabia in a HE ELE setting? In order to further delve into the complexity of the main question, the following questions were formulated:

(1) How is culture framed in explicit educational policies relating to ELE in this context?

(2) In what ways does culture appear to be discursively framed in the textbooks exercises observed in this setting?

(3) How are affordances to engage with culture realised (or not) in this setting?

(4) How do English language teachers and students understand and perceive culture, and position themselves in relation to it, in this context?

(5) What factors frame the treatments of culture in this setting?

In what follows, I will address these questions based on insights from the findings of this study.

As mentioned above, the overarching research question of the present study sought to explore how culture is treated in the selected Saudi HE ELE setting. The findings revealed that the treatment of culture is multifaceted and can vary significantly across different layers of Saudi English language educational ecosystems. There is a notable divergence in treatments of culture between policies and classroom practices. Furthermore, there are also differences in such treatment among educational policies, particularly institutional and national policies.

At the national level, the findings revealed that the educational policies demonstrate a commitment to raising cultural awareness among Saudi youth, especially in the recent years following the introduction of Saudi Vision 2030. This can be seen as an indicative of a recognition of the role of culture in language learning. It may also suggest an intention, at the national level, to integrate culture into language education. However, when we look at the institutional level, a different picture of how culture is treated emerges. The findings revealed that institutional policies and classroom practices appear to be predominantly focused on teaching language and linguistic aspects, muting culture and cultural references. Discussions on cultural themes within the confines of these language classrooms, thus, appeared to be marginalised and blocked, which resulted in reduced opportunities for students to develop an understanding of the cultural aspects intertwined with language in their classrooms.

Addressing the first subsidiary research question, which focuses on the framings, orientations, and expectations in relation to culture in Saudi ELE policies, the findings unveiled a variety of discourses and dimensions of culture manifested in the educational documents. They revealed a multiplicity of perspectives on culture within ELE, reflecting the complexity and layered nature of treating culture in educational documents in Saudi Arabia.

The findings showed, first, a spectrum of conceptualisations in the educational policies, ranging from essentialist to non-essentialist perspectives. Furthermore, it revealed various expectations from the students and the teachers in relation to culture. As for the students, the findings of this study revealed that policies have included various expectations. Some policies expected learners to acquire cultural awareness in addition to language proficiency. Conversely, other policies appeared to focus on linguistic aspects by solely focusing on teaching language and promoting learners' language skills. The findings also revealed that the expectations set for teachers varied in educational policies. National policies, for example, tend to encourage teachers to promote cultural awareness among their students, highlighting the importance of tolerance, acceptance, and moderation. However, institutional policies predominantly urge the teachers to concentrate on teaching language and language skills, seemingly overlooking the cultural aspects of language teaching.

In addressing the second subsidiary research question about the dimensions and discourses in the selected classroom materials, the analysis has revealed a complex

web of cultural dimensions and discourses that are available for teachers and students to engage with. The analysis revealed various dimensions, ranging from products and practices to perspectives and communities. Similarly, visual references, while diverse in some aspects, did highlight certain biases in terms of gender, age, and race. For example, male actors were represented more prominently than their female counterparts, and their roles were noticeably more diverse. Similarly, white actors were given prominence over other actors, both in frequency and in diversity of roles. Such dimensions and discourses, far from being passive pieces of information, invite teachers and students to delve deeper, to question, discuss and engage with the content actively.

In answer to the third subsidiary research question, which targets how the participants utilise and engage with culture in their classrooms, the findings revealed two distinct practices with regards to culture in the selected ELT setting. The first practice type observed was the avoidance of culture as a central pedagogical focus. In such practice, the primary emphasis of the teachers was language teaching, including teaching of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and reading skills. In the second type of practice, even when it was not the explicit focus of the lesson, culture was recontextualised into specific forms. These forms included presenting culture as a declarative knowledge, positioning culture as a divisive factor, and generalisations and normalisation of culture.

Turning to the fourth subsidiary research question, which explores how participants conceptualise, perceive the role of, and position themselves in relation to culture, the analysis of interview data shows that the participants had various conceptualisations, perceptions, and positionings towards culture. Firstly, concerning conceptualisations of culture, the findings revealed that, like in the educational documents, participants' understanding of culture demonstrated a range of views on culture, from essentialist to non-essentialist. Secondly, with respect to participants' perceptions about the role of culture in their classrooms, the findings revealed a significant contradiction. On the one hand, some participants emphasised the importance of opening discussions on culture, signifying its integral role in their language teaching/ learning. On the other hand, some participants, mostly teachers, did not assign similar value to culture, viewing it instead as an additional, optional, and distracting element that can be learned outside their classrooms, distinct from the language. Thirdly, in terms of their positionings towards culture, the participants varied in their self-identifications. While some considered

themselves solely as language learners or teachers, others viewed themselves as both learners and teachers of both language and culture.

Lastly, the findings addressed the final subsidiary question, which sought to identify the factors framing the treatments of culture in the selected setting, found in the collected data. The findings revealed a spectrum of factors, ranging from 'microsystem' factors, such as personal preferences and expectations, to 'macrosystem' ones, such as religious affiliations and beliefs, cultural adherence and identifications, educational policies and requirements, and wider sociocultural and political aspects.

7.4 Limitations

The limitations of this study vary from contextual to methodological. One of the limitations was related to the micro settings of the study. My study was intended to explore the negotiations of cultural references within the classrooms, focusing on the instances where both teachers and students actively engage in discussions about cultural references, sharing their diverse perspectives and individual experiences. However, the reality of the observed classroom environment presented a limitation. The observation of the classroom dynamics revealed that classrooms interactions were predominantly led by the teachers with limited contributions from the students' side, which contrasted with my initial assumption, based on wider trends in Saudi education, and the materials being used in the class. This scenario diverged from anticipated balanced ecological interaction, where both teachers and students co-create the learning environment through shared experiences and negotiations. By not fully capturing these balanced interactions, the present study may have missed out on understanding the complete ecological fabric of the classroom, particularly in terms of 'relaxed' cultural discussions. In particular, the study would have been designed differently if I had sought to understand a situation where affordances to engage with culture were not being engaged to the extent that data show here. In the end, the narrative and approach of the thesis had to be adapted to account for what was happening in the field, which was interesting but not fully planned from the beginning.

