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**Students' Experiences of Learning English as a Foreign Language:
A Case Study of an Undergraduate EFL Programme at a Saudi University**

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**Submitted to the University of Sussex in fulfilment of the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy**

December 2017

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another university for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

Acknowledgements

The Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him — said “he would not be thankful to Allah, he who would not thank the people who bestowed favours upon him”. The list of people to whom I am indebted for the completion of this project is far too long to fit into the space I have available. My apologies go to all of those whose names deserve a mention yet go unmentioned here.

First and foremost, my sincerest gratitude goes to my supervisors, Professor Yusuf Sayed and Dr Andrew Blair, for their invaluable guidance, assistance and inspiration that have helped me grow both on an academic and a personal level, and have made the completion of this thesis possible. It goes without saying that I owe so much to my supervisor Yusuf; I can only find clichés to express the pleasure and the privilege I have had working with you. I have learnt so much from the experience, and I hope that our friendship and collaboration will continue for many years to come. Andrew Blair, my second supervisor: I would like to thank you for the encouragement and support you offered me from the early days of this project, and for all your contributions that have been critical to my work.

I would like to thank my parents, brothers and my beloved wife and daughter for their amazing support and prayers throughout my PhD journey. I would also like to thank the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, the Saudi Cultural Bureau in London and City University for their moral and financial support. I am also indebted to the Head of the European Languages Department at City University for granting permission for my study to take place in his department. I am immensely grateful to the lecturers and students who volunteered to take part in this research.

My gratitude is also extended to my dear friends Nasir Aba Alkhail, Saleh Algamdi and Majid Alrshoudi for their support and friendship throughout my candidature. Thank you for your direct or indirect support and input which has contributed to the success of this project.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
CAH	College of Arts and Humanities
CU	City University
DEL	Department of European Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
KAUST	King Abdul-Allah University of Science and Technology
KFUPM	King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MEP	Ministry of Economy and Planning
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoE-HE	Ministry of Education-Higher Education
NACCC	National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation
NCAHE	National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education
NES	Native English Speaking
NNES	Non-Native English Speaking
NTP	National Transformation Programme
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Thesis Summary

In the light of falling oil prices, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has launched a multifaceted vision for 2030 that seeks to modernise the country's economy and diversify its revenue base. A key goal of this vision is developing the country's education system in general and higher education in particular (Reardon, 2016; Vision2030, 2016). The government is determined to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all its citizens. Within this context, there is an increased focus on improving the quality of English language teaching and learning in higher education institutions and in the education system generally. However, the lack of essential linguistic and pedagogic skills amongst many Saudi graduates remains a major concern (Albaiz, 2016; British Council, 2016).

The aim of this thesis is to investigate students' learning experiences in an undergraduate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programme at City University (CU), KSA from three different perspectives. The first viewpoint draws on Bourdieu's notions of field, capital and habitus to examine the influences that CU as an institution has on teaching and learning in the EFL programme. The second perspective uses the concept of cultural capital to analyse the influence of family educational background on students' learning. The third perspective provides insights into the teaching approaches adopted by EFL lecturers and the effects these approaches have on students' learning. Thus, this study is guided by one main research question: **How do students experience learning in the undergraduate EFL programme at CU?**

The study uses a qualitative case study approach. Data was gathered from multiple sources: namely, semi-structured interviews with students and lecturers, observations, and a documentary review. The analysis is based on the three research sub-questions that guide this inquiry.

The key findings related to the first perspective highlight the ways in which CU's institutional policies and practices impact teaching and learning in the EFL programme. The analysis reveals that CU defines its capital as 'accessible higher education', which translates into large numbers of students enrolling in its colleges

and departments each year. As a result of this open admissions policy, the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) has been forced to lower its entry requirements to the EFL programme in order to accommodate the number of students. This has resulted in the admission of students who do not possess the minimum entry requirements, and has adversely affected the quality of education in the EFL programme, as manifested in relation to class size, student-teacher relations, the use of English in teaching, and assessment practices.

The second set of findings analyse the influence of family educational background on students' learning experiences. The findings indicate that this background plays an important role in students' success in the EFL programme. It was found that families with higher education backgrounds use their learning experiences and resources to support their children's education. The findings further demonstrate that students from families with no higher education background and a lack of cultural capital have low levels of English language competency. As such, many of them struggle with the linguistic and academic demands of the programme.

The third set of findings reveal the influence of teaching approaches on students' learning experience. The findings show a distinction between native English speaking (NES) and non-native English speaking (NNES) lecturers in relation to their teaching approaches and interactions with students. It was found that NNES lecturers adopt a teacher-centred approach in their teaching which minimizes students' interactions. Many students were critical of such practices and felt that it denied them the opportunity to develop their language skills. In contrast, NES lecturers use a student-focused approach and integrate communicative practices into their teaching. These lecturers emphasise the importance of building positive relationships with the students in order to facilitate their learning. Generally, students reacted positively to such practices and were more encouraged to participate in the classroom.

This study provides important insights into students' learning experiences in higher education in general and EFL programmes in particular. It contributes to existing debates and literature on EFL teaching and learning in higher education, particularly in KSA. The study also provides important suggestions for policy-makers to consider, and recommendations to CU and its faculty members, and for further research.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Higher education holds a special place in society. It has long been viewed as the producer of knowledge, the creator of leaders, the engine for the economy and considered critical for the wellbeing of society (Newman and Couturier, 2002). Throughout the world, higher education is commonly recognised as a key force for development and modernization. This places a huge demand on higher education and more importantly touches directly on questions of social and curricular relevance, equity, quality, global competitiveness and skills development (Altbach et al., 2009).

In this context, higher education has come to be at the forefront addressing concerns about the prosperity in many nations, and Saudi Arabia is no exception. The Saudi higher education sector has been undergoing unprecedented changes in the last decade (Ankari, 2013). The government has recognised, in both policy and practice, the necessity of developing its higher education system to global standards and significantly increasing equitable access and participation across a range of disciplines to support the social and economic growth of the country (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013; Alshayea, 2012). This movement toward global recognition focuses on improving learning outcomes, skills and dispositions that will address the needs of a modernized economy (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013).

This is accompanied by massive investment in higher education that reflects the government's ambition to compete in the global marketplace (Al-Awasat, 2011; Romani, 2009). This is exemplified in the expanding number of Saudi higher education institutions over the last decade, and the almost 160,000 Saudi students on scholarships worldwide (Alshayea, 2012). These developments often exert significant pressure on the core functions of higher education, including teaching and learning (Altbach et al., 2009; Trow, 2006). This means that the expansion of Saudi higher education and its expected growth in the coming years generates

concerns about the quality of teaching and learning and thus requires research about this, which this study aims to address.

1.2. Background and Rationale

In light of falling oil prices, the Saudi government has launched a multifaceted vision for 2030 that hopes to modernize the country's economy, diversify its revenue, and employ the young population. The *vision* – and the *National Transformation Program* (NTP) which flows from it – emphasises the importance of developing the country's education system in general and higher education in particular to achieve its ambitious goals (Reardon, 2016; Vision2030, 2016). The government intends to continue to invest in education and pays close attention to issues related to skills development, high quality education, refining the national curriculum, deepening the participation of parents in the education of their children, training teachers and educational leaders and redoubling the efforts to improve the outcomes of its higher education sector (Vision2030, 2016). To achieve these goals, the government has great expectations for its higher education institutions in supporting its policy ambitions. This places a great responsibility on institutions to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in its programmes.

This study is driven by three rationales. Firstly, the expansion of Saudi higher education has been on a mass scale, and it has occurred very rapidly. This imposes a challenge on its universities to improve the quality of their teaching and learning and to develop the necessary skills of their students. However, despite efforts made to improve the level of teaching and learning in this sector, there are ongoing concerns about the poor level of knowledge and skills of many of its graduates (Issa and Siddiek, 2012). Saudi universities have in particular received sustained international criticism over the quality of their teaching and learning standards in relation to skills development, teaching methods, curriculum development and the quality of its graduates (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). It is therefore essential to review the quality of teaching and learning in programmes provided by these institutions.

Secondly, within the framework of improving the quality of education, the focus on English language teaching and learning in the country's educational system has increased (Moskovsky and Alrabai, 2009). It is the only foreign language taught in Saudi schools and was previously only taught at intermediate and secondary levels. Nowadays, English is introduced as early as 4th grade, demonstrating the importance placed on the subject (Al-Seghayer, 2013; Al-Shannag et al., 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2006). However, there seems to be a consensus among language researchers about the low level of English proficiency of most Saudi students at almost every level of learning (Albousaif, 2011; Alrabai, 2010; Syed, 2003).

One important concern is the lack of essential linguistic and pedagogic skills amongst many teachers who graduate from English as Foreign Language (EFL) programmes (Albaiz, 2016; Al-Hazmi, 2007). This concern is obvious in the efforts by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to organise in-service EFL teacher training sessions in partnership with the US Embassy and the British Council to acquaint Saudi EFL teachers with modern teaching methods and to identify problems that affect their teaching (Al-Hazmi, 2007). Therefore, to improve the quality of the new generation of EFL teachers and specialists, it is imperative to investigate their learning experience in higher education.

Furthermore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) houses the two Holy mosques in Makkah and Madinah which Muslims from around the world come to visit. Muslims travel to these sites throughout the year to perform their pilgrimages (i.e. Umrah and Hajj). Currently, the number of visitors each year is around 8 million and is anticipated to increase to 30 million by 2030 (Vision2030, 2016). It is considered one of the largest mass gatherings in the world and English is the common language shared amongst these people (Mitchell et al., 2013). Therefore, higher education institutions in KSA have the responsibility of properly developing its students' language skills in order to communicate effectively with these visitors.

The final rationale originated from my own personal experience. As an English

language lecturer at the School of Education in CU and during my teaching experience, I was responsible for evaluating students' performance in their final semester practicum course. This provided a unique opportunity to observe and assess the students' language performance towards the end of their Bachelor's degree at the Department of English Language. In some cases, I was surprised by the low level of language competency some students had and since this was their final semester, there was little that could be done. I started to question the policies (e.g. entry requirements) put forward by the university and the Department of English Language. I also noticed that some of the best students were those that had support from their families (e.g. educational resources, travel) in developing their language skills. This experience offered a glimpse of the students' learning experiences at the EFL programme. This experience of interacting with students as they prepared to graduate from university made me wonder about their experiences of learning in higher education in general and the EFL programme in particular. Therefore, I decided to explore the students' experience of teaching and learning in the EFL programme at CU and the way in which it is impacted by the institutional influences, the educational background of the family and the pedagogical strategies used by the lecturers inside the EFL classroom.

1.3. Aim of the research

The aim of this study is to investigate students' learning experiences in an undergraduate EFL programme in a Saudi university. In order to accomplish this, the study adopts a sociological approach to examine the structural and agentic forces that affect the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme.

This study focuses on investigating students' learning experiences from three different perspectives. The first perspective uses the concept of institutional influences to understand how institutional policies and practices affect teaching and learning in the EFL programme and therefore students' learning experiences. Secondly, the notion of cultural capital is used to understand how the family's educational background influences the students' learning experiences. The final

perspective investigates the impact of teaching approaches adopted by lecturers on the students' learning experiences, and demonstrates how institutional influences and cultural capital are translated inside the EFL classroom where lecturers implement their teaching approaches, particularly in relation to native English speaking (NES) and non-native English speaking (NNES) lecturers.

This study is guided by one overarching question: **'How do students experience learning in the undergraduate EFL programme at CU?'** This question is further divided into three sub-questions:

1. How do institutional influences affect teaching and learning in the EFL programme?
2. How does the educational background of the family influence students' learning experiences in the EFL programme?
3. How do the teaching approaches adopted by lecturers affect students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom?

1.4. Overview of methodology

The study adopts a qualitative case study approach and draws on data gathered from semi-structured interviews, documentary review, and classroom observations. Documents were mainly collected from two sources: open access electronic documents published by the Saudi Ministry of Education-Higher Education division (MoE-HE) and CU (e.g. policy documents about the Saudi educational system, higher education, university policies) and printed documents collected from the administration of the university's Department of English Language (e.g. EFL programme design and aims).

Purposive sampling was used to select twenty-one students from the EFL programme for the interview process. Seven students from each year of the EFL programme (i.e. second, third and fourth year) were asked to volunteer for the

study. This was done to obtain a holistic understanding of the students' experiences throughout the programme. In addition, seven EFL lecturers of different ages and levels of experience were interviewed for the study, all of whom were teaching in different semesters. Three of the lecturers were native English speakers (NES) from the United Kingdom and the United States and the other four lecturers were Saudi nationals. Interviews with students and lecturers were carried out in the department and conducted in either Arabic or English. All interviews were audio-recorded (except for one lecturer who declined to be recorded), and transcribed, and interviews conducted in Arabic were firstly translated then transcribed.

In order to triangulate the interview data, classroom observations were conducted. I was given the opportunity to observe students and lecturers in their classroom settings and was occasionally asked to participate in classroom activities. This provided a better understanding of the nature of the students' social reality inside the classroom.

Data was collected over a period of three months (September to November 2014) and was later analysed. The software NVivo was used to organise the data into three main themes: the policy and practices of CU in relation to the EFL programme, the family's educational background, and the pedagogical strategies used by EFL lecturers in the EFL classroom.

1.5. Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of eight chapters. This first chapter outlines the research rationale, the overarching research question, an overview of the methodology, and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter Two introduces the context of the study. It begins with a description of the geographical, historical, economic, political and social context of Saudi Arabia. Next, the chapter discusses the country's K-12 public education system with a focus on EFL teaching at schools. After this, the higher education sector is discussed as

well as English language teaching in higher education. Then it introduces City University, The College of Arts and Humanities and the Department of English Language, with a detailed description of the EFL programme.

Chapter Three reviews the relevant literature in relation to EFL teaching and learning in higher education. It begins by reviewing different research perspectives about how students learning is conceptualised. This is followed by a review of the institutional influences in relation to higher education and the EFL programme specifically. Then it theorizes the notion of cultural capital to explain the influence of the family on students' learning experiences. After this, the chapter considers the different pedagogical strategies and their influence on students' learning experiences. It concludes with a discussion of the research questions and the framework of this study.

Chapter Four introduces the methodology of the study. It begins with a discussion of the epistemological and ontological position that informs the inquiry. The chapter then presents the case study as a research approach, the choice of data collection methods, approaches used for data analysis, sampling process, and the researcher's position. Then issues of trustworthiness are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations and limitations to the study.