Another contextual limitation is related to the scope of the study, taking into account its theoretical perspective. Ecological perspectives acknowledge that the treatment of culture in any ELE settings is influenced by various ecological factors that surround those specific settings, as discussed above. Although, this study was deeply rooted in

sociocultural, educational settings in Saudi Arabia, there were certain ecological elements and stakeholders that were not explored in relation to the treatment of culture. Specifically, influential spheres such as family, friends, and wider social networks, which play a significant role in shaping cultural perspectives and practices, were not included in the study scope. Furthermore, in a setting like Saudi Arabia, religious texts and teachings, rules, and their localised realisations act as a de facto policy framework, often impacting educational guidelines. These religious dimensions cannot be overlooked, as they have the potential to direct classroom practices, especially if the is a perceived conflict between classroom content and local religious rules, laws, and beliefs.

Additionally, a limitation arises from the exclusion of policymakers at wider ecological scales, including educational ones. The roles of these policymakers are crucial in shaping and influencing the treatment of culture withing educational frameworks. Recognising the ecological theory's emphasis on the interconnected nature of various environmental factors, and the complex interplay between the individuals and their surrounding environments, the omission of these elements might present a limitation in providing a holistic view of the treatment of culture in Saudi ELE settings.

As for the methodology, in addition to the limitations related to the research instruments used in this study (see Section 4.5), one more limitation, given the qualitative nature and the interpretive approach of the study, was the notion of researcher subjectivity. Haven and Van Grootel (2019) note that 'every result in a qualitative design is one that is an interpretation, subjective; it is influenced by the lens through which the researcher has interpreted the data' (p. 243). Haven and Van Grootel highlighted that in qualitative research designs, each finding emerges as an interpretation, inherently subjective, shaped through the researcher's unique lens. Thus, having in mind this study' ecological perspective, the interplay between my background, and 'shared' sociocultural and religious contexts with the participants could mean that this lens is not isolated but rooted in a shared environment, despite my efforts to maintain neutrality in this study by relying on the participants' accounts and experiences, and using their actual or double checked translated utterances.

Another limitation is related to the selection of one chapter from each textbook. The focus on one chapter, though useful for an in-depth exploration of multiple affordances available for teachers and students to engage with in their classrooms being observed,

does not capture the full diversity and range of cultural content present across the entire textbook. This limitation implies the findings may not fully represent the breadth of cultural teaching affordances available in the wider spectrum of the selected textbook. This decision was made so that the textbook analysis and teaching observations were aligned and integrated, as it was not my intention to look for answers in the textbook, but to understand potential affordances and themes that might be realised in the classrooms or in participants' perceptions. Future research could incorporate a more extensive analysis of entire textbook to provide a more comprehensive view of how culture is framed, and perhaps integrate that with observations of teaching over time, covering more aspects of the materials used.

In the following section, I will shed more light on the implications of this study for future research.

7.5 Implications of the study

The findings of this study provide significant implications for various aspects of language education and, more precisely, ELE within, and beyond, Saudi Arabia. These implications are not only confined to the theoretical elements concerning the treatment of culture in language education settings, but have an impact on practical applications, such as policy formulation, the evolution of teaching methodologies and strategies, and the enrichment of teacher training programmes. Such findings are useful for stakeholders looking for harmonising their strategies with the latest insights in the educational domain. Moreover, this study serves as a catalyst, stimulating further exploration of the treatment of culture.

In analysing educational policies with regard to ELE, it became evident that our understanding and interpretation of 'culture' and its role in language educational settings is not just about knowledge or content. Rather, it is interwoven with our understandings of and orientations to culture, and our expectations of both the teachers and the students. The findings revealed that there were discrepancies between educational policies at various levels in regard to the treatment of culture in ELE settings. Such discrepancies should not be seen as mere oversights. Rather, they reflect deeper conceptual divergence and potential misunderstanding about the intrinsic relationship between culture and language in language education settings. Thus, this study

reinforces earlier calls for a more cohesive, integrated, and informed approach to policy-making, especially in promoting cultural competence and awareness as an integral element of language education (Kramsch and Zhu Hua, 2016).

The findings also suggest that ensuring that education policies align with each other is crucial. This alignment does more than streamline top-down processes. It would help ensure that the philosophical underpinnings of teaching practices at various educational ecosystems resonate with broader national aspirations and visions for education in Saudi Arabia. This would point to an overarching need for crafting policies that are both coherent across and through educational ecosystems and sensitive to the nuanced demands of integrating culture into language teaching.

Furthermore, this study sheds light on the significant role and implications of 'forbidden' or culturally sensitive topics within Saudi ELE settings. The findings suggest that teachers often navigate complex cultural and ideological constructs, where certain topics may be deemed 'haram' (forbidden) and thus carry a profound weight in classroom dynamics. This scenario presents context-specific challenges, as teachers must balance pedagogical goals with cultural sensitivities. In some cases, as the data indicated, a student's perception of a topic as haram could significantly challenge a teacher's authority or the flow of a lesson, thus giving students an unusual form of power in these settings. For example, one of the teachers mentioned that he was informed by the administration to avoid opening discussions about sensitive issues like music as some students complained about this matter. Teachers need to know and be trained on how to sensitively navigate these cultural and ideological elements in their classrooms, ensuring a respectful and effective learning environment. This emphasises the need for explicit guidance within these educational policies on how to integrate culture into language teaching. A prescriptive approach towards appropriate integration of culture into language teaching would not work, as implied in this study. Instead, policy makers could develop teaching frameworks and guidelines for teachers to open discussions on cultural issues in their classrooms. This points to the need for future research that delves deeper into how teachers and policy-makers can effectively address and incorporate these culturally sensitive topics into language education, enhancing understanding without disrupting classroom harmony or power dynamics.

As a final implication regarding policy making, the findings suggest that the limited duration of lessons often leads to avoidance of crucial discussions on culture. This

underscores the need for education policy makers to prioritise a holistic approach to LE. By recalibrating the emphasis between pure language instruction and cultural incorporation, we could create a classroom atmosphere conducive to in-depth cultural discourse. Such a shift does not diminish the value of language instruction; instead, it acknowledges that successful language learning is deeply intertwined with discussions about learners' practices and perspectives.

In addition to policy making, this study offer insightful implications for refining teaching practices and reshaping teacher training programmes. A notable finding was the perception of culture, especially among teachers, as merely an added element, one that might be relegated to extracurricular settings and activities. Such perspectives could stem from a limited view of the interplay between culture and language among the participants, and appeared to have had an impact on the teaching practices in the observed classrooms. The findings of this study could be seen as an encouragement for teachers (and students) to broaden their knowledge about the role culture in their language teaching (and learning) practices, and find suitable ways to integrate it into their classrooms. It would also inspire the teachers to tailor a pedagogy that considers the crucial role of culture in their language classrooms by shifting their focus from merely language to opening discussions for their students to share their experiences and beliefs.

The findings also offered some insights for teacher training programmes. The data revealed that there was an emergent teaching pattern suggesting that many teachers perceive language as a set of set linguistic forms, often overlooking its deeper ties with complex sociocultural practices and beliefs. This was accompanied by implications for outlooks, with native-speakerism appearing in some teachers' accounts, perhaps encouraged by the lack of dialogue and broader cultural insights in the class environment, and practices, with teacher-centredness and a focus on correct answers being a feature of much observation data.

Additionally, it was revealed that some English language teachers, especially those unfamiliar with specific sociocultural practices within the settings, often struggled with effectively incorporating discussions of culture in their curriculum, often citing students' lack of interest, or anxieties over how engagement with culture might be received by students and the wider institution. There also appeared to be a misalignment between

classroom practices and the educational policies concerning cultural integration, suggesting a potential conflict in understanding and applying policy guidelines.

Drawing on these findings, it becomes evident that teacher training programmes have to play several roles. First, the findings highlight the need for training programmes to foster a deep understanding of interrelationship between language and culture. Training programmes should emphasise that language is not merely a set of linguistic forms, but is deeply rooted in complex sociocultural practices and beliefs. The findings also suggest the necessity of equipping teachers with tangible and achievable strategies to effectively be able to open discussions about culture in their classrooms. This is of great significance, having in mind that there are English language teachers who are not familiar with Saudi sociocultural practices. The findings highlight the need for training programmes to address discrepancies among Saudi educational policies in treating culture, and prepare teachers to be able to align their classroom practices with policy guidelines, while still taking into account the diverse learning needs of their students, especially in relation to culture.

As a final implication, the findings of this study also suggest several avenues for future research. The findings of this study revealed discrepancies within policies across various ecological scales, as well as between policies and actual teaching practices regarding the treatment of culture at various ecological levels, and also between policies and ELT practices regarding the treatment of culture. Such inconsistencies raise pertinent questions about their underlying causes. Drawing on an ecological perspective, we could posit that the complexities inherent in the broader educational ecosystems, including communications among micro- and macro- systems, might contribute to these gaps. Furthermore, literature on educational reform and change suggests that factors like rapid policy changes without adequate application and consideration of various scales that tap into education, limited professional development for teachers, and misalignments between curriculum design and assessment might also contribute to these policy-practice gaps (Scott et al., 2016). Hence, future research could delve deeper into exploring these potential factors, aiming not only to understand the roots of such discrepancies but also to suggest solutions to bridge them.

7.6 Final remarks

The origins of this study are rooted in my curiosity about culture and how it is treated in ELT classrooms. This curiosity resonated with me as an English language student, teacher, and, later, continued to underpin my academic pursuits and framed the direction of my PhD journey. It also motivated me to delve deeper and broaden my understanding of the complexity of the notion of culture itself and how it is constructed. Based on such understanding, I explored the dynamics of culture within ELT classrooms, leaning on an ecological perspective and utilising a qualitative approach. The ecological perspective adopted in my study allowed me to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the complexity and non-linearity of the treatment of culture in ELT classrooms. In the same vein, the utilisation of a qualitative approach, which was a new experience for me, proved to be offering a foundation to deeply delve into the complexity of ELT classrooms from an ecological perspective. More importantly, it helped me to develop my skills as a qualitative researcher.

Additionally, conducting this qualitative study has had lasting benefits for my professional and personal life. The new insights that emerged from reading literature, observing classrooms, and interviewing teachers and students led me to question my teaching practices. Before I started this study, although I was aware of the role of culture, my teaching was, as with most teacher participants, concerned with formal aspects of language and associated skills, with a feeling that students were not motivated to engage with culture too directly or overtly in their English classes. However, after I conducted this study, I have realised that some students were interested in engaging in discussions about culture, and sharing/hearing about personal experiences in their classrooms. Although this is not to be generalised, it motivated me to consider opening discussions about culture, while appreciating students concerns, as my findings revealed. In addition, this study opened my eyes to new factors that impact on teachers' treatment of culture, and made me aware and prepared for them. Time is an example of an influential factor; that is, the findings of this study emphasised the importance of planning lesson times in a way that allows for having discussions about culture while satisfying other educational requirements.