Chapter Five presents the empirical findings of the institutional influences on the College of Arts and Humanities in general and the Department of English Language in particular. By doing so, it highlights how institutional policies and practices affect teaching and learning in the EFL programme.

Chapter Six uses the concept of cultural capital and presents the findings of the influence of the educational background of the family. The chapter specifically discusses how different forms of cultural capital (i.e. embodied, institutionalized and objectified) are transmitted to the students and its influence on their learning experiences.

Chapter Seven discusses the findings of the influence of lecturers' pedagogical strategies on the students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom. There is an examination of the two main teaching approaches commonly used in the EFL programme, namely, *teacher-centred* and *student-centred*. The chapter further uses the notion of nativeness and non-nativeness as an additional axis to analysis the teaching approaches adopted by lecturers in the EFL programme.

The final chapter concludes the thesis and discusses the findings of the study. It begins with a summary of the main findings in relation to each research sub-question. After this, the key themes relating to the main research question are addressed in order gain a holistic understanding of the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme. The contribution of the study is then presented. The chapter concludes by offering recommendations for future research, policy-makers and faculty members at the EFL programme, and reflections on my research journey.

Chapter Two: Context of the Study

This chapter introduces the context of the study. It begins with an overview of the geographical, historical, social and economic background of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The chapter then discusses the public education system in KSA, with a particular focus on English language teaching. After this, it discusses different aspects of Saudi higher education as well as the state of English language teaching and learning in higher education. The chapter continues by introducing the specific context of the study, namely City University (CU) and the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH). The final section concludes with a detailed description of the EFL programme offered by the Department of English Language at CU as well as its design and aims.

2.1. Saudi Arabia

The research project was conducted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is considered to be one of the largest countries in the Arabian Peninsula, comprising about 2,000,000 square kilometres. Located in the southwest corner of Asia, the Kingdom is at the crossroads of Asia and Africa. It is bordered by Iraq and Jordan to the north; the Arabian Gulf, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar to the East; and Yemen and Oman to the south. The Red Sea borders the entire western region and stretches about 1,760 kilometres (1,100 miles) while its Arabian Gulf coastline is roughly 560 kilometres (350 miles). The major cities in the country are Makkah, Jeddah, Medina and Riyadh, the capital of KSA.

According to the Saudi General Authority for Statistics (GaStat, 2016), the estimated population of KSA is over 31 million: 20 million Saudi citizens and 11 million foreign expatriates of different nationalities. KSA has a very young population, with approximately 47 per cent of its population are below the age of 30, and over 92 per cent are below 54 (GaStat, 2016).

Figure 1: Map of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/Saudi_map.png [accessed on 8 December 2016]

KSA is considered to be one of the most influential countries in the Arab and Islamic world (Al-Shammmary, 1998). Its status is derived from the fact that it is located in the birthplace of Islam, and possesses the two Holiest Mosques in the Islamic religion, therefore, the country is known as “the Land of the Two Holy Mosques”. Throughout the year, Muslims from around the globe travel to visit these two holy mosques to perform Hajj and Umrah (i.e. different forms of pilgrimage). Muslim visitors come from different cultural backgrounds and speak different languages and so it is essential for Saudi citizens to communicate with them through an international language such as English (Al-Shammmary, 1998).

The country was established in 1932 by the Al Saud family as an Arab Muslim state governed by Islamic law otherwise known as ‘Sharia’. Islam is the official religion and the constitution is based upon the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet Mohammed's Sunnah or tradition, and Arabic is the official language of the state. The Kingdom was founded by King Abdul-Aziz bin Abdurrahman al Saud as a monarchy and continues to be governed by his descendants today. Politically, KSA has no political parties and the country is governed by the Council of Ministers, led by the King, who is also known as *The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques* (Saudi National Portal

- SNP, 2017). The Council of Ministers represents 25 government ministries that are selected by the monarch and include members of the royal (Al Saud) family.

Furthermore, there is the Consultative Assembly also known as *Majlis Ash-Shura*. The Consultative Assembly is the legislative government branch that plays an advisory role, but has no power to pass laws (Majlis Ash-Shura, 2017a). As Article fifteen of the Shura Council Laws indicates, the role of the Consultative Assembly is to express its opinions on the government's general policies in relation to different issues such as security, finance, economy, education, international treaties and agreements, health, social affairs, and administration and human rights (Majlis Ash-Shura, 2017b). The king selects the one hundred and fifty members of the assembly for a four-year renewable term based on their experience and reputation. In 2011, King Abdul-Allah announced that women would be allowed to join the Consultative Assembly, and on 11 January 30 female members were appointed to join the assembly, thus accounting for 20% of the seats (Majlis Ash-Shura, 2017a).

In terms of religion, KSA is a mainly *Sunni* Muslim country. 85-90% of the Saudi population are believed to be *Sunni* Muslims and the rest 10-15% are *Shi'a* Muslims (Al-Qudaihi, 2009). The official form of *Sunni* Islam in KSA is also known as *Salafism* (supposedly called *Wahhabism*). It dominates all aspects of people's lives, beliefs, culture and customs. Islamic law is widely implemented in KSA and there is an inseparable bond between the people and their religion. For example, all the businesses must close at prayer times and most people head to the mosque to perform their prayers.

Socially, the Saudi population is characterised by a high degree of cultural and religious homogeneity and by an equally high degree of social stratification. The majority of the population are Arab (90%) and 10% are of African and Asian origin (GaStat, 2016). There are only a few studies that have examined the class structures in KSA (e.g. AL-Sultan, 1988; Rugh, 1973). One of the first to discuss class in KSA was Rugh (1973) who divides Saudi society into upper, middle and working social class. The upper class is further separated into an upper division of the upper class

that mainly consists of the Al Saud royal family and the lower division of the upper class, the top *ulama* (scholars in religious text) from the Al Shaykh family. These two parts of the upper class are considered to be the governing force in KSA, although Al Saud family is the more dominant force (Rugh, 1973).

Family ties mostly define the middle class, and people that belong to certain families are immediately recognised as being in this class. However, according to Rugh (1973), a part of the middle class established its social belonging through education. As oil was discovered in the late 1930s and state revenues increased, oil companies started to employ a large segment of the population and the economy began to boom. The government quickly realised the need for skilled Saudi workers to support the emerging economy and therefore introduced a more modern education programme. The government also started to encourage citizens to pursue higher education studies locally and internationally by providing scholarship programmes through the oil company Saudi Aramco that was founded in 1933. This led segments of the society to establish their belongingness to the middle class through their training and education. However, the rise of this new middle class led to further upper and lower stratifications:

The upper stratum includes better educated Saudis such as professors, doctors, engineers, and some businessmen - secular educated commoners who achieved high civil service rank primarily because of their personal qualifications. The lower middle class includes government clerical personnel, school teachers, skilled industrial wage earners, most of whom have not had direct exposure to a modern environment that foreign educated Saudis enjoyed (Rugh, 1973, p. 17).

Al-Sultan (1988) describes the rise of a new middle class in KSA, in which people were able to move up the social ladder and establish their belongingness to the middle class through education and training. Al-Sultan describes how this ignited a competition between two segments of the new middle class, secular progressives and non-secular conservatives. Secular progressives (i.e. people who promote and support liberal change and reform) were mainly Saudi nationalists who obtained their education and training in Arabic disciplines or international institutions. Non-secular conservatives (i.e. people who are averse to liberal change and hold religious

and traditional values) were Saudi citizens that obtained their education from Islamic colleges in KSA. Al-Sultan argues that the rise of the new middle class resulted in a withdrawal of Saudi labour from low-paid manual jobs, which led to a high rate of expatriate labour in the country. Moreover, the lower class is composed of “nomadic Bedouin, semi-nomadic herdsmen, unskilled and semi-skilled workers in government and the private sector” (Rugh, 1973, p.7). The lower classes do not take part in running the country and are usually controlled by tribal leaders.

In terms of its economy, KSA is one of the wealthiest nations in the world, with a GDP of 654.7 billion US dollars (World Bank, 2016). The country has one of the world’s largest oil reserves and is considered the second largest oil producer after the United States (World Bank, 2016). The country is highly dependent on oil to balance its budgets. However, the 2015 budget deficit was around 40%, due to low oil revenues and the cost of the military campaign in Yemen (Gov.UK, 2017). This led the government to launch an ambitious vision for 2030 to diversify its revenues, and move towards private sector-led growth. Much of the spending in 2015, almost 30% of GDP, was for developing the human and physical capital of the country (Gov.UK, 2017). For example, the government announced that it will continue to invest in the construction of new schools, universities, hospitals, transport networks and industrial sites despite the decline in oil revenue (Gov.UK, 2017). This generated job opportunity in construction, transport, financial services, project management, and health and education, which further encourages Saudi citizens to develop their English language competencies and skills in general in order to compete in a modernised economy.

2.2. Education in Saudi Arabia

This section provides an overview of the public education system in KSA with a focus on English language teaching. The focus is on this system as many public school EFL teachers are graduates of public universities studying EFL programmes. EFL teachers at public schools are all Saudi citizens and thus the public sector is the leading employer of these graduates.

Public education is freely provided for all Saudi students throughout their K-12 years. Children start their primary education at the age of seven, and complete their secondary school education when they are eighteen. The structure of Saudi K-12 education is divided into six years of elementary school, three years of intermediate school and three of secondary school. After completing their first year in secondary education, students have the opportunity to select between two routes: (a) the 'natural sciences' or (b) the 'arts' to study in their final two years (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). Students who select the natural sciences study subjects such as Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics and English, while students who choose the arts study subjects such as Arabic, Islamic studies, History and English. These two routes determine the type of college to which students are allowed to apply when enrolling at university. For example, students who follow the arts route are only permitted to enrol at colleges that are in alignment with their chosen path (e.g. colleges of arts, humanities and social sciences). (See section 2.4. for further discussion of the admission process).

The number of schools in KSA has increased dramatically in the last four decades. In the 1970s the number of schools was around 3,000 but increased to more than 36,900 schools in 2015. The number of students has also sharply increased during the same time period from 536,000 to 5,586,167 (MoE, 2016a; Oyaid, 2009). This rapid expansion in the number of schools and students has led to an increased demand for qualified teachers in order to meet the needs of the education system.

Teachers in the public school system are Saudi citizens and regarded as government civil servants. Although the teaching profession is not considered to be a high status profession in KSA, it does provide a level of job security (Al-Soheem, 2009). The minimum qualification to become a public school teacher is a Bachelor's degree in any specific discipline and no prior experience is required (Alfahadi, 2012). Teachers graduate from different local universities and colleges that offer four-year Bachelor's degree programmes in different disciplines. For example, EFL teachers are graduates from the colleges of arts and humanities or education in public universities that offer a four-year Bachelor's degree in English.

2.2.1. English Language Teaching in schools

English is the only foreign language taught within Saudi public schools. The subject was introduced in the late 1950s as a mandatory part of the intermediate and secondary school curriculum (Al-Johani, 2009). However, as the government became aware of the importance of modernising its education system, English was introduced from an early stage (i.e. 4th grade). According to Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) and Al-Zayid (2012) the teaching of English in schools aims to achieve several objectives such as: enabling students to acquire basic language skills; developing important linguistic competence needed in different professions; constructing positive attitudes towards learning the language; increasing students' knowledge about the significance of English as a medium of international communication; enabling students to understand and respect different cultures and allowing students to take part in transferring scientific and technological advances from other countries to KSA.

However, the outcomes show that even after nine years of studying English, students fail to acquire the necessary language competencies and their language skills are still in need of improvement (Albousaif, 2011; Alsaif, 2011; Alrabai, 2010; Al-Sughaer, 2009; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Syed, 2003). The low language competency among students can be traced to different reasons. The most important ones are the poor quality of teachers' knowledge and confidence, the teaching approaches used by teachers, and students' learning strategies (Alsaif and Milton, 2012; Khan, 2011; Al-Jarf, 2008; Rabab'ah, 2005; Al-Hazmi, 2003).

The poor quality of teachers' knowledge and confidence in using the language is one of the main concerns in teaching English in public schools (Al-Hazmi, 2003, 2007; Al-Johani, 2009; Rabab'ah, 2005; Zaid, 1993). Although EFL teachers hold a degree in English, many lack the necessary English skills, especially the ability to communicate in English (Al-Johani, 2009). Al-Hazmi (2003) argues that the reason for this is that teachers' initial training did not provide them with the English language competency needed. Therefore, many use Arabic in their instruction and

communication and consequently students lack the opportunity to develop their communicative competence (Alfahadi, 2012; Rabab'ah, 2005; Al-Hazmi, 2003).

The lack of knowledge and confidence in using the language has a huge impact on the teaching approaches used by EFL school teachers. These teachers use strategies that are more likely to conceal their shortcomings, thus many adopt a teacher-centred approach, which hinders the students' language learning (Alkubaidi, 2014; Fareh, 2010). As such, teachers dominate the learning process and use strategies that help them teach English through abstract textbook knowledge (e.g. vocabulary and grammar) (Alkubaidi, 2014; Alhawsawi, 2013; Al-Jarf, 2006). Teachers spend the majority of time in the classroom talking and explaining the topic in Arabic while students take on a passive role and are discouraged from participating or asking questions (Alkubaidi, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Al-Johani, 2009). This deprives students from practising the language and developing their language competencies.

Furthermore, the dominant role of EFL school teachers and the use of Arabic in classroom instruction and communication results in students relying on inappropriate learning strategies such as memorisation and rote learning (Alkubaidi, 2014; Rajab, 2013). Students use these strategies to memorise different grammatical rules and texts without a comprehensive understanding of their meanings (Alkubaidi, 2014; Rajab, 2013). By applying these strategies, students are often able to pass exams and attain high marks without learning the language (Alkubaidi, 2014).

The above discussion suggests that the poor quality of English language teaching in public education is closely associated with the quality of teaching and learning in higher education undergraduate EFL programmes. These programmes are responsible for training and preparing prospective EFL teachers who in many cases join the public education system. Therefore, the poor quality of EFL teachers in public schools links to the programmes they graduate from. In addition, these prospective EFL teachers are usually a product of the same school system and often carry their language weaknesses with them when enrolling in higher education EFL

programmes and therefore face significant challenges in their English courses. This suggests that EFL programmes need to acknowledge the English language levels of incoming students and adapt their courses to address students' needs. This makes it imperative to look at the students' learning experiences in higher education and investigate the issues that may hinder their language learning.