Conducting qualitative research that draws on an ecological perspective, although very challenging sometimes and requiring me to deeply delve into the complexity of classroom interactions, and teachers and students perceptions and experiences,

enhanced my understanding not only of the researched setting but also of everyday life. It was highly beneficial for me to have culture and how it is constructed as the focal point of this study. Indeed, the research journey has helped me understand the complexity of culture, and led me to appreciate diversity among people in general. However, despite the numerous insights and valuable lessons that I gained from conducting this study, I regard this to be the beginning for me, and my curiosity about culture and its treatment within ELE settings is far from satisfied.

Appendix A   Interview questions

Teachers:

1. How would you define culture in general and in your teaching of English language?

2. To what extent you think having discussions about culture is important in your classrooms?

3. What do you think about the images in the lesson you had? Were they suitable for Saudi male students? did you feel hesitant to have discussions with you students about them?

4. What do you think about playing music inside your classrooms? Do you listen to music in general? Why/why not?

5. What made you open/avoid having discussions about culture in your classroom?

Students:

1. How would you define culture in general and in your learning of English language?

2. To what extent you think engaging in discussions about culture is important in your classrooms?

3. What do you think about the images in the lesson you had? Were they suitable you? did you feel hesitant to participate in discussions about them?

4. What do you think about playing music inside your classrooms? Do you listen to music in general? Why/why not?

5. What made you participate/avoid engaging in discussions about culture in your classroom?

Appendix B   Spoken data: Coding and thematisation

Classroom Observations	Codes 'what happens in classrooms'	Codes 'what happens to culture'	Themes
COR3M1 (Reading 3, Page 70)			
T: ok then, let's start. Ah, go to page number seventy. You have pictures and you have, you know, statements, four pictures and four statements, match each picture to the correct description. Ok, who can read number one, *((looking at S1))* yes please, read number one.	Focus on reading		
S1: eh, a tradition is something that people in a specific place have done or believed for a long time. eh, it is a tradition to drink tea in the afternoon in England.	T asks S2 to read the second statement 'reading'	Declarative knowledge	
T: Ok, um, which picture you think,	Reading		
Ss: number four			
T: is matching this statement, eh this description?	T explains meaning of the chapter title 'Vocabulary'		
Ss: four, four, four, four, number four, number four			
T: Ok, come to the next one, yes, the next one is done for you, the third one, yes, please, who can? *((looking at S2))* Yes			
S2: society is a large group of people who live in the same area and have the same ideas about how to live. eh, in many societies children begin school around age five.	T focuses on vocabulary		Muting/Re contextualising culture in classrooms
T: ok, which picture you think, eh.	pronunciation		
Ss: two, two.			
	Reading		

T: Two, ok, eh, the last statement, *((looking at S3))* yes please. S3: to fit in is to be able to live in an easy and natural way with other people. I fit in with my brother's friends. They like playing soccer too. T: OK, it [this statement] gives us the definition of, eh, what is the meaning of to fit in, yes, it says, to fit in, is to be able to live in an easy and natural way with other people. Ok then, it means you have some type of acceptance, you feel comfortable living with other people. You do not have a problem for them having some other values or other, eh, some other beliefs, traditions, etc. Ok, which picture you think, eh, is matching this statement? Ss: three, three, three T: Yes, three? Ss: yes T: ok, yes, you are right. Ok, come to the next page, seventy one, match each sentence to the correct picture, we also have, how many pictures? Ss: four T: four, yes, one is done for you. Ok, number one, who can read it? *((talking to the students))* So please, just give more attention to the words, which are in bold. There are some words written in bold. Just try to understand the meaning of each. Ok who can read number one, *((looking at S4))* yes please. S4: a popular fashion trend is to wear, eh, joans. Ss: jeans, jeans	pronunciation T corrects pronunciation by reading loudly Focus on vocabulary Pronunciation	 normalised	

T: A POPULAR FASHION TREND IS TO WEAR JEANS. Ok? … Yes, which picture you think? Ss: last picture T: last one, right. Ok, number two, *((looking at S5))* yes please. S5: its human nature to laugh when others do. T: yes, which one you think? Which picture? Ss: two, the second one. T: second picture, ok, nice, nice, yes please, who can read number three? *((looking at S6))* Yes, please. S6: in my culture, everyone learns to eat with chi, eh, chipstick. Ss: chopsticks T: CHOPSTICKS S6: chopsticks T: yes, IN MY CULTURE, EVERYONE LEARNS TO EAT WITH CHOPSTICKS, um, ok. *((looking at the picture))* From where, you think, this one is from?	Pronunciation	declarative knowledge normalised	

Ss: Asia T: yes, from? Ss: Asia T: from? Ss: china T: CHINA, maybe china where people eat by using chopsticks Ss: South Korea T: maybe China, so you know now that you can know people by their culture, yes, that's it. ok then this is the meaning of culture, this is how people fit in. *((looking at the picture))* so she learns how to eat by using chopsticks. Number four; who can read? *((looking at S6))* yes S6: I feel lonely at my school. T: I FEEL LONELY AT MY SCHOOL. Yes, which picture? Ss: three, three T: yes, ok, it is true, it is true. so in every culture people have their own rules, their own ways, their own traditions, their own instructions that they teach their people to follow.	Teacher's personal knowledge	normalised	

Appendix C Consent forms and participants' information sheet

C.1 Classrooms observations consent form

Study title: Investigating the Enactment and Negotiation of Cultural Representations in ELT Classrooms in a Saudi University

Researcher name: Jaber Hassan Altheebi

ERGO number: 64579

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (*20/04/2021 /Version:1*) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time for any reason without my participation rights being affected.	
I understand that my participation in the classroom observation will be audio recorded.	
I understand that should I withdraw from the study then the information collected about me up to this point may still be used for the purposes of achieving the objectives of the study only.	
I understand that identifying details will be removed from the research data and it will be deposited in the University of Southampton repository so that it can be used for future research and learning.	

Name of participant (print name)……………………………………………………………………………

Signature of participant…………………………………………………………………………………….

Date……

Name of researcher (print name)……………………………………………………………………………

Signature of
researcher ………………………………………………………………………………….