2.3. Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

The first university in KSA was established in 1957, which makes higher education a relatively modern phenomenon in the country (Rawaf and Simmons, 1992). Since then the number of higher education institutes has dramatically increased to more than 100. This includes 26 government universities, 42 technical colleges, 11 private universities and 38 private colleges (MoE, 2016b). These institutions provide a wide range of degrees in many disciplines to both male and female students. However, all higher education institutions follow a strict policy of segregation of males and females in their educational facilities, administration staff, lecturers and students. The only exception to this policy is King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST), which was established in 2009 and allows the integration of both genders on its campus (Alsaif, 2011).

The official language for higher education institutions is Arabic (MoHE, 1994). However, this is not the case in all institutions. A growing number of institutions complement Arabic with English as the medium of instruction (Alhawsawi, 2013). Nowadays, there is a desire to introduce English as the main medium of instruction in many universities to provide students with up-to-date information in order to enhance the quality of their education (Al-Hazmi, 2005).

The Saudi higher education sector is governed through a hierarchical structure of decision-making authority. The Council of Higher Education (CHE) is the highest authority in Saudi higher education and is responsible for regulating and supervising higher education institutions (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). The next level of governance is the MoE-HE, which ensures the implementation of the

council's rules, policies and decisions and is responsible for planning, coordination and supervising the higher education sector (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013). The MoE-HE supervises the university councils that are responsible for the academic policy and strategic direction of individual universities. The university council also presides over other institutional councils which include the Scientific Council, which is mainly responsible for the assessment of faculty achievement and special awards, and the College and Department Council, which manages the academic programmes, staff recruitment and students' enrolment criteria at college and departmental levels (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013). This hierarchical structure determines the way in which formal communication channels are established between different councils. For example, decisions made at the college or departmental levels are submitted in the form of recommendations to the Scientific Council or the University Council for approval.

Finally, the rapid growth in Saudi higher education is accompanied by a commitment to improve the quality of teaching and learning in this sector (Alnassar and Lee Dow, 2013). For example, the MoE-HE has established the National Commission for Academic Assessment and Accreditation (NCAAA) to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in all Saudi universities. Many universities have also sought the accreditation of their academic programmes from international organisations such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) (Al-Ankari, 2013). Nevertheless, ensuring the quality of teaching and learning is a major challenge for universities and many researchers believe that it still needs to be improved (Profanter, 2014; Darandari and Murphy, 2013; Alshayea, 2012; Issa and Siddiek, 2012).

2.3.1. English Language Teaching in higher education

Over the last few years, the importance of English language teaching and learning in Saudi higher education has increased significantly (Moskovsky and Alrabai, 2009). This is evident in the recent policy change that requires all universities to teach English as a compulsory component in their preparatory year programme

(PYP) (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). This means that all university students are required to complete a compulsory EFL programme as part of their PYP plan. The aim of this programme is to develop students' English language competencies and enable them to use the language as a tool of knowledge in addition to Arabic (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015). In addition, many STEM Colleges (i.e. science, technology, engineering, and maths) use English as the medium of instruction. These colleges have established their own language centres that design their curriculum and course materials (Al-Hazmi, 2007). However, only two Saudi universities have been able to completely transfer to using English as the only medium of instruction. These universities are King Fahad Petroleum and Mineral University (KFPMU) and King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST).

English is the medium of instruction in English language disciplines in the Colleges of Arts and Humanities and Education in Saudi universities. These colleges provide a four-year Bachelor's degree in English and offer courses in English education, literature, linguistics and translation. In the case of CAH, the focus of their undergraduate EFL programmes is to prepare students to become English language specialists, not necessarily EFL teachers, with a specialisation in linguistics, literature, or translation (Zaid, 1993). However, many of these students become EFL teachers in the public education system.

In the past, teacher training programmes were mainly offered by teacher training colleges throughout KSA. These colleges emphasise the educational aspects in their training and therefore students are offered Arabic courses in educational psychology, teaching methodology, evaluation, school administration, and curriculum studies. However, since 2007 all such colleges in KSA have been merged with universities and teaching has become a degree profession only offered at university level (Al-Murshid and Al-Guniam, 2007). Al-Hazmi (2007) describes EFL programmes offered by colleges of arts and humanities as inadequate in relation to teacher education. He argues that these programmes do not provide the necessary training for EFL teachers and are in need of improvement. Therefore, it is

imperative to investigate the students' learning experiences in such programmes. (See section 5.2 for further discussion of EFL programmes in higher education).

2.4. City University

This study is conducted at the English language department at the College of Arts and Humanities at City University (CU). CU is a prestigious academic institution that was initially established in 1967 as a private university by a group of businessmen. The goal was to provide the people of the western region of KSA with the opportunity to complete their higher education since there was no other university in the region. CU was later converted to a public university in 1971, which enabled it to grow rapidly. The university started its first year in 1968 with a population of 68 male and 30 female students and with only two colleges: The College of Economics and Management and the College of Arts and Human Sciences (KAU, 2017a).

The main campus of CU is located in Jeddah, on the western coast of KSA. It is separated into two main campuses that adhere to Islamic regulations, one male and one female campus. The male campus has 14 colleges and the female campus has 6. Both are equipped with various educational, sports and healthcare facilities which include two separate libraries with the latest technology to serve both students and staff. The university witnessed considerable development in quality and quantity from its establishment until it became one of the leading universities in terms of the number of students, and the number of scientific and theoretical fields of study (Alriyadh, 2007).

The university provides students with the opportunity to join different colleges and departments that offer a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. However, undergraduate students must first pass a compulsory preparatory year programme (PYP) in their first two semesters before enrolling in their degree level studies. According to CU's *Handbook Guide to the Preparatory year* (KAU, 2017b) the goal of the PYP is to reduce the knowledge gap between the graduates of public education and what is expected of undergraduate level students, by developing their

academic and language skills. The PYP follows a similar structure to that in secondary education as it is divided into two tracks (i.e. 'natural sciences' and 'humanities and administrative'), and is closely associated with the students' route in secondary school (see Appendix 2 for details of the PYP structure for the humanities and administrative).

Students who complete the arts route in their secondary education can only enrol in the humanities and administrative track of the PYP. These students study 11 courses, which include Islamic studies, Arabic, English and Information Technology. After the successful completion of the programme, students are allocated to different departments in one of the four specific colleges, Arts and Humanities, Law, Economics and Administration, or Communication and Media. The placement process is based on a student's Grade Point Average (GPA), the department's capacity and its specific admission criteria.

Students who follow the natural science route in their secondary education are allowed to join either track of the PYP. Those who choose the natural science track also study 11 courses, which include Mathematics, Physics, Biology and English. The students are then allocated to one of the different departments in STEM colleges. These colleges have a higher level of student competition and more rigorous entry requirements than other colleges and departments in CU. For example, the College of Medicine requires students to achieve a high-grade average of 85% in all EFL modules in the PYP whereas the College of Arts and Humanities only requires students to pass (i.e. a grade average of 60%) these modules to join its various departments.

Students in both tracks must complete a four level content-based EFL programme as part of the PYP. The EFL programme is conducted by the English Language Institute (ELI) in CU, which operates independently from the Department of English Language and is delivered using a system of four modules, two per semester (ELI, 2017a). Each module is seven academic weeks and taught for 18 hours a week. At the beginning of the EFL programme, students are required to take a placement

test to assess their language proficiency and are then placed at the relevant level, according to their test scores. The ELI also uses the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which defines students' level of proficiency and measures their progress at each stage of learning (Trim, 2001). The aim of the EFL programme is to develop the students' language competencies from a beginner's level to an *intermediate* level (ELI, 2017b). This suggests that the programme is designed with the assumption that students who finish school and join the PYP have a low level of language competency and therefore need to start learning English from a beginner's level.

Furthermore, CU's culture in general and teaching and learning in particular are highly affected by the norms, traditions and values that govern Saudi society. In relation to the university's overall culture, Alhazemi et al. (2013) argue that the fact that CU is classified as a 'government university' means that it is expected to comply with the cultural and social norms of the country. These considerations have exerted a significant impact on the university's culture. These effects can be observed in, for example, the university's decision-making process in relation to issues such as the level of participation of women in various activities (e.g. sports and theatre). This is mainly because "... [CU] and its senior staff ... [are], to a degree, expected to conform to traditional customs and norms rather than effecting changes which may challenge these customs and norms" (p. 978).

Alhazemi et al. (2013) further suggest that teaching and learning has also been affected within the university. They give an example of how the western-based perspective about education encourages students to learn through active participation in various activities and by asking questions, while the Saudi perspective encourages students, to some degree, to passively adhere to authority. This suggests two important issues. First, that many students at CU take on a passive role in relation to their learning and are less engaged with various learning activities at the university (e.g. workshops and seminars). Second, students are generally less involved in activities provided by the university such as sporting events, theatre and different clubs (e.g. horsemanship club, scout club, and hobby centre).

2.5. The College of Arts and Humanities at CU

The College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) was initially established in 1970 with the purpose of providing the country with competent scholars that can contribute to its development (KAU, 2017c). The college is composed of several departments, which include Islamic Law and Studies, European Languages, History, Geography, Sociology and Social Work, Arabic Language and Psychology. The college initially started with a student population of 28 and since then the number has increased to more than 28,900 in 2012 (KAU, 2017c). In terms of the admission policy, the CAH has one of the lowest entry requirements in CU. According to the *Handbook Guide to the Preparatory Year* (KAU, 2017b), the college does not require any admission criteria other than the satisfactory completion of the PYP. This means that students merely have to pass the PYP in order to apply for admission to its various departments. This consequently leads to a large number of students accessing the CAH in order to obtain an undergraduate degree. (See sections 5.3.1 for further discussion).

2.6. The Department of English Language at CU

The undergraduate EFL programme is designed and delivered by the Department of English Language, which was established in 1970 as the first department within the CAH. The department later became a sub-division of the Department of European Languages and offers a Bachelor's degree in English, with a focus on linguistics and literature. Male students join the department in their second year after completing the PYP, which makes the EFL programme a three-year degree (six semesters). According to the department's website, the main goals of the programme are to enable a student to become proficient in the skills of reading, writing and speaking in English; study the theories and hypotheses of linguistics with the ability to analyse, compare and apply; study different branches of Western literature with the ability to analyse and criticise; and in general to prepare a graduate who is able to develop himself and his society as well as communicate with other cultures while keeping a sense of pride in himself, his principles and his independent identity (KAU, 2016a).

The EFL programme has a student population of almost 600 male students and the average number of students per classroom is around 40. It has 18 lecturers: 3 native English speakers (NES) from the United States and the United Kingdom and 15 non-native English speakers (NNES) who are all Saudi nationals. The student-lecturer ratio is around 1:34 in the EFL programme. The EFL programme is divided into 35 courses that are taught over a period of six academic semesters: 6 courses in the first five semesters and 5 in the final one (see Appendix 3 and 4 for a detailed description of the EFL programme structure and curriculum).

The structure of the 1st and 2nd semesters of the EFL programme focuses on building the students' language skills (i.e. listening and speaking, reading and writing). There are 6 basic language courses, 3 per semester, which adapt international EFL materials based on the 4th edition of the Mosaic series (e.g. Blass and Pike-Bak, 2002; Hanreddy and Whalley, 2001, 2002; Wegmann and Knezevic, 2001). The aim of these series is to develop the students' language skills from an intermediate level to a more advanced level to meet the linguistic demands of the EFL programme. Thus, students are expected to have at least an intermediate level of language skills when taking these courses. The listening and speaking courses are intended to develop the students' communicative skills in order to communicate effectively in the programme. The reading and writing courses aim to develop the students' reading and writing skills to an advanced academic level. In addition to these basic language courses, students must take Arabic and Islamic studies as core requirements by the CAH.

In the 3rd semester, students are introduced to the main three branches of their degree level courses (i.e. linguistics, literature and translation). Students are first taught introductory level courses which include 'Introduction to Linguistics', 'Introduction to Literature' and 'Introduction to Translation'. The aim of these courses is to provide students with a brief introduction to familiarise them with these branches and prepare them for further specialised courses which they will be taking later in the degree. For example, the 'Introduction to Linguistics' course offers students a brief survey of the theoretical bases of language study, emphasising

theories of language origins and development, introducing students to the major branches of linguistics such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, and preparing them for further language studies.

In the 4th, 5th and 6th semesters, more advanced specialised courses are taught. In the field of linguistics, students study separate courses in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. In the field of literature, students take courses in fiction, drama, poetry, literary criticism and modern literature. They also must complete a practicum course toward the end of the EFL programme. The purpose of this course is to give students the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge acquired during their studies, within a professional setting. Many students choose to complete their practicum course within the public school system. These students spend the last semester of the EFL programme at intermediate and secondary schools as novice teachers, and are required to teach one or two EFL courses (i.e. four to eight classes per week) (Al-Hazmi, 2003).

Assessment in the EFL programme is mainly based on exams. With the exception of the practicum course, the document of the EFL programme plan (see Appendix 4) shows that the assessment criteria, in almost all courses, is based on two mid-term exams and one final exam which covers 80% of the course credits. The remaining 20% is determined by lecturers and is often based on assignments, presentations and attendance. In the case of the practicum course, students are required by the supervising lecturer to write periodic progress reports as well as a final training report.

The structure of the EFL programme clearly emphasises the development of the linguistic and literary aspects of the students. However, the EFL programme in the CAH at CU pays little attention to teacher training courses, such as teaching methodology, educational psychology and curriculum studies. This is despite the fact that many of its graduates become EFL teachers in the public system. This

supports Al-Hazmi's (2003) description of many of these EFL programmes as inadequate in relation to teacher training.

2.7. Summary

This chapter introduced the context of the study. It began with a brief description of KSA and the public education system. It then discussed some of the main concerns with regard to English language teaching and learning in schools: namely, the level of EFL teachers. After this, the higher education system was discussed with a focus on English language teaching in higher education institutions. It then introduced CU and the CAH. The chapter concluded with a detailed description of the EFL programme conducted by the Department of English Language at CU. The next chapter discusses the relevant literature that establishes the framework for this study.

Chapter Three: Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to EFL teaching and learning in higher education. In order to contextualise the theoretical framework, this chapter begins with an overview of the different research traditions and perspectives used for analysing students' learning experiences in higher education. After this, the chapter discusses the three different concerns that guide this study: the institutional influences, students' family educational background, and the impact of lecturers' teaching approaches on students' learning experiences in the EFL programme.

The study uses a sociological approach and is conducted from an interpretivist epistemological, constructivist ontological stance, and a qualitative methodological orientation. The research aims to gain a holistic understanding of how students experience learning in the EFL programme at CU, by examining the complex interrelationship between social structure and individual agency.

3.1. Contextualising students' learning in higher education

There are a wide range of factors that affect students' learning experiences in higher education, and these factors are scrutinised in this chapter according to the different theoretical perspectives used to conceptualise learning. One of the earliest perspectives of learning was influenced by the work of traditional behavioural psychologists such as Skinner's (1957) Stimulus-Response Theory, and Lado's (1957) Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. From the behaviourist view, learning is perceived not as a mental phenomenon but as an observable behaviour (Lightbown and Spada, 2013; Littlewood, 1984). Like other forms of human behaviour, language is learnt through a system of *habit-formation*, which is brought about by *imitation*, *reinforcement* and *repetition*. According to this view, formation of habits is based on the notions of *stimuli* and *response* and on receiving positive reinforcement, which could take the form of praise or successful communication (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). Through repeated positive reinforcement, a certain stimulus produces the same response, which later forms a habit. The behaviourist perspective therefore

gives great importance to the learning environment as the source of what the learner needs to learn.

The learner in this perspective starts off with the habits formed in the first language, which are later transferred to the second one. When the first language habits are similar to the second and are successfully transferred to it, this is *positive transfer* (Littlewood, 1984). On the other hand, *negative transfer* or *interference* occurs when there are differences between the first and second language. The differences between the two languages causes interference and results in learning difficulties and mistakes. The notion of interference therefore is especially interesting for second language teachers, due to its teaching implications. The teaching becomes focused on areas in which the first and second language differ, since “those elements that are similar to [the learner’s] native language will be simple [...], and those elements that are different will be difficult” (Lado, 1957, p. 2).

However, the behaviourist perspective of learning was strongly criticised by cognitive psychologists, as not being able to provide insights into how learners experience, conceptualise, perceive and understand their learning process (Lightbown and Spada, 2013; Richardson, 1987; Marton, 1986). Its failure to explain the more complex and sophisticated nature of learning a language and its emphasis on quantifying behavioural responses were some of the main concerns (Mitchell et al., 2013). In contrast to the behaviourist approach, cognitive psychologists suggest that learners internalise their environment and develop an underlying system of rules by processing information from the outside world. The knowledge of these rules forms the learner’s *linguistic competence*, which is different from the *performance* that can actually be observed (Lightbown and Spada, 2013; Littlewood, 1984). The focus therefore shifted from the basic view of second language learning as merely a fixed verbal behaviour to a more cognitive and variable phenomenon.

In the cognitive view, second language learners use their skills of cognition to extract patterns from the language they are exposed to. Through practice and experience, these patterns become organised in the learner’s mind, as a by-product

of language use (Lightbown and Spada, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2013). Learners are seen as actively constructing rules from their experiences and gradually adapting these rules to acquire the second language. Moreover, mistakes are no longer viewed as signs of failure, but rather as clear evidence that learners are using creative strategies (e.g. generalisation) to develop their own system of the language. As a result, learners benefit from their mistakes in their attempt to understand how the language works (Lightbown and Spada, 2013).

The *Approaches to Learning and Teaching* (ALT) perspective emerged, within cognitive psychology, as a significant way to analyse students' approaches to learning in higher education (Richardson, 2005; Price and Richardson, 2004; Kelly and Van Deursen, 2002; Trigwell, 2002; Biggs, 1987; Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983). The ALT research is largely based on the development of quantitative inventory scales to understand students' learning experiences in higher education. Understanding learning in this way is based on the assumption that learners' approaches to learning are a combination of *individual motivation* and *learning strategy*. This is exemplified in the work of Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) and Biggs (1987) who introduced different learning inventories to understand students' approaches to learning by applying a distinction between deep and surface learning (terms first coined by Marton and Säljö, 1976).

The deep approach is defined as learning with understanding and is associated with the ability to structure knowledge well, an appropriate motivational environment, and learner activity and interaction (Biggs, 2001). Learners using this approach are personally committed to the learning process which derives from their search for self-fulfilment (Trigwell and Shale, 2004). Prosser (1999, p. 3) describes such students as having:

an intrinsic interest in the task and an expectation of enjoyment in carrying it out. They adopt strategies that help satisfy their curiosity, such as making the task coherent with their own experiences; relating and distinguishing evidence and argument; looking for patterns and underlying principles; integrating the task with existing awareness; seeing the parts of a task as making up the whole; and relating what they

understand from other parts of the same subject; and from different subjects.

This approach to learning is strongly associated with higher quality learning outcomes. Conversely, a surface approach to learning is described as an intention to reproduce knowledge and approaches to learning characterised by rote learning and memorising information for assessment purposes rather than for understanding. Learners using this approach are instrumentally motivated by the need to avoid failure and to meet the demands of the task with minimum effort (Prosser, 1999).

In the study of students' learning experiences in higher education, much of the research conducted using the ALT perspective focuses on students' perceptions of various factors, including teaching, assessment, learning resources, aim and clarity of programme, workload, and interactions with peers and lecturers (Entwistle et al., 2002; Beattie et al., 1997; Ramsden, 1992, 1987). The research shows that students' perceptions of these variables have a significant influence on their learning experiences. These studies suggest that when students perceive these variables positively (e.g. the quality of teaching, appropriate workload, and the nature of the assessment), they are more likely to attempt to develop a deep approach to learning, instead of simply reproducing knowledge for the sake of assessment (Ashwin, 2009). For example, Ramsden (1992) reports on a number of studies that investigate the relationship between students' perceptions of their learning environment and their approach to learning. The results show that students who perceive the assessment practices as encouraging memorisation and the workload as high often adopt a surface approach in their learning.

Although the ALT perspective emphasises the importance of the individual learners (the agents) and their learning process, it is criticised as failing to incorporate the complexities of the location and learning context (Ashwin 2009; Hodgkinson et al., 2008; Haggis, 2003). By assuming that the learning outcomes are determined by the individual's personal understanding and perceptions of the context, it overlooks the ways in which learners' understandings and perceptions of the context are also

structured and shaped by wider social and contextual issues (Kember et al., 2008). In this case, the individual learner is considered to be the significant level of analysis that exists, to some extent, in a historical, institutional and micro-social vacuum (Trowler, 2009). The ALT perspective therefore narrows the focus of research to issues of individual cognition such as motivation and learning strategy.

The above discussion suggests that the ALT approach, particularly in quantitative inventory-based studies, is strongly rooted in considerations of individual agency (Ashwin, 2009) and that such studies do not consider that “much of what happens does not depend on or correspond to agents’ understandings; there are unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions and things can happen to people regardless of their understandings” (Sayer, 2000, p. 20). Thus, the main critique of the ALT perspective is that the learner is removed from the wider social and contextual issues (Ashwin, 2009; Mann, 2001). Jones et al. (2005) further argue that the body of ALT research is prone to oversimplification, which leads to:

simplified abstractions that are de-contextualized from the lived experience of individuals; from content and discipline; and from social, political and historical contexts (p. 250).

Haggis (2003) further critiques the ALT approach as giving little acknowledgement to the fact that learners are individuals, and that for multiple and different reasons, such as conflicting philosophical or cultural views, norms and values, or a sense of alienation (Mann, 2001), they may reject institutional agendas or lack the ability (e.g. financial or family background) to engage in the ways that are assumed to be both desirable and possible. She further argues that:

.... [this] draw[s] attention to the restricted nature of this particular approach to the study of higher education learning, the way in which its construction of ‘the learner’ avoids any real engagement with complexities of location and context (Haggis, 2003, p. 101).

Another concern is the assumption that questionnaires are the most appropriate way to investigate students’ learning experiences in higher education. This approach has been the subject of several methodological concerns. Richardson (2000) and

Mitchell (1994) have questioned the psychometric validity of questionnaires such as Bigg's Learning and Study Questionnaire, and some forms of the Entwistle's Approaches to Studying Inventory. Mitchell (1994) further argues that survey instruments do not actually measure conceptions, but only the students' responses to questionnaires: "they are not sampling learners' behaviour, but learners' impressions" (p. 8). In addition, survey instruments provide little space for interpretation and therefore do not fit with the interpretivist and qualitative nature of the present study.

In spite of these limitations, an important contribution of the ALT perspective is that it foregrounds EFL learners as individuals with agency, who have multiple ways of constructing their understanding of the context and approaches to learning. However, as mentioned before, this research understands students' learning experiences as a combination of individual agency and social structure influences. Therefore, in order to contextualise the social structural aspect of this research, a more social perspective of learning is discussed.

In contrast to cognitive psychologists who emphasise the importance of motivation and learning strategy, sociologists (Kember et al., 2008; Solomon, 2007; Lindblom-Ylänne et al., 2006; Hirschy and Wilson, 2002; Kember and Kwan, 2000; Lea and Street, 1998; Becher, 1994) understand learning as a social phenomenon influenced by wider social structural, and contextual issues. In this case, the primary focus is on how different forms of social structure (e.g. gender, ethnicity, social class, and power-relations) influence teaching and learning practices in higher education. Research evidence also shows that structural factors related to the educational institution (e.g. the curriculum, the nature of the students, and the academic disciplines) can also influence the students' learning experiences (Kember and Kwan, 2000). Lindblom-Ylänne et al. (2006) argue that the typology of academic disciplines (i.e. the distinction between soft/hard and pure/applied fields) and the context of the teaching (i.e. the department, college and university) can influence the teaching approaches of lecturers and the students' experiences of learning. Lueddeke (2003), for example, argues that the nature of the academic discipline has

a strong influence on the teaching approaches and that lecturers in the hard disciplines (e.g. physics, engineering and medicine) are more likely to adopt a teacher-centred approach to teaching, whereas lecturers from soft disciplines (e.g. arts and humanities) adopt an approach that is more student-centred.

However, despite some significant insights which this perspective offers about how structural factors can impact students' learning experiences, it is criticised as being overly deterministic in its understanding of teaching and learning in higher education (Kreber, 2009; Kreber and Castleden, 2009). Trowler (2009) argues that such an approach, particularly the impact of academic disciplines as a structure, is based on epistemological essentialism whereby knowledge characteristics represent a key influence on social life, with other factors being epiphenomenal. He further argues that this approach neglects:

the power of structures other than discipline as well as the agentic role of individuals and groups to chart their own course in teaching and learning practices (p. 184).

Another significant perspective on the influence of social structure on teaching and learning is based on Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of *Communities of Practice* (CoP), which can be understood as a process of social learning that takes place when people who have a common interest in a subject or area cooperate over an extended period of time toward a unified view of working, learning and innovation (Brown and Duguid, 1991). Wenger-Trayner (2015) defines CoP as:

... groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (p. 1).

Within this view, learning is seen as social activities that take place in everyday interactions between members of a given community. Students construct their understandings within everyday interactions, which means that learning is a product of these interactions (Lave, 1993). This indicates that learning is a collective product rather than an individual practice (Gherardi et al., 1998). Individual learning is thus seen as constructed and enacted by accessing communities that

have the power to shape and reshape individual practices (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Learning is therefore regarded as an embodied activity, rather than simply a cognitive one. Each academic or disciplinary community has its own sets of complex skills and rules that are required for a learner to gain access and to function effectively in that particular community (Lea and Street, 1998). This suggests that learning is a product of certain social structures, which are established within different learning communities in a university. Students are therefore seen as participants in a structured framework, over which they have little control.

Thus far, the discussion has reviewed the different traditions in which researchers analyse students' learning experiences in higher education. The division in conceptualising learning stems from the different ways in which researchers draw on the fields of either psychology or sociology, with the former largely viewing learning as an individualistic phenomenon that is driven by cognitive motivational factors which can be manipulated through learning strategies, and the latter emphasising the importance of structure in influencing students' learning. Hodkinson et al. (2008) describe the division in the conceptualisation of learning in relation to differently scaled maps of learning (i.e. level of analysis), a metaphor from map-making. The largest scale of learning might focus on the learning of one individual in a local setting while the next scale down might focus on the whole institution on a national level. Decrease it further, and the scale might focus on learning in relation to wider social (e.g. class, gender, ethnicity and religion) or economic structure, including globalisation.

Those different scales roughly correspond to different understandings of what learning is. Thus, if the scale is the individual, the tendency is to overlook the social, and to privilege agency over structure. Similarly, if the scale is drawn around a local site, there is a tendency to focus on the social, but to bracket off wider issues of social structure, and background individuals and individual agency (Hodkinson et al., 2008, p. 33).

In the context of the current study, learning is understood as an active and emergent social phenomenon, affected by agentic and structural factors. Learning is regarded not as a fixed entity that learners possess, but rather as an individual choice that has its roots in the mind of the learner, and is acquired and influenced by the teaching

and learning approaches experienced by the learner (Alhawsawi, 2013). These choices are mediated by the social structure surrounding the learner and the learning context. In other words, learning is seen as the projects of human agents, and these projects are enabled or constrained by structural factors (Archer, 2003). In this case, learning is seen as a transformative experience where students construct and enact their learning, rather than a deterministic process dictated by structure (Thornton, 2010; Ashwin, 2009). This suggests that while the individualistic view of learning may hold part of the explanation, a holistic account of the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme requires attention to structural issues such as institutional influences and social class. Therefore, this study examines students' learning experiences from three different perspectives: the institutional influences, the students' family educational background, and the teaching approaches in the EFL programme at CU. By examining these three perspectives, this study is able to analyse learning from an agentic and structural perspective.

The first perspective analyses the structural influence of the educational institution on students' learning experiences. It highlights the university's position within the field of higher education at the national level of KSA, and the impact of its position on its policies and practices, which in return affect different aspects of teaching and learning in the EFL programme.

The second perspective focuses on the students' family educational background. Hirschy and Wilson (2002) mention that social class has always been a recurring and important theme within sociology, and as this research uses a sociological approach, it is important to consider a structural concept that provides insights into the notion of social class. Mooney and Evans (2015) suggest that although social class has always been associated with personal wealth, occupation and geographical location, other factors such as *parental education* also play an important role. In this study, family educational background is seen as social structure that relates to social class. The usefulness of examining the family background in the specific context of Saudi higher education was also demonstrated in the work of Alhawsawi (2013),

who used the concept of *cultural capital* to analyse what students bring to the learning situation from their family background.