Date……

Appendix C

C.2 Interviews consent form

Study title: Investigating the Enactment and Negotiation of Cultural Representations in ELT Classrooms in a Saudi University

Researcher name: Jaber Hassan Altheebi

ERGO number: 64579

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I agree to take part in the interviews/ focus groups and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time for any reason without my participation rights being affected.	
I understand that my participation in the interviews/focus groups will be audio recorded.	
I understand that should I withdraw from the study then the information collected about me up to this point may still be used for the purposes of achieving the objectives of the study only.	
I understand that I should keep the content of the conversation confidential.	
I understand that identifying details will be removed from the research data and it will be deposited in the University of Southampton repository so that it can be used for future research and learning.	

Name of participant (print name)……………………………………………………………………

Signature of participant……………………………………………………………………………….

Date…………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………

Name of researcher (print name)……………………………………………………………………

Signature of
researcher ………………………………………………………………………………….

Date……………………………………………………………………………………………………

C.3 Participants' information sheet

Study Title: Investigating the Enactment and Negotiation of Cultural Representations in ELT Classrooms in a Saudi University

Researcher: Jaber Hassan Altheebi

ERGO number: 64579

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

First of all, I am a PhD student in applied linguistics and English language teaching at the University of Southampton, United Kingdom. This study is for the completion of my PhD programme. It primarily aims to investigate ELT teaching practices in relation to culture. In particular, the questions asked in this study related to ways in which you discuss cultural content inside the classrooms. Other questions will be to explore your views and understanding of culture and its role in ELT classrooms. The findings of this study will help provide informed decisions towards ELT practices in relation to culture in Saudi Arabia.

Why have I been asked to participate?

This study aims to investigate classroom practices in relation to culture. Regardless to what culture you identify yourself with, the reason you have been selected for this study is because you are a classroom participant. Thus, your participation in classroom discussions and later in follow-up interviews/ focus groups will help this study achieve its goals.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in this study, your classroom will be observed using audio recorders and taking field notes. The number of observational sessions will depend on the amount of participation; but should not be more than three times. Then, you will take part in a follow-up interview/ focus group so you could comment on your practices inside the classroom and mention the factors that, you think, influence your discussion and negotiation of culture. In addition, there will be general questions about your views

towards culture and its role in language classrooms. The interviews/ focus groups will take about one hour and will be conducted on campus. The interviews/ focus groups will only be audio recorded. Students can still take part in the classroom observations even if they do not to be interviewed.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

Taking part in this study may bring some benefits. You will have a chance to discuss with the researcher the contemporary views towards culture and its role in language teaching/learning. In addition, you will have an opportunity to talk about your own concerns regarding teaching/learning culture in Saudi Arabia. This may help improve your understanding of culture and accordingly inform your teaching/learning practices.

Are there any risks involved?

Observational sessions will always take place in regular classes according to your timetable. In addition, I will arrange with you a time and place to conduct the follow-up interviews/focus groups. During the interviews/ focus groups, I will comply with any COVID mitigation requirements from the University or the government.

What data will be collected?

Data collected from observations will be focusing on how you enact and negotiate cultural content in your classrooms. Then, during the interviews, the data collected will include your explanations of your practices, views, understanding and concerns towards teaching/learning culture in your classrooms. The data will always be collected by me, the researcher, and then will be securely stored in the University of Southampton computer which is password protected. The data then will be deposited in the University of Southampton repository so that it can be used for future research and learning.

During the study, your identity will not be revealed. I may however store your contact details, i.e. email address, for the duration of the study so I could ask for some clarifications during data analysis process.

Will my participation be confidential?

The information I collects about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. I will be the only person to access the data till it is coded. When data is coded, the researcher will use pseudonyms so your personal information will remain confidential. The de-identified data will be deposited in the University of Southampton repository so that it can be used for future research and learning.

My supervisory team and other responsible members of the University of Southampton may be given access to the coded data for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your data. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part. The researcher will present you the consent form and participant information sheet and answer any concerns and questions you might have. You will have a week to decide whether to take part in the study.

If you are a student and do not want to take part in the study or parts of it, you can change the module or stay on the same module and I will not collect your data. Also, be informed that your participation is entirely voluntary and will have no effect on your marks in any module that you take.

What happens if I change my mind?

Taking part in the study is completely voluntary. You have the right to change your mind and withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without your participant rights being affected. You are always welcome to email me at "J.H.Altheebi@soton.ac.uk" including to let me know you want to withdraw.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent. The findings of this study will be written up in a thesis format for obtaining my PhD, and it may possibly be published and presented at conferences/workshops. In addition, you are welcome to ask for a copy of the research findings, in case you want to.

Where can I get more information?

In case you have any questions related to the study, you are welcome to contact me at J.H.Altheebi@soton.ac.uk or my supervisor at R.D.Baird@soton.ac.uk

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to me and I will do my best to answer your questions.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly-funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, 'Personal data' means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University's data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/ls/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University's policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this

research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller' for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 10 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal data necessary to achieve our research study objectives. Your data protection rights – such as to access, change, or transfer such information - may be limited, however, in order for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your personal data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University's data protection webpage (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page) where you can make a request using our online form. If you need further assistance, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer (data.protection@soton.ac.uk).

Finally, I would like to thank you for taking time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in this research.

Appendix D Trio Reading 3: Chapter 5

CHAPTER 5 How Do We Fit In?

- Spelling patterns for the different sounds of *t* and *t* with other letters
- Understand phrasal verbs
- Make inferences
- Present, present progressive, and present perfect

▲ **BEFORE READING** ▶ Oxford 2000 ✿ words to talk about how we fit into society

Learn Vocabulary

A. Match each picture to the correct description.

_____ A **tradition** is something that people in a specific place have done or believed for a long time.

It's a tradition to drink tea in the afternoon in England.