The final perspective examines how different teaching approaches adopted by lecturers affect students' learning experiences. It demonstrates the way in which students negotiate their individual learning and how different structures (i.e. institutional influences and families' educational backgrounds) interact inside the EFL classroom. The notion of nativeness and non-nativeness is also used as an axis in analysing the teaching approaches and their effects on students' learning (see section 3.5. for further discussion).

Based on the preceding section, the following section develops the review of structural influences of an educational institution on teaching and learning in higher education.

3.2. Institutional Influences

As discussed before, this study understands students' learning as a social phenomenon that is influenced by different factors (e.g. teaching, assessment, and workload). However, these factors do not exist in a structural vacuum. In the context of this study, the higher education institution (i.e. CU) is seen as a social structure that influences students' learning experiences in the EFL programme. This influence is conceptualised in this study as *institutional influences*. The notion of institutional influences draws on Bourdieu's concepts of *field*, *capital* and *habitus* to examine the field of higher education in KSA and the EFL programmes offered within this field, the university's position within the field of higher education in KSA, the position of the College of Arts and Humanities within CU, and the university's different policies such as entry requirements, assessment policy, class size and other aspects that impact teaching and learning in the EFL programme.

There are a number of studies about institutional influences on teaching and learning in higher education (Rind and Kadiwal, 2016; Alhawsawi, 2016, Alhawsawi,

2013; Ahmed, 2012; Ashwin 2009; Flowerdew and Miller, 2008; Kezar, 2006; Gao, 2005; Jones et al., 2005). Several of these studies refer to institutional influences as *institutional culture*, and focus on analysing the relationships between different aspects of the institution, and the influence these relationships have on teaching and learning in higher education. Marginson (2008), for example, found a link between the position of an institution in the field of higher education and its institutional culture. Here, the field of higher education is described as “a relational environment” occupied by institutions (Marginson 2008, p. 303). Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1993), Marginson (2008) maps the field of global higher education and positions different institutions, according to their culture, along two axes. The first axis examines the institution’s autonomy/heteronomy and is presented as a continuum of elite research universities to commercial vocational institutions, while the second axis focuses on the degree of local or global engagement.

The above research highlights an important relation between the position of an institution within the field of higher education and the institutional culture it develops. Different institutions operating in the field of higher education develop their own institutional culture, which is influenced by their position in this field. Consequently, these influences have an impact on the institution’s policies and practices, which in turn influence teaching and learning within these institutions. For example, Kezar (2006) examined the relationship between a university’s *size* and students’ engagement, arguing that the size of an institution affects the way in which students engage in its programmes. She notes that larger institutions tend to use different policies (e.g. structured activities) than smaller institutions in order to achieve student engagement.

In a different relationship, Ahmed (2012) established a link between institutional culture and *class size*, arguing that the institutions’ open admission policy resulted in large class sizes. Consequently, interactions between students and lecturers were severely restricted and lecturers’ teaching strategies and their perceived role in the classroom were also affected. Likewise, Muchiri and Kiriungi (2015) and Alhawsawi

(2016) revealed a strong relationship between class size and effective teaching. McKeachie (1980) argues that:

[Class] size and [teaching] methods are almost inextricably intertwined. Thus, the research on class size and that on lecture vs. discussion overlap. Large classes are most likely to use lecture methods and less likely to use discussion than small classes (p. 24).

Crozier et al. (2008), established a link between institutional culture and *entry requirements* for students. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1990) notion of habitus, Crozier et al. revealed a matrix of differences and diverse experiences across and within different higher education institutions. They argue that the implicit understanding of an institution impacts the type of students it attracts within its programmes. For example, Reay et al. (2005) suggest that universities which have a more open access policy tend to attract students from lower class backgrounds. In relation to *assessment*, Rind and Kadiwal (2016) analysed the impact of institutional culture on assessment. They argue that due to the university's inclusive admission policy, average assessment standards were put in place to ensure that students from poor educational backgrounds and lacking the necessary academic skills were still able to gain a university degree.

Drawing on the work of McDonough (1997), Ashwin (2009) uses Bourdieu's structural approach to analyse the relationship between different factors (e.g. entry requirement, assessment, class size) and institutional culture. In his study, Ashwin analysed the influence of macro-structure (i.e. the influence of a university's position on its policy and practices, the influence of policy on its faculties, the influence of faculties on its departments and the influence of departments on the structure of the programmes it offers) on teaching and learning in higher education institutions. Ashwin (2009) discusses how Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital offer: "a way of analysing how the position of higher education institutions within the field of higher education impact on their... institutional habitus" (p. 106).

The notion of institutional habitus was developed by McDonough (1997). She used the concept to connect institutions with the broader socioeconomic context, and it

is this connection, she argues, which distinguishes institutional habitus from institutional culture. Institutional habitus is developed in relation to an institution's position within the field of higher education, and the different forms of capital (i.e. economic, cultural, and social capital that manifest themselves in forms of symbolic capital) that it tries to maintain or develop within the field of higher education.

In applying this approach to higher education, Ashwin (2009) discusses the different configurations that institutional habitus has on teaching and learning, which are mediated by the position of particular programmes of study within a range of internal fields in the institution. The process through which this refraction occurs depends on the particular structure of the institution. For example:

a university with an institutional structure which involves different faculties and departments, institutional habitus will be shaped through the university's position in the field of higher education but it will then be refracted through the particular faculties position within the institutional field, the department's position in the faculty field... [and] in institutions with different structures, the fields through which institutional habitus is refracted will be different (Ashwin, 2009, p. 113).

This understanding of institutional habitus fits well with the notion of institutional cultures which emphasises that such cultures have multiple configurations and avoids the idea that each institutions has a single institutional culture. Ashwin (2009) further argues that institutional habitus is articulated through different forms of expression which are carried through different fields within an institution, and that these forms of expression include: particular entry requirements to a university and to different programmes within a university; the particular form of the programmes that institutions offer; institutional teaching and learning quality regimes, such as assessment criteria; curriculum; and the quality of learning space. Although these forms of expression determine how institutions perceive the role of students, Ashwin argues that "institutional settings do not act in a deterministic way, but instead, different students can respond to the same institutional setting in different ways" (2009, p. 118).

Following the work of Ashwin (2009) and McDonough (1997), Rind and Kadiwal (2016) conducted research analysing the institutional influences on an English language programme in a university in Pakistan. In their study, Rind and Kadiwal demonstrate how the university's policies and practices are affected by its position within the field of higher education. As a result, these institutional influences impact teaching and learning in the English programme. They argue that due to the way in which the university defines its capital (i.e. 'higher education for all'), disadvantaged groups of students who have been rejected from other universities in the region or cannot afford private universities' high tuition fees are able to gain access to higher education. However, as a result of the university's open access policy and its attempt to accommodate the influx of students with limited resources, Rind and Kadiwal (2016) indicate that the quality of education offered by the university is affected. They further argue that these policies and practices impact different aspects of teaching and learning in the English programme, including the number of students in the classes, assessment criteria, students' participation, teaching approaches and the lecturers' attitudes towards and perceptions of the students.

It is important to note that Bourdieu's work, in particular the notion of habitus, has received some considerable criticism (e.g. see Goldthorpe, 2007; Johnson, 2006; Reed-Danahay, 2005; Adkins, 2004; King, 2000). One major critique of Bourdieu's concept of habitus is that it limits individuals to only being able to reproduce what they know (Johnson, 2006, Adkins, 2004). In other words, habitus is criticised as being overly deterministic and giving limited consideration to individual agency. Similarly, King (2000) argues that the notion of habitus fails to overcome the impasse of objectivism and subjectivism in social theory and in fact often retreats quickly into objectivism. He states, that "for Bourdieu, the habitus which consists of corporal dispositions and cognitive templates overcomes subject-object dualism by inscribing subjective, bodily actions with objective social force so that the most apparently subjective individual acts take on social meaning. Although Bourdieu believes that the notion of the habitus resolves the subject-object dualism of social

theory, in fact, the habitus relapses against Bourdieu's intentions into the very objectivism which he rejects" (King, 2000, p. 417).

However, Reay (2004) puts forward a strong argument against such claims. She argues that although habitus is a product of past social conditioning within the family, it could also be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations. She states that "while habitus reflects the social position in which it was constructed, it also carries within it the genesis of new creative responses that are capable of transcending the social conditions in which it was produced" (Reay, 2004, p. 434 - 435). This suggests that the notion of habitus carries the possibility of social mobility.

Despite such criticism, the review of the literature highlights the value of Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital in analysing the institutional influences on teaching and learning in higher education at CU. It indicates the vital role of the institution's position in the field of higher education in developing its policies and practices. These policies and practices affect the institution's entry requirements for the EFL programme, teaching approaches, assessment criteria and other aspects that affect teaching and learning. In the context of this study, the notion of institutional influences is utilised to analyse these important influences on the policies and practices enacted by CU in relation to teaching and learning in the EFL programme; and how these policies and practices influence the students' learning experiences.

3.3. Family educational background and students' learning experiences

This section conceptualises the impact of family educational background on students' learning experiences in higher education. Bourdieu's conceptual tool of *cultural capital* is used to analyse the influence of such a social structure (i.e. the family), on students' learning experiences in the EFL programme. In the present study, cultural capital is understood as *competence* (i.e. knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that students acquire from their families, and which can help and support

their learning. Thus, this section discusses the ways in which the presence or absence of cultural capital influences the students' learning experience in the EFL programme at CU.

3.3.1. Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital

Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital has become highly influential in analysing the impact of familial education on students' learning experiences in higher education (e.g. Gale and Parker, 2017; Georg, 2016; Alhawsawi, 2013; Zimdars et al., 2009; Thomas and Quinn, 2007). The concept enabled researchers to view culture as an asset that provides access to rewards, and which can be transmitted from one generation to the next (Lareau and Weininger, 2003). However, cultural capital is differentiated from economic capital, in that it consists of the non-materialistic and non-economic parental cultural codes, practices and dispositions transmitted to children through family socialisation (Tzanakis, 2011). Bourdieu (1977) argues that the possession of cultural capital represents the familiarity with the dominant culture and that the educational system presupposes the possession of such capital.

Moreover, the notion of cultural capital adds an important dimension to the understanding of social class, as it reflects an individual's class, which manifests itself in certain behaviours that are rewarded in the educational setting (Sullivan, 2007). In other words, success in the educational system is facilitated by the possession of cultural capital and differs along social class. For example, in the case of upper-class families, students are able to access and gain profit from "elite cultural resources [that] can become cultural capital valued in society" and in the educational setting (Tzanakis, 2011, p. 77). On the other hand, students from lower class families, who do not possess cultural capital, are more likely to be marginalised in the educational setting (Sayed and Ahmed, 2011; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

However, Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction in general and his concept of cultural capital in particular has received some criticism (e.g. see Goldthorpe, 2007; Lareau and Weininger, 2003; Kingston, 2001; Broderick and Hubbard, 2000; De

Graaf et al., 2000, De Graaf, 1986). For example, some educational researchers challenge the idea that modern educational systems facilitate the process of social inequalities in which individuals and families maintain their social status over time (Goldthorpe, 2007; Kingston, 2001). This is because over the last couple of decades and during the expansion of the educational systems (e.g. secondary and university education) in the modern world, studies have shown that “substantial and predominantly upward educational mobility, did in fact occur between generations” (Goldthorpe, 2007, p. 7). This suggests that students that belong to lower-class families were able to acquire culture capital and move up the social ladder because of their education. This challenges the view that the family is the only or main way for students to acquire cultural capital.

In a different example, Broderick and Hubbard (2000) examined and criticised the fact that Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction is based on the assumption that teachers value elite culture. In their study, they analysed whether students’ cultural capital impress teachers and whether this had any effect on the teachers’ judgments and grades. They concluded that cultural capital (i.e. household educational resources) had no significant impact on the relationship between teachers’ perceptions and students’ grades. Similarly, De Graaf (1986) argued that some forms of cultural capital (i.e. parents’ participation in high culture) had no impact on the children’s educational attainment.

In spite of such critique, the review of the literature shows the value of Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital in analysing the impact families’ educational background has on students’ learning experiences (see chapter six).

3.3.2. Forms of cultural capital

Bourdieu (1986) states that cultural capital exists in three different forms: *embodied*, *objectified* and *institutionalised*. The embodied form reflects the *accumulation* of cultural capital, which begins at birth and is acquired from the family. Bourdieu (1986) describes the embodied form as:

the long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body... [that represent an] external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus, [which] cannot be transmitted instantaneously (unlike money, property rights, or even titles of nobility) by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange (p. 17).

Through socialisation, children essentially acquire certain practices such as habits, traditions, cultural experiences and knowledge from their families. The social conditions of the transmission and acquisition of these practices assumes the investment of time dedicated to learning and/or the exposure to family members who possess cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979). However, direct interaction with members of the family is not a necessary condition for the transmission and acquisition of cultural capital from the possessor (e.g. a family member) to the receiver (e.g. a child). The presence of the possessor alone can implicitly influence the practices of the receiver (Alhawsawi, 2013; Sacker et al., 2002). For example, educated parents can act as role models who provide the necessary support for their child's learning.

The second form of cultural capital is the objectified form, which refers to the artefacts (e.g. books, computers, paintings or televisions) that an individual or family possesses, and which can be used to gain intellectual profit. Bourdieu (1986) argues that cultural capital in its objectified state can only be explained by its relationship with cultural capital in its embodied form. This relationship assumes that individuals are able to transmit their embodied cultural capital (i.e. knowledge, skills) through artefacts. In this case, artefacts (e.g. computers) themselves do indicate the possession of cultural capital. However, the true benefit of such artefacts is only attained when individuals understand how to use them as an educational resource (i.e. embodied cultural capital). Therefore, in order to maximise the benefit of artefacts, family members must have the knowledge and skills to use these resources in order to support the students' learning.

Cultural capital in its institutionalised form refers to academic qualifications that represent "a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a

conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 20). Bourdieu suggests that academic qualifications are seen as a distinct form of cultural capital and that “institutionalisation performs a function for cultural capital analogous to that performed by money in the case of economic capital” (Lareau and Weininger, 2007, p. 2). These qualifications are acquired through academic institutions (e.g. schools and universities) that offer individuals the credentials that will verify their possession of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are valued in the educational setting. Universities, for example, offer students from various disciplines universally recognised credentials that attest to the amount of embodied capital that students possess. Furthermore, the value of the institutionalised form of cultural capital can be seen on both the personal and societal level. On the societal level, for example, individuals considered high in cultural capital (e.g. academics) are expected to act and think in certain ways. On the personal level, households that possess an institutionalised form of cultural capital can have an impact on students’ learning experiences. Educated family members, for example, can project behaviours and attitudes that reflect their cultural capital, which in turn can influence the academic choices made by students.

3.3.3. Different interpretations of cultural capital

Although educational studies that make use of the notion of cultural capital do demonstrate a degree of consensus in distinguishing between different forms of cultural capital, they also reflect different ways in which the concept is understood. This is because Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital is not clearly defined, and thus has been operationalised in different ways (Sullivan, 2001). One of the earliest studies that utilised culture capital in educational research was carried out by DiMaggio (1982). He conceptualised cultural capital as knowledge, attitudes and participation in high cultural activities such as attending art galleries, theatre or reading. These cultural activities reflect an individual’s social class and familiarity with the dominant culture. The participation in such activities offers students the opportunity to increase their knowledge and develop their skills and succeed in the educational setting. DiMaggio argues that students’ familiarity with the dominant

culture leads “teachers...[to] communicate more easily with students, give them more attention and special assistance, and perceive them as more intelligent or gifted than students that lack cultural capital” (p. 190). This suggests that the culture of educational institutions (e.g. school and university) often reflects the dominant culture.

De Graaf (1986) views cultural capital as a general term that encompasses the knowledge of particular skills (e.g. reading) and participation in beaux-arts such as galleries, theatre, the opera and concerts. People attending such activities are exposed to middle class culture, which often reflects their own social class. De Graaf (1986) argues that the more people attend such activities the more culture they accumulate. Thus, this type of cultural capital could be described as an embodied and objectified that students can draw on to succeed in their studies. However, De Graaf et al. (2000) and Crook (1997) distinguish between different aspects of cultural capital and their effects on students’ educational attainment. They argue that parental reading behaviour, and not parental beaux-arts participation, have the most noticeable effect on students’ educational attainment.

Brown et al. (2016) interpret cultural capital as a form of competence that encompasses knowledge, skills, educational qualifications and credentials. This form of cultural capital can be described as an institutionalised form, which acts as a currency of opportunities that individuals draw on to obtain advantages in certain contexts (Brown et al., 2016). For example, individuals might use titles such as ‘Dr’ or ‘Prof’ to receive special treatment and respect (Lee and Bowen, 2006). People also use such capital to express their social status in society. In the context of KSA, for example, individuals use titles such as ‘Imam’ or ‘Sheikh’ which indicates their high status of knowledge of Islamic scripture. Such titles indicate not only religious knowledge but also their privileged status in society. Sheikhs and Imams are always consulted by government officials and also relied on in managing the public (Alhawsawi, 2013).

Sullivan (2007, 2001) conceptualised cultural capital as linguistic competence or the ability to use 'educated' language. In her study of the impact of parental education on the development of students' linguistic ability, Sullivan established a link between parents' level of education and the development of students' linguistic abilities. She found that such linguistic competence is transmitted to children through cultural activities such reading at home and supervised TV watching in which parents engage with their children. These activities were found to have a significant influence on the students' motivational levels and educational attainment. This suggests that parents who provide their children with creative and practical learning activities (e.g. painting, gardening and participating in poetry or debates) will support the development of their linguistic competence. Sullivan further states that "parental cultural capital is strongly associated with parental social class and with parental qualifications", which confirms Bourdieu's view that cultural capital is unequally distributed according to social class and education (Sullivan, 2001, p. 21).

Lee and Bowen (2006) interpret cultural capital as parents' educational attainment and their involvement in their child's education (e.g. assisting with homework, and management of the child's home activities). They argue that parents with higher educational credentials often possess academic knowledge and skills as well as wealth which enables them to engage their children with different educational artefacts (e.g. books and computers). Thus, the possession of such capital allows parents to be more involved in their children's education. Lee and Bowen (2006) further argue that such involvement enables parents to transmit their knowledge and skills to their children, which has a positive impact on their educational attainment. On the other hand, parents who lack educational credentials are less likely to be involved in their children's education, which is likely to lead to lower academic achievement (Lee and Bowen, 2006; Hill and Taylor, 2004). This suggests that children's lower academic achievements are linked with less involvement by the family. In other word, children's academic success is strongly associated with the involvement and support of family members, as Lee and Bowen (2006) state:

parents with different demographic characteristics exhibited different types of involvement and the types of involvement exhibited by parents from dominant groups had the strongest association with [the students' academic] achievement (p. 193).

In the context of KSA, Alhawsawi (2013) conceptualised cultural capital as a general term that encompasses “knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are acquired by individuals from their families and which can be used as an asset that can help and support the students’ learning in higher education” (p. 61). In his study of students’ learning experiences in Saudi higher education, Alhawsawi used the notion of cultural capital to analyse the influence of students’ families’ educational background on their learning experiences in an EFL programme at a Saudi University. Arguing that families are considered a key factor in understanding how students learn and develop their learning skills and competence, Alhawsawi (2013) found that the students’ families’ educational attainment, the resource and materials they provide for their children and the wealth of a family influences the accumulation and the transmission of cultural capital. The development of the students’ cultural capital was through various means such as the use of media, books, attitudes and behaviour of and within the family, and appropriate role models. His findings show that “the possession of cultural capital positively influences the students’ learning experiences [in the EFL programme] in terms of utilizing different learning skills and resources” (Alhawsawi, 2013, p. 178). He further indicates that students who lack cultural capital are more likely to be disadvantaged in relation to their learning experiences in higher education.

[The] lack of cultural capital negatively impacts on the student learning experiences by limiting their participation, confidence and their interactions with their peers and teachers in the class, and the ways they learn (i.e., dependency on teachers), and a loss of confidence and low self-esteem. These students would have to be supported by the university to address these weaknesses and any shortfalls (p. 178).

The above discussion reviewed the relevant literature in relation to the impact of family educational background on students’ learning experiences. It explored different aspects of Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital and how the concept allowed researchers to view culture as an asset that may advantage individuals in

certain contexts. The discussion also indicated that cultural capital is seen as an indicator of social class and how people are positioned in the wider social structure based on their capital (Lareau and Weininger, 2003). In addition, the review highlighted the different forms of cultural capital. It is worth noting that these different forms of culture capital intersect with each other, and therefore their influence is observed in different ways (Ahmed and Sayed, 2009). The review concluded by highlighting the different ways in which researchers have conceptualised such a concept.

In the context of the current study, cultural capital is conceptualised as a term that includes knowledge, skills and attitudes that are acquired by students from their families and which can be used as an asset to support their learning in the EFL programme at CU. The next section conceptualises the influence of teaching approaches on students' learning experiences in the EFL programme.

3.4. Teaching approaches and students' learning experiences

The review of the literature shows that the teaching approaches that lecturers adopt in their teaching have a significant influence on the students' learning experiences in higher education (Alhawsawi, 2016; Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Ahmed, 2012; Muller et al., 2012; Entwistle and Smith, 2002; Prosser, 1999). These teaching approaches are driven by different philosophies (i.e. behaviourism vs constructivism) that describe the lecturers' conceptions about knowledge, teaching, students and assessment procedures (Troudi et al., 2009; Norton et al. 2005; Evans, 2000). The analysis of the teaching approaches provides valuable insights into the interactions between lecturers and students inside the classroom. Thus, this section discusses the influence of lecturers' teaching approaches on students' learning experiences in higher education.

3.4.1. Teaching approaches in higher education

During the early 1990s, a number of researchers examined the relationship between lecturers' conceptions about teaching and learning and their teaching approaches

in higher education programmes (Kember and Gow, 1994; Martin and Ramsden, 1992; Samuelowicz and Bain, 1992; Dall’Alba, 1991; Martin and Balla, 1991). These studies found that the teaching approaches which lecturers use are influenced by their conceptions and experiences of what teaching and learning is. These conceptions have a powerful impact on the lecturers’ choice of teaching methods and their views about their roles, students and assessment, which in turn influence students’ learning in higher education (Alhawsawi, 2013; Ahmed, 2012; Kember et al., 2008; Entwistle and Peterson, 2004). In general, different research place teaching conceptions along a spectrum with two ends, which has “teaching as an *engagement* process at one end and as knowledge *transmission* at the other end” (Alhawsawi, 2013, p. 63). For example, Kember (1997) identified four different conceptions of teaching, with teaching as *conveying information* at one end and teaching to bring about *conceptual change* at the other end.

Another important example of lecturers’ conceptions of teaching in higher education is demonstrated in the work of Prosser et al. (1994). They identified six different categories of teaching conceptions held by lecturers in first year university science courses. These conceptions are further discussed in detail to exemplify the wide range of conceptions that lecturers hold in relation to teaching in higher education. The *first* conception which Prosser et al. (1994) identified is *teaching as transmitting concepts of the syllabus*. Lecturers that hold this conception focus on the knowledge and information as detailed in the syllabus or materials. They entirely rely on and follow what is in the syllabus, and view their primary role as transmitting the exact content of the syllabus to the students. In this conception, lecturers do not focus on establishing links between different components of the syllabus; nor do they question its suitability for the students.

The *second* conception is teaching as *transmitting the lecturers’ knowledge*. As in the first conception, lecturers who hold this view, perceive their role as knowledge transmitters and do not question whether the information they disseminate is coherent nor do they pay attention to the students’ needs. However, rather than following the exact syllabus, lecturers structure knowledge and information

according to their own understanding and then pass it on to the students.

In both the conceptions above, teaching is mainly focused around the lecturers' interests and not the students' needs. Lecturers simply assume that all the students have similar needs and learn in the same manner. In this approach it seems that lecturers do not value the students' input when transmitting to them either what is in the syllabus or their own structure of knowledge. Learning therefore involves memorisation techniques and retaining the knowledge and information transmitted by the lecturers.

The *third* conception that Prosser et al. (1994) identified is teaching as *helping students to acquire the concepts of the syllabus*. Within this conception of teaching, as in the first one, lecturers focus on the knowledge and information as detailed in the syllabus or materials. However, rather than viewing teaching as an act of knowledge transmission, lecturers see it as an act of helping students acquire the concepts from the syllabus. They enable students to understand the relationships between the concepts as presented within the syllabus by encouraging them to critically engage with the content. In this case, and unlike the first two conceptions, lecturers always question the suitability of the materials for the students and consider their prior knowledge as being important. In this conception, teaching starts to become more centred around the student.

The *fourth* conception is teaching as *helping students to acquire the lecturer's knowledge*. Lecturers holding this conception focus on their own understanding of the knowledge and information. They view their roles as assisting students with acquiring the concepts and understanding the relationships between them. This is done by structuring the concepts and information presented by the syllabus in a manner that is accessible for the students in order to enable them to interact with the content. However, unlike lecturers who hold the second conception of teaching and learning, these lecturers neither follow the syllabus literally nor present strong views about how the students should learn. Instead they focus on the suitability of the materials for the students' learning levels.

The *fifth* conception Prosser et al. (1994) mentions is teaching as *helping students develop concepts*. Within this conception, lecturers focus their teaching around the students' views of the subject matter rather than their own worldviews or those dictated by the syllabus. Lecturers view their roles as facilitating student learning by helping them develop their own ideas and thoughts.

The *sixth* conception lecturers hold is teaching as *helping students change concepts*. As in the fifth conception, lecturers focus their teaching around the needs of the students, not around their own interests or those dictated by the syllabus. However, they differ from the previous conception in that they view their roles as helping students change their concepts or worldviews. The focus of teaching and learning in these final two conceptions centres around the students and their needs.

Although these various conceptions of teaching presented by Prosser et al. (1994) and other researchers (e.g. see Kember, 1997) do differ, they show a high degree of commonality in relation to the range of teaching approaches adopted by lecturers in higher education. They classify teaching as an engagement process at its highest level and teaching as knowledge transmission at its lowest level. Lecturers who perceive their roles as knowledge transmitters simply focus on passing on the exact content of the curriculum or their own knowledge to the students regardless of the needs of the latter. They usually depend entirely on the textbook and prefer monologue lectures as a method of teaching.

In contrast, more confident lecturers tend to deploy teaching practices that allow students to engage with the content and become co-creators of knowledge (Northcote, 2009). These lecturers devote much effort towards making the learning content more accessible and interesting for the students and use a number of different teaching methods such as dialogue, class discussions, and group and pair work. These different conceptions can be placed under two broad teaching orientations characterised as teacher-centred and student-centred approaches as discussed below.

3.4.2. Teacher-centred approach

The teacher-centred approach is associated with the principles of the behaviourist philosophies of teaching and learning, which emphasise the necessity of replicating the learned behaviour and lecturer-imparted knowledge in its exact form. The idea is that the lecturer holds the ultimate authority and students are ‘empty vessels’ whose role is to absorb and retain information through passive listening. Thus, one of the main criticisms of this approach is that lecturers assume that they know what is important for their students to learn, without giving them the opportunity to voice their opinions or address their individual needs (Ramsden et al., 2007; Hancock et al., 2002). In such an approach, lecturers act as gatekeepers to the knowledge and are responsible for transmitting this knowledge to the students. They tend to allow students to access knowledge only through a certain hierarchy that starts them from basic concepts before moving to more complex ones (Schweisfurth, 2013). Students are expected to retain and recall the exact information transmitted by their lecturers and the textbook.

Lecturers that adopt a teacher-centred approach tend to understand learning as an accumulation of knowledge and behaviours, and view their roles as knowledge transmitters. In such an approach, lecturers are responsible for deciding the appropriate areas and methods of inquiry, legitimacy of information, and what constitutes knowledge (Kain, 2003). Ramsden (2004) argues that “many university teachers implicitly or explicitly define the task of teaching undergraduates as the transmission of authoritative content [to the students]” (p. 108). Thus, lecturers use teaching practices that enable them to take control over all aspects of classroom activities, such as lecture-based pedagogy. Students are expected to take on a passive role and learn through different methods of memorisation and drilling techniques which emphasise the formation of habits. In this approach, traditional assessment methods are often used to compare students to one another and to measure how well students are able to retain the accumulated knowledge and behaviours. These assessment practices usually include exams and tests that focus on short-answer, multiple-choice, and true-false questions.