___1___ Your **values** are your thoughts about what is wrong and right.

I share many of the same values as my parents about money. We save our money.

_____ **Society** is a large group of people who live in the same area and have the same ideas about how to live.

In many societies, children begin school around age five.

_____ To **fit in** is to be able to live in an easy and natural way with other people.

I fit in with my brother's friends. They like playing soccer too.

B. Match each sentence to the correct picture.

1. A popular **fashion trend** is to wear jeans.

2. It's **human nature** to laugh when others do.

3. In my **culture**, everyone learns to eat with chopsticks.

4. I feel **lonely** at my new school.

Oxford 2000 🔑

Use the Oxford 2000 list on page 133 to find more words to describe the pictures on these pages. Share your words with a partner.

C. When you *follow* **someone or something, you do what someone or something says you should do. Write each collocation under the correct picture.**

follow a fashion trend   follow directions   follow traffic signs

1. _____   2. _____   3. _____

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Preview the Text

D. Look at the photos on page 74. Answer the questions. Use the bold words from pages 70–71.

1. What does the top photo show? _____

_____

2. What does the bottom photo show? _____

_____

3. What do you learn from looking at the two photos? _____

_____

E. Circle the best answer.

1. What will the text do?

   a. give directions to follow
   b. explain why people do something
   c. describe an event that happened

2. The first sentence of the text is "Fashion is everywhere, in homes, in architecture, but especially in clothing." What word will the writer discuss more?

   a. clothing
   b. architecture
   c. homes

3. The first sentence of the second paragraph is "To try on clothes is to try on another identity, to be someone different." Which word or phrase has the meaning *who or what someone is*?

   a. identity
   b. clothes
   c. try on

4. The first sentence of the third paragraph uses the phrase *developments in society*. What do you think is an example of a development in society?

   a. You buy a new shirt.
   b. Clothing stores also begin to sell products online.
   c. Your friend designs clothing.

Sounds of English

Spelling Connection

🔊 A. Listen to the different sounds the *t* makes in the words below.

   fit   tradition   nature   clothing

Notice the spelling pattern. Listen for /t/ in *fit*, the /ʃ/ in *tradition*, the /tʃ/ in *nature*, and the /ð/ in *clothing*. Note that *th* can also make the unvoiced /θ/ sound as in *think*. Use a dictionary to help you know when to use /ð/ or /θ/.

B. The following words are in the texts on pages 74 and 76–77. Write them in the correct column. Some words may belong in more than one column.

| action	architecture	particular	population	they
shirt	society	that	this	culture

/t/ in *fit*	/ʃ/ in *tradition*	/tʃ/ in *nature*	/ð/ in *clothing*

● Make Connections: Text to Self

A. Think about fashion. Complete the chart.

Questions	Your Answer
1. What is a popular fashion trend now?	
2. Do you follow fashion trends? Why or why not?	
3. What can you learn about someone from the clothes he or she wears?	
4. Do students and businesspeople wear similar clothes? Why or why not?	
5. What causes changes in fashion?	

B. Complete the web. List some of the things that affect fashion.

advertisements

Fashion
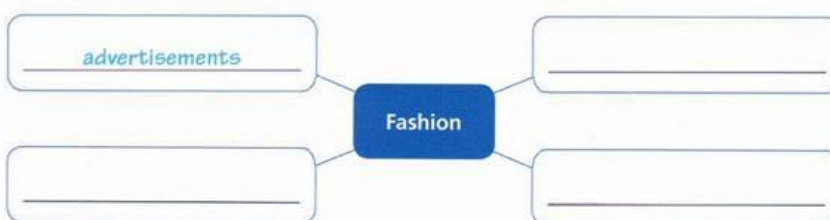
▲▲ DURING READING
▶ Vocabulary strategy: Understand phrasal verbs
▶ Reading strategy: Make inferences

◉ Reading 1

A. Use punctuation to help you read phrases. Give a short pause after a comma. Then go on to the next phrase. A period is used after a complete sentence or thought. Pause for a little longer between sentences. Listen to the text and focus on the pauses after commas and periods.

Why Is Fashion Important?

Stop and Think

What values does your fashion show?

By the 20th century, most people no longer wore handmade clothing. Fashion had changed. They dressed more simply and bought their clothes from stores.

Fashion is everywhere, in homes, in architecture, but especially in clothing. Ask yourself why you are wearing a particular color, length of pants, or design. Is it because you saw an advertisement or someone wearing something similar? Not everyone likes to say they **follow** fashion **trends**. However, it's **human nature** to want to **fit in**. Imagine walking into a room of people. Who do you talk to? Many people talk to the person wearing clothes like theirs. Some choose the person whose clothes they like. Whichever you choose, it is connected to human needs. The first and most important human needs are water and food, the things the body needs. The second most important are connected to feeling safe. The third is our deep need to **belong**. Fashion fits in with this need. Walk down the street and look at the clothes people wear. The clothes show who they are. They show the group the person connects with. Is it a businessman in a business suit or a student in a T-shirt and jeans? You can learn a lot about a person from his or her clothes. What do each of these people do? What do they value?

To try on clothes is to try on another identity, to be someone different. With our clothing, we tell the world about ourselves and the groups we identify with. Everyone follows fashion. Even if you don't follow fashion trends, what you choose to wear shows your **values**. What fashions are we following? Fashion is connected to **culture**. There are groups who have worn the same styles for hundreds of years. These people follow the **traditions** of the past. Other people try out new designs.

Often, developments in **society** change fashion. In the 18th century, wealthy men wore bright colors of silk and velvet. However, in the 20th century, they wore more standard, plain clothing. It was the fashion of business. Designers made these clothes so men could move and work easily. Fashion also is connected to society. As society changes, fashion changes too. For instance, most people no longer have their clothes individually made for them. Due to this, we all buy clothing from many of the same stores. This doesn't mean we don't have choices. Walk down the street of any big city and you'll see something new. But even if it's new, it fits in with a group or belief. That's why we choose to wear it. We want to be accepted in that group. We want to be seen as young, rich, or smart. Fashion will continue to change as society does. And what we wear will too because as humans we have a deep need to belong.