3.4.3. Student-centred approach

The student-centred approach, also known as the student-focused approach, is considered to be a reaction to the teacher-centred ones. This approach is associated with the principles of constructivist philosophies of teaching and learning in which the construction of knowledge is shared between the learner and lecturer, with lecturers taking on a facilitative role rather than a whole-class instructive one (Schweisfurth, 2011, 2013). Unlike the teacher-centred approach, the focus moves away from the lecturer and the curriculum and towards the learners. This view of teaching and learning emphasises the importance of constructive interaction between the learner, the lecturer, and the content in order to achieve quality learning. Central to this philosophy, is the notion that learners construct their own understanding of the taught content. Thus, this perspective rejects the assumption that knowledge is objective. Learners are seen as unique individuals with diverse needs who have an active role in constructing their knowledge and understanding of the social context through their own experiences (Poerksen, 2004; Kain, 2003). Learners are encouraged to take more responsibility for their learning.

In the context of EFL teaching and learning in higher education, different methods of instruction are guided by the student-centred approach, which includes cooperative learning, problem-based learning, participant learning, and critical pedagogy. All of these methods highlight the importance of students' active involvement through dialogue in the process of constructing knowledge (Mascolo, 2009). For example, problem-based learning emphasizes the effective use of task-based problems to engage students in active learning. This means that students learn English by solving problems that are carefully constructed by the teacher according to the curriculum. Here, teachers facilitate such a process by organising students into groups and allowing students to evaluate themselves and their peers (Coffin, 2013; Othman and Shah, 2013).

In another example of the student-centred approach, critical pedagogy encourages EFL teachers to engage their students in a critical dialogue, and help them identify the topics that they themselves see as problematic, and reflect on such issues

(Riasati and Mollaei, 2012). Critical pedagogy therefore emphasises the importance of the students' context and personal experiences in the learning process. It aims to empower students and make them agents of social transformation (Shor, 1996). Within EFL teaching and learning, critical pedagogy "functions with the basic theory that materials and approaches should be relevant to the social, political, and cultural conditions of each group of students. Topics should be locally situated and should meet learner needs in the society which they live in. It is also important to find subject matter that provides meaningful content for lessons" (Yoshizawa, 2012, p. 23).

Within the student-centred approach, assessment is seen as a continuous process that supplements learning, which enables lecturers to monitor the progress of each individual student and emphasises the importance of feedback (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2011; Mascolo, 2009). It is not purely content-driven, based only on memorisation and rote learning (Schweisfurth, 2013). Instead of relying on test scores, lecturers aim to obtain qualitative insights into the students' level of understanding and comprehension. However, examinations are still adopted, but are considered as a fundamental part of a continuous process. Different assessment practices have been associated with the student-centred approach and include open-ended questions, group and pair work, class discussions, and portfolios (James, 2006).

The student-centred approach is commonly considered pedagogically superior to the teaching practices associated with a teacher-centred approach and is often associated with quality education (Ginsburg et al., 2008). However, several scholars question its associated benefits with disadvantaged students. Schweisfurth (2013) argues that it is important to acknowledge that a student-centred approach does not necessarily take into consideration the students' background and does not explain how students from different social backgrounds interact with such an approach. Schweisfurth (2013) further suggests that a student-centred approach is most beneficial for students from privileged backgrounds, as it reflects their cultural capital. By contrast, students from disadvantaged lower-class backgrounds are more

likely to be satisfied with the teacher-centred approach, since it does not assume any prior knowledge or experience.

It is important to mention that the literature in relation to teaching approaches in higher education does indicate a third type of approach, which is *structured pedagogy*. It is characterised as an approach that combines elements from both the student-centred and teacher-centred ones. It is described as “[an] approach to teaching that includes both instructional design and delivery procedures...[and] is branded by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process (Archer and Hughes, 2011, p. 1). In this approach, lectures have a clear purpose of the lesson and follow structured steps in helping students develop their critical learning skills and engage with the content (Boghossian, 2003). Central to this approach, is the repeated act of asking questions, which is considered an important method of developing students critical thinking skills and maximising their engagement (Paul and Elder, 2006). Learning is therefore viewed as an ongoing process in which student involvement in the construction of knowledge is vital. Similar to the student-centred, structured pedagogy emphasises the importance of students’ prior knowledge and experiences which is constantly checked by asking questions (Kuhn, 2007). In terms of assessment, lecturers follow a similar instructional approach in which students progress is closely monitored step by step through continuous feedback (Baird et al., 2015; Krause et al., 2006). As the above discussion depicts, structured pedagogy shares many similar aspects with student-centred approach in respect to the role of lectures, students and assessment practices. Therefore, this study considers structured pedagogy as part of the student-centred approach.

Having reviewed the relevant literature in relation to the teacher-centred and student-centred approaches commonly used in teaching in higher education, the following table summarises the main aspects of these two approaches. It compares the different aspects of each approach in relation to learning, lecturers’ roles, learners’ roles, teaching strategies, and assessment.

Table 1: Student-centred versus teacher-centred approaches in higher education

	Teacher-centred Approach	Student-centred Approach
View of learning	Accumulation of knowledge through memorisation and rote learning	Assisting students to develop their skills and to practise, construct and obtain knowledge
Lecturers' roles	Knowledge transmitter, authoritative role	Facilitator and co-constructor of knowledge
Views about students	Passive receivers of knowledge that is transmitted by lecturers and from textbooks	Active actors and constructors of knowledge and possessing prior experience and knowledge
Teaching strategies	Lecture-based pedagogy	Active teaching with classroom discussions, presentations, and group work
Assessment	Assessment that measures the accumulated knowledge and behaviours that students are able to recall at the end of the course (e.g. multiple choice and define questions)	Assessment understood as a continuous process that measures the learning skills and the practical application of these skills (e.g. open ended questions)

As Table 1 demonstrates, the two teaching approaches reflect different views about learning, lecturers' roles, learners' roles, teaching strategies, and assessment. The traditional or teacher-centred approach views learning as a process of knowledge accumulation that is acquired through memorisation and rote learning. Lecturers who use such an approach believe that their primary role is to transmit their knowledge and that of the curriculum to the students. These lecturers take on an authoritative role and thus use teaching strategies that enable them to have more

control inside the classroom. Students are seen as passive recipients who are supposed to sit quietly and listen while the lecturer teaches. Thus, students are not expected to question the logic between what is being taught and their individual needs. Assessment is seen as evaluating how well students can recall the knowledge that they have been taught.

In contrast, the student-centred approach views learning as a continuous process in helping students access, practise and construct knowledge according to their needs. Lecturers who use this approach view their role as facilitating the students' learning. Students are encouraged to actively engage in constructing their concepts and ideas. Assessment is seen as a continuous process that measures students' skills and development.

3.4.4. Different studies of EFL teaching approaches in higher education

In the context of EFL teaching and learning in higher education, various studies have investigated teaching approaches in higher education. This section reviews a number of these studies, with a focus on Asia and the Gulf region. In Pakistan, for example, Ahmed (2012) investigated the influence of different pedagogical strategies on students' learning experience in a public university. His findings revealed students' perceptions of lecturers' attitudes and teaching approaches, the different pedagogical strategies used by lecturers, and the influence these strategies had on their participation in the English classroom. Lecturers who used student-focused pedagogy were found to play a facilitator's role in the classroom, creating an environment that enabled them to listen to students' opinions, respect their arguments, appreciate their feedback on teaching practices, and demonstrate empathy to their problems. Thus, students felt encouraged and motivated to participate fully in classroom activities. His findings further show that in contrast, lecturers who adopted a teacher-centred approach, viewed their role as knowledge transmitters and preferred monologue lectures in their teaching. In such classes, students were usually not given the opportunity to ask questions or express their

opinions to these lecturers. This resulted in students feeling discouraged and demotivated from participating in the class.

In the context of KSA, Alhawsawi (2013), in a study of EFL students' learning experiences in higher education, found that lecturers who deployed a student-focused approach viewed themselves as facilitators of learning with the role of encouraging students to become active agents in the process of co-constructing knowledge. These lecturers were found to create a learning environment in which students' voices and opinions is respected and heard. Such lecturers see their teaching approach as a way of assisting students to develop and improve their learning skills as well as their English language competence. They view assessment as an integral part of the learning journey and emphasise the importance of student feedback. However, lecturers who used a teacher-centred pedagogy viewed their role as knowledge transmitters who impart language-based information in its exact form to their students. In this approach, students are expected to wait passively for the information and knowledge to be transmitted by the lecturer. For these lecturers, assessment is an instrument to measure the students' ability to recall memorised information with the goal of passing the exams. He further reveals that students from privileged backgrounds were more equipped to handle student-centred pedagogy, due to their cultural capital, than their peers from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Ansari (2012) investigated the challenges EFL lecturers face in Saudi higher education. In his study, he discovered that a large number of Saudi students struggled to deal with student-centred approaches. He found that the main reason was that the pre-university education system in Saudi Arabia did not prepare students for such an approach. Within the Saudi education system, there is a tendency to rely upon prescriptive and authoritarian teaching approaches that do not encourage students' participation and active involvement (Melibari, 2015). This suggests that Saudi students are more familiar with teaching practices that are heavily dependent on the teacher and the textbook. Most of the students' past learning experience was in a controlled learning environment, where students

completely relied on teachers to tell them exactly what and how learn. Therefore, when joining university, students were suddenly faced with teaching approaches that challenged their past learning experiences. This resulted in students struggling to adapt to teaching methods that required increased participation and active engagement.

In a different study, Zahid (2016) compared the effectiveness of different teaching practices adopted by Native English Speaking (NES) lecturers and Non-Native English Speaking (NNES) lecturers in developing students' language skills and competence in a Saudi university. He concluded that NES lecturers played an important role in facilitating students' learning and were more successful in creating a classroom environment that encouraged student interaction and development of language competence. NNES lecturers, on the other hand, provided a more serious and controlled learning environment, which was favourable for some students (Zahid, 2016; Alseweed, 2012).

In the context of the current study, the two teaching approaches, namely, teacher-centred and student-centred, in relation to the lecturers' country of origin (see section 3.5) are used to analyse the influence of lecturers' teaching approaches on students' learning experiences. These different teaching approaches are used to describe the teaching practices deployed by lecturers in the EFL programme at CU and the impact on students' learning experiences.

3.5. Summary and research questions

Students' learning in higher education has been investigated according to different theoretical conceptualisations. Behaviourism, one of the earliest perspectives used to study students' learning, perceives learning as an observable behaviour and emphasises the importance of habit-formation. However, the behaviourist approach in understanding learning has been strongly criticised by psychologists and others, as not providing any valuable insights into how learners experience, conceptualise, perceive and understand their learning process (Lightbown and Spada, 2013).

Within the field of psychology, the Approaches to Learning and Teaching (ALT) has been a prominent means of analysing teaching and learning in higher education. This approach is largely based on inventory-based studies that aim to understand students' approaches to learning in higher education. One important drawback of the ALT perspective, however, is the detachment of individuals from the learning context (Ahmed, 2012; Ashwin, 2009). This indicates that within the ALT approach, context-related issues are not given enough attention. However, rather than studying students' EFL learning in isolation from specific contextual issues, this study is interested in obtaining a holistic account of students' learning experiences in which structural issues such as the institution and family educational background are considered. This study therefore aims to investigate students' learning experiences in the EFL programme at CU from three different perspectives.

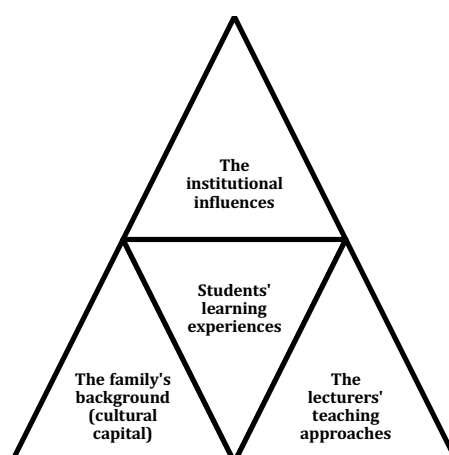
The first perspective uses Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, and habitus to analyse the institutional influences on teaching and learning in higher education. As discussed in section 3.2, the literature shows the important effect that institutional policies and practices have on students' learning experiences, and denotes that the institution's position within the field of higher education has a direct link to the development of its policies and practices. In turn, these policies and practices influence the institution's entry requirements for the EFL programme, teaching practices, assessment criteria and other aspects that affect teaching and learning.

The second perspective, as reviewed in section 3.3, discussed the relevant literature in relation to the effects of students' family educational background on their learning experiences. The concept of cultural capital is used to examine what students bring to the learning setting. Cultural capital allows the study to explore students' learning outside the context of the institution, and the ways in which such capital brings advantages or disadvantages to students from different social backgrounds in the EFL programme.

The third perspective, as discussed in section 3.4, examines the influence of teaching approaches used in higher education on students' learning experiences. The literature indicates that the different teaching approaches (i.e. teacher-centred and student-centred) are informed by the different philosophies that lecturers adopt in their teaching. These approaches that lecturers deploy inside the EFL classroom have a significant effect on the way students learn. This highlights the ways in which students from different social backgrounds negotiate their learning and react to different teaching methods. The teaching approaches of lecturers in the context of this study also relate with accounts, as the review suggests, of where the lecturers are from. The notion of nativeness verses non-nativeness is therefore used as an interesting extra level of analysis.

In conclusion, this study set out to investigate the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme at CU in KSA. The investigation used different theoretical notions that constructed its framework, including institutional influences, cultural capital and teaching approaches, in order to answer the main research question. This framework allows the study to gain a holistic and context specific understanding of how students experience learning in the EFL programme at CU from their own perspectives and those of the lecturers, and is supplemented by an understanding of social and institutional issues. The following Figure illustrates the framework of this study based on the preceding discussion and review of literature.

Figure 2: Illustration of theoretical framework



Following the brief summary of the literature chapter, the overarching question of this inquiry is: **How do students experience learning in the undergraduate EFL programme at CU?** This question is further divided into three sub-questions:

1. How do institutional influences affect teaching and learning in the EFL programme?
2. How does the educational background of the family influence students' learning experiences in the EFL programme?
3. How do the teaching approaches adopted by lecturers affect students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom?