B. Read the text aloud. Think about pausing after commas and periods.

Check Your Understanding

C. Write *T* (true) or *F* (false). Rewrite false statements to be true.

1. __F__ Following fashion is not connected to fitting in.
   Following fashion is connected to fitting in. _____

2. _____ The need to belong is the most important human need.
   _____

3. _____ The clothes you wear show the group you belong to.
   _____

4. _____ Changes in society and business affect fashion.
   _____

Vocabulary Strategy

Understand Phrasal Verbs

Some verbs in English are phrases. They include a verb and a preposition.

verb   preposition

*It's human nature to want to **fit in**.*

The meaning of the phrasal verb is different from the individual words. Most phrasal verbs can be replaced by another verb that means the same thing. *Fit in* means "belong."

Phrasal verbs are used often in English, so it's good to know their meanings. Follow these steps to help you.

1. Read the sentence and identify a verb + preposition. Note that not all verbs and prepositions are phrasal verbs. For example, in "I walked into the room," *walked into* is not a phrasal verb—*into the room* tells where the person walked.

2. Look for a verb + preposition that has a different meaning from the verb. Think of another verb that could be used in the phrasal verb's place.

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D. Underline the phrasal verb in each sentence.

1. With our clothing, we tell the world about ourselves and the groups we identify with.

2. To try on clothes is to try on another identity, to be someone different.

3. Other people try out new things.

4. Can you figure out why fashion changes?

5. Did you pick out a new coat yet?

Appendix D

Reading Strategy

Make Inferences

Readers make inferences to help connect what they are reading to what they know. Making an inference can help you better understand the writer's ideas.

1. Read a sentence or group of sentences.

2. Think about why the writer included this information. What is the writer saying? What can you learn?

3. Make an inference to help you understand the writer's idea. Think of what you know and how it connects to the text.

   Not everyone likes to say they follow fashion trends, but it's human nature to want to fit in.

Question: *Why don't people want to say they follow fashion trends?*

Inference: *I think the writer is saying that people like to be seen as different.*

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E. Match each question to an inference based on the text on page 74.

Questions

1. __c__ Why do some people try out new designs?

2. _____ Why do people wear different clothes to different places?

3. _____ Why do people wear styles from the past?

4. _____ Why is trying on clothes like trying on a new identity?

Inferences

a. People want to be accepted where they go. They change their clothes so they fit in.

b. People look at your clothes and form an idea of what group you belong to. This might change your idea of yourself.

c. People want to show that they are creative and they like change.

d. People want to show they value traditions.

⦿ Reading 2

A. Read the text on your own.

What Is Culture Shock?

According to the United Nations Population Fund, in 2013, 232 million people, 3.2 percent of the world's population, lived outside their home country. In 2009, the United States and the United Kingdom were the most popular places to move to. However, people also leave these places. In 2013, the United Kingdom lost 400 citizens a day. Many of these people were college educated and looking for other job and

social opportunities. There's a phrase for the effect making your home in another **society** and **culture** has on you: *culture shock.* A shock is a bad surprise, but that's not actually how most people experience culture shock. Culture shock is when someone feels he or she doesn't **belong** in a new country. First, most people feel excitement at being in a new place: There are opportunities and possibilities. However, the second stage is different. People now notice how the new place is different from home. Everyday things like ordering food in a restaurant, shopping, and using the train are different. These small things can seem big. People get upset. It's **human nature**. They compare their new place to home. They think of home as better. When you know how to do things, like communicate in the language, it's easier. At this point, many people feel **lonely**. And feeling lonely can affect how you communicate with others. Lonely people often see other people as a danger. They don't trust them. As a result, they don't talk to others. There are people all around them, but they feel that they don't belong.

A university website gives tips for people to **follow** to help with culture shock:

(1) Do not think things will be like they are at home. How people do business and communicate and what times of day they eat are often different. (2) Talk to people. Show you want to learn about them and their culture. (3) Do not let one person's actions affect your idea of the whole society. (4) Understand that everyday things, such as how close people stand to one another, how people wait in line, and how long people pause in conversations, are different. For example, during conversations, most Americans do not let much time pass before they feel the need to start speaking. Other cultures are much more comfortable with pauses in conversation. People in different cultures have different **values**. Try to notice these things and understand the new culture you are in. You may want to connect with others from home. While it can be helpful to be with people from your country, try to identify with others. This doesn't mean you have to change who you are to **fit in**. Think about what you can share and what you can learn. If you concentrate on these things, then you can begin to feel less lonely. Maybe you are different, but you can be different and also belong.

Grammar in the Readings

Notice the present, present progressive, and present perfect in the readings.

Writers use present tense to talk about things that are true now.

*Fashion **is** everywhere, in homes, in architecture, but especially in clothing.*

Writers use the present progressive to describe something that is happening.

*Ask yourself why you **are wearing** a particular color, length of pants, or design.*

Writers use the present perfect to talk about something that happened in the past and is still happening.

*There are groups who **have worn** the same styles for hundreds of years.*

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for grammar practice

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Check Your Understanding

B. Complete the sentences to summarize the text on pages 76–77.

1. There are two stages of culture shock. In the first, people feel _____.

   In the second, people get _____. They feel _____.

2. There are four tips to help people with culture shock.

   a. Do not think that things _____.

   b. Communicate with others and _____.

   c. Do not let an individual's behavior _____.

   d. Know that many things _____.

3. The writer says that it can be good to _____ but

   _____.

Vocabulary Strategy: Understand Phrasal Verbs

C. Underline the phrasal verb in each sentence, and match it to a verb with a similar meaning.

1. __a__ Many people <u>look for</u> new job opportunities in other countries.

   a. seek

2. _____ Can you hang on a minute? I have to answer the phone.

   b. quit

3. _____ Don't give up. Living somewhere new is hard, but you can do it.

   c. wait

Reading Strategy: Make Inferences

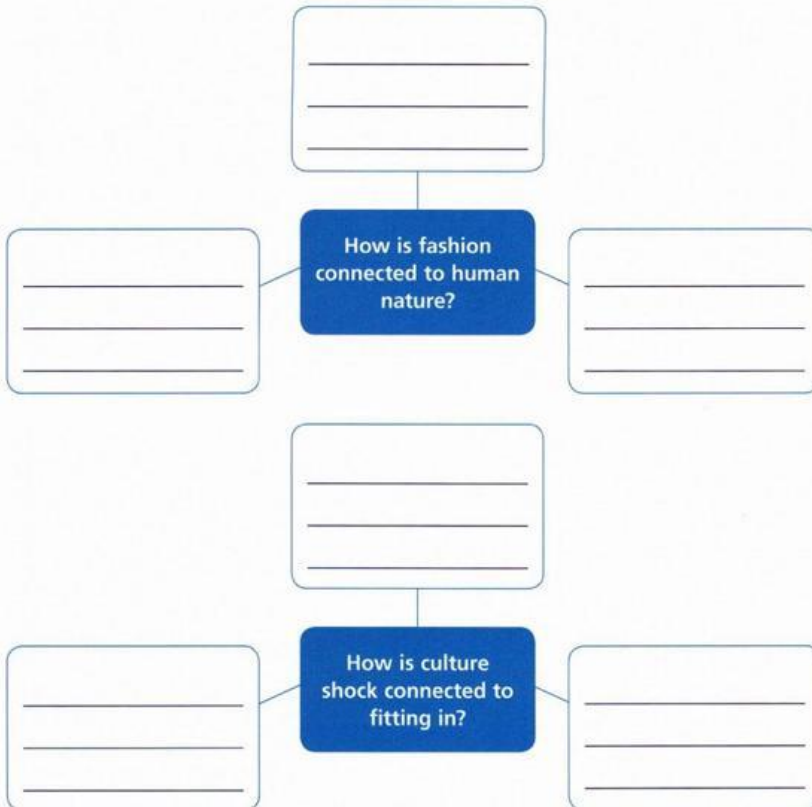**D. Match each question to an inference based on the text on pages 76–77.**

1. __b__ Why do people feel they don't belong in a new culture?

2. _____ Why isn't it good to let one person's actions affect your idea of a society?

3. _____ How does showing you want to learn about a new culture help you?

4. _____ What does the writer mean by "they don't trust them"?

Inferences

a. A society is more than just one person.

b. They don't make connections with the people there. They feel they are not part of the group.

c. You concentrate on new things and not just your feelings.

d. People believe that others are not good people.

◑ Make Connections: **Text to Text**

A. Both texts discuss human nature and fitting into society. Answer the questions. Look at the texts on pages 74 and 76–77 to help you.

How is fashion connected to human nature?

How is culture shock connected to fitting in?

B. The writers organize the texts in different ways. Read each description. Write *1* if it matches Reading 1 and *2* if it matches Reading 2.

1. _____ uses a numbered list

2. _____ defines a key word

3. _____ asks questions to connect to the reader

4. _____ gives statistics

5. _____ gives examples from history

6. _____ uses an *if-then* statement to show cause and effect

7. _____ ends with a prediction for the future

8. _____ purpose is to change the readers' behavior or actions

During Reading   79

AFTER READING

Summarizing and Retelling

A. Complete the sentences with the words from the box. Some of the words have to be changed to fit the sentences. For example, *tradition* has to be changed to *traditions*. Then read the paragraphs to a partner to retell the ideas.

Adjectives	Nouns	Verbs
human	culture	belong
lonely	fashion	fit
	nature	follow
	society	
	tradition	
	trend	
	value	

1. Some things are part of _____ _____. This means that everyone does or experiences these things. One of those things is the deep need to belong. We wear clothes to show the group we _____ in with. Sometimes people wear clothes to show they value _____ from the past. Other times people follow the newest _____ if they care about _____.

2. Many people experience _____ shock. This is when _____ is different from your home. Many people feel _____ in this situation. But there are tips you can _____. Understand that people have different _____. Focus on what you can learn about the culture. You may be different, but you still _____.

Word Partners

member of society

the rest of society

modern society

wider society

fit into society

GO ONLINE
to practice
word partners

B. Use the words from the chart in Activity A to discuss the topics below with a partner.

1. Talk about a fashion trend. Why do you think it happened? Why do you think people follow it? Why do you like or not like it?

2. Talk about culture shock. How might people act when they have culture shock? What other tips could help them?

Make Connections: Text to World

A. Do you agree or disagree with the writers? Check the statements you agree with, and then discuss your ideas with a partner.

1. _____ The clothes you wear show who you are.

2. _____ Fashion is important to people because they want to belong to a group.

3. _____ No one's clothes are really different. They fit into an idea or group in society.

4. _____ Learning about a culture can help you feel better.

5. _____ You can be different and still fit in.

B. Think about the two texts. Complete the chart to make predictions.

Now	In the Year 2065 (Future)
1. People wear _____.	1. People will wear _____.
2. _____ is having an effect on fashion.	2. _____ will affect fashion.
3. In 2013, 3.2 percent of the world's population lived outside their home country.	3. In 2050, _____ percent of the world's population will live outside their home country.
4. Many people leave home to move to the United States or Great Britain.	4. People will leave home to move to _____ and _____.

C. Both texts discuss ideas that are connected to a person's identity. What other things affect how you think about yourself? Complete the web with your own ideas. Look at the Oxford 2000 keywords on page 133 and find five words to help you.

my connection to traditions
_____ in my culture

_____
_____

Identity: What affects my idea of myself?

_____
_____

_____
_____

Chant

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