Each of these questions is addressed in a separate findings chapter (5, 6, and 7). The next chapter outlines the methodology used to investigate the main research question and sub-questions in relation to students' learning experiences in the EFL programme at CU.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter reviews the methodological approach used in this research. It begins by discussing the epistemological and ontological assumptions that inform this inquiry. The chapter then outlines the research design (i.e. case study) and its link to the methodological orientation of this study. This is followed by a discussion of the data collection tools, the sampling techniques, methods of data analysis, and the measures of trustworthiness and positionality. Finally, the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study are discussed.

4.1. Philosophical orientation

In order to understand how students experience learning in the EFL programme, I must first decide on the appropriate research approach for this inquiry. This involves exploring different philosophical paradigms that determine the epistemological assumptions and beliefs about the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known; and ontological theories and assumptions about the nature of reality and what can be known about it that guide this study. In general, there are different paradigms, such as positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and interpretivism, that inform how researchers understand the nature of knowledge as well as the way in which they conduct their research and the methodological orientations they espouse (Cohen et al., 2011; Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Guba and Lincoln, 2005).

The positivist paradigm represents the traditional form of research and holds a deterministic philosophy in that it assumes the existence of a single objective reality waiting to be studied, captured and understood through the isolation of cause and effect (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Guba and Lincoln (2005, p. 203) state that the positivist paradigm assumes “there is a ‘real’ reality ‘out there’, apart from the flawed human apprehension of it...that reality can be approached only through the utilisation of methods that prevent human contamination of its apprehension or comprehension”. Therefore, knowledge is viewed as being independent from the

individual, and the researcher is external to the research site. Researchers working within this paradigm conduct careful observations and measurements of the objective reality, which allows them to quantify the phenomena at hand, and produce findings that can be both replicated and generalised (Flick, 2006). This paradigm uses terms such as validity, reliability and objectivity to evaluate the quality of research.

However, many social researchers are critical of the use of the scientific method in the social world, and reject the belief that human behaviour is governed by the same laws as the natural world. They “share a view that the subject matter of the social sciences—people and their institutions—is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences. The study of the social world therefore requires a different logic of research procedure, one that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order” (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). In other words, social researchers need to adopt an epistemological stance that reflects and capitalises on such differences. Unlike positivism, the interpretivist paradigm asserts that there is no objective knowledge independent of the individual; rather, knowledge is subjectively constructed. This epistemological assumption emphasises that “all human actions are meaningful and have to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices when we discuss how knowledge is gained. In order to make sense of the social world, the researcher needs to understand the meanings that form and arise from interactive social behaviour” (Scott and Robin, 1996, p. 18). This denotes that the interpretivist paradigm highlights the impact that the social context has in shaping the respondents’ viewpoints about reality. It also asserts the importance of researchers accessing the participants’ context in order to understand the subjective meaning of social action. As O’Donoghue (2007, p. 10) elaborates:

This approach [interpretivism] emphasizes social interaction as the basis for knowledge. The researcher uses his or her skills as a social being to try to understand how others understand their world. Knowledge, in this view, is constructed by mutual negotiation and it is specific to the situation being investigated.

In the interpretivist paradigm, the traditional positivist criteria of validity and reliability are replaced by terms such as trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). This is established through the research design and data collection process (see section 4.8). In the context of the current study, this paradigm reflects my epistemological stance as an *interpretivist*. This position allowed me to gain access to the participants' specific context and understand how it shapes their realities. It helped in contextualising students' learning experiences in light of the role of the institution, familial educational background, and teaching approaches. It also enabled me to view reality from the participants' own perspectives, and to examine these realities in terms of the existing literature in the field of EFL teaching and learning in higher education. Bryman (2016) describes this process as the double hermeneutic. Throughout the course of a study, the researcher provides an interpretation of the participants' views about reality; but also the researcher's interpretations are further understood in relation to literature of the discipline.

In relation to ontology, *constructivism* reflects the ontological assumptions which inform this study. While objectivism implies that the social phenomena that confront the researcher are beyond the reach of social actors or their influence, constructivism "asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction but are in a constant state of revision" (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). This suggests that researchers always present a specific version of social reality, instead of one that can be considered as definitive. Fry et al. (2009) argue that this assumption is particularly useful for the arts and humanities education that involves the consent revision and making of knowledge, and therefore generates multiple and amendable realities.

In addition, researchers articulate different types of research questions according to the paradigm they choose in their studies. On this, O'Donoghue (2007, p. 12) states:

[On] this matter of different 'types' of research questions, the argument is that the adoption of a different paradigm can predispose a researcher to approach a research problem differently in terms of the questions

asked. This situation will, in turn, lead the researcher to choose different research methodologies and research methods.

Thus, the interpretivist paradigm used in this study has influenced the way in which the research questions were formulated. As mentioned before, this paradigm emphasises the importance of understanding how respondents interpret their world and construct their own realities. This indicates that this paradigm is particularly useful in investigating *how* students experience learning.

4.2. Methodological orientation

This research is conducted using a qualitative methodological orientation. The qualitative approach can be defined as “an enquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (Creswell 2007, p. 5). Qualitative researchers usually share common features. They generally take a holistic perspective in conducting their research, attend to the interpretive nature of inquiry, and situate their studies within the social and cultural context of the participants. The decision to conduct this research using a qualitative research approach is based on two reasons.

First, as mentioned before, the subject matter of the social sciences is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences. This requires me to espouse an epistemological (i.e. interpretivist) and ontological (i.e. constructivist) position that helps in grasping the social meaning of reality. Similarly, qualitative research emphasises how individuals interpret their realities differently, and embodies a view of social reality that is constantly shifting (Bryman, 2016). This suggests that qualitative research goes hand-in-hand with the philosophical stance chosen in this study. The qualitative research approach enabled me to conduct classroom observations and one-to-one interviews with research participants in order to explore and understand how they interpret and construct their daily realities in context.

Second, to the best of my knowledge, there are only a limited number of qualitative studies that focus on students' learning experiences from a sociological perspective in the context of EFL teaching and learning in higher education in KSA, especially when compared to the amount of quantitative psychological (i.e. focusing on motivation and learning strategies) studies conducted (e.g. see Assulaimani, 2014; Albousaif, 2011; Alrabai, 2010; Alfallaj, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1997) argue that the qualitative research approach is a better way to understand a phenomenon about which little is known. Therefore, using a qualitative approach allows a more in-depth analysis to be conducted of how students experience learning. Bryman (2016, p. 36) emphasises this point:

If a researcher is interested in a topic on which little or no research has been done in the past, quantitative research may be difficult to employ, because there is little prior literature from which to draw leads. A more exploratory stance may be preferable, and therefore qualitative research may serve the researcher better.

Within the interpretivist paradigm and the qualitative research approach there are different methodological strategies, which include ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism (Bryman, 2016; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The choice of the methodological strategy lies in the purpose of the research. In other words, the type of research questions which the study seeks to answer (Crotty, 1998). Among these different strategies, phenomenology was especially attractive for the present study. It focuses on the learner's experiences of a phenomenon, and is concerned with the question of how individuals understand their social realities (Bryman, 2016; Ahmed, 2012). It is not concerned with explaining the causes of things, but aims to describe how things are experienced first-hand by individuals (Denscombe, 2010). This suggests that phenomenology complements the main research question in this study '*How do students experience learning in the undergraduate EFL programme at CU?*'.

A further dimension of the research process is choosing between different designs, such as the case study, biographical method, ethno-methodology, and participatory action research. In the context of the current study, a qualitative phenomenological

case study design was adopted to understand how students experience learning in the EFL programme at CU. Within the context of higher education in Saudi Arabia, there are only a limited number of qualitative social studies that investigate students' learning experiences from a structural and agentic perspective. Thus, it was essential to use a methodological strategy that would enable me to develop my own understanding of such phenomena. Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that through the use of the phenomenological case study strategy, researchers are able to gain experience through exposure to a particular phenomenon and develop the necessary skills for good research. This is because of the researcher's close proximity to the reality being studied and continuous interaction with those under study. This generates a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study. As Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 236) asserts, "the proximity to reality, which the case study entails, and the learning process that it generates for the researcher will often constitute a prerequisite for advanced understanding". Therefore, using such a design was helpful in developing a deeper understanding of students' learning experiences in the EFL programme.

4.3. Case study as a research design

The case study is a common way of conducting qualitative research and is defined as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2013, p. 16). Case studies offer a systematic way of examining issues, collecting data, analysing information and presenting results (Sturman, 1994). They focus on the experiential knowledge of the case and the impact of social, cultural, political and other contexts. This helps the researcher to retain a holistic and meaningful understanding of the social action and brings the reader as close as possible to the experience being described (Yin, 2013; Fossey et al., 2002). Pearson et al. (2015) argue that the case study design is a useful approach in investigating teaching and learning in a higher education setting. They further state that one of the main advantages of the case study is its flexibility in terms of the types of research questions that can be

addressed. However, it is particularly a “preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, the investigator has little control over events, and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 2).

The selection of the unit of analysis plays an important role in case study research. This unit can be an individual, a programme, an institution, or a community, and involves a contextual analysis of events, conditions and their relationships (Patton, 2002). In the current study, the undergraduate EFL programme (the case) is the unit of analysis. Bryman (2016) indicates that one criterion when choosing a single case is that it provides a suitable context for the research questions to be answered. Thus, the rationale behind choosing the EFL programme as the case was to be able to gather as much information as possible from different sources (i.e. interviews, classroom observations and document analysis) in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the students’ learning experiences of the programme.

Different scholars have suggested different typologies for case studies. Stake (1995, p. 3) classifies case studies into types, based on case selection. According to Stake (1995), an *intrinsic* case study is used when the researcher needs to learn about a particular issue; an *instrumental* case study is used to develop a general understanding of an issue; and a *collective* case study involves the selection of a number of cases, and is considered an extension of the instrumental case study. The present study follows an intrinsic case study design, with the objective of obtaining an in-depth understanding of the student’ learning experiences in the EFL programme.

Yin (2013) also identifies three types of case studies based on different purposes. The *exploratory* case study aims at defining the questions and the hypotheses of the study; the *descriptive* case study provides a complete and contextualised description of a phenomenon; and the *explanatory* case study presents data on causal relationships. The current study can be described as a descriptive case study, since it does not focus on establishing any causality relationships between variables and

does not test any hypotheses. Instead, it offers a description of the phenomena within its specific context. This allows me to gather information from different sources, which complements the intrinsic case study adopted in this inquiry.

Flyvbjerg (2006), in his persuasive article on the misunderstandings of conventional wisdom about case study research, offered some strong arguments in response to several points of criticism that face case studies in general and single case studies in particular. These include the questioning of the context-dependent nature of case studies, its alleged tendency toward bias and verifying the researcher's preconceived notions, and its inability to produce generalised knowledge. His responses to the questioning of the context-dependent nature of case studies are summarised in two key points. First, he argues that case studies can be a valuable learning experience for the researcher in order to develop good research skills, and that concrete experiences can be achieved via continued proximity to the studied reality and via feedback from those under study. Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 221) asserts that "the case study produces the type of context-dependent knowledge that research on learning shows to be necessary to allow people to develop from rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts". Second, he states that "in the study of human affairs, there appears to exist only context-dependent knowledge, which thus presently rules out the possibility of epistemic theoretical construction" (p. 221). He gives an example of a teaching situation where well-selected case studies can help the learners achieve competence, whereas context-independent knowledge (e.g. facts and rules) will only allow the learners to reach a beginner's level.

In response to the claim that case studies have a tendency toward bias and the verification of the researcher's preconceived notions, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that such a critique is fallacious and demonstrates a lack of knowledge of what is involved in case study research. He adds that this is because the case study approach is no less rigorous than quantitative research. He further stated a major advantage of case studies is that it can "close in on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice" (Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 235). Many social scientists who conduct in-depth case studies find that their preconceived

notions and views are challenged and that the case material has forced them to reconsider and revise their initial understandings. Such issues are discussed in further detail when establishing the trustworthiness and authenticity of this inquiry (see section 4.8).

In responding to critics stating that single case studies are restricted in that they lack the ability to produce generalised knowledge, Flyvbjerg (2006) states that this is the case for all social science research, and until today social sciences has simply not been able to produce context-free predictive social theory. This critique also draws attention to one of positivism's major tenets: namely, the ability to produce research findings that can be generalised. Such critique fails to consider the fact that people have the ability to self-reflect and interpret the social world differently, whereas this capacity to attribute meaning to events and their environment cannot be found among the objects of the natural sciences (Bryman, 2016). This makes it difficult for social researchers to generate findings that can be generalised. Nevertheless, Shenton (2004) and Stake (2003) argue that although each individual case study is considered unique, each is an example of a wider group and thus can form a component of a wider consensus.

In summary, this research uses an intrinsically descriptive snapshot case study design, seeking to provide a holistic understanding and in-depth analysis of students' learning experiences in relation to institutional influences, family background and teaching approaches in an EFL programme at CU in KSA. The following section discusses the researcher's positionality.

4.4. The researcher's position

In social science research, the position of the researcher in relation to his/her study has important effects on the study as a whole. It implicates different stages of the research process such as the way in which researchers formulate their questions, as well as data collection and analysis (Ganga and Scott, 2006). As Foote and Bartell (2011, p. 46) assert,

The positionality that researchers bring to their work, and the personal experiences through which positionality is shaped, may influence what researchers may bring to research encounters, their choice of processes, and their interpretation of outcomes.

It is crucial therefore to pay close attention to the researcher's positionality in order to undertake ethical research (Sultana, 2007). Researchers have classified various types of positions that a researcher can take. For example, Banks (1998) identified four types of positions that recognises the complexity of the researcher's position: the indigenous-insider, the indigenous-outsider, the external-insider, and the external-outsider. However, despite these different possibilities, only the two extremes of outsider and insider positions are widely conceptualised throughout the literature (DeMarrais and Lapan, 2004). These two conceptual positions describe how researchers position themselves in relation to other factors in the research context such as language, religion, culture, gender, and careers (Ganga and Scott, 2006). These relationships have a significant impact on the entire research process.

In this study I considered myself as having both positions, that of an insider and outsider, with the dominant position being that of an insider. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the fact that I am a lecturer at CU, and a former graduate student from the Department of English at a different university, places me within the same research context. This insider position offered a unique perspective and pre-existing experiences about the research context of Saudi higher education in general and EFL teaching and learning in particular. This position was also reflected in the support I received throughout the fieldwork and afterwards from lecturers and administrators in the EFL programme and the university staff. It enabled me to gain quick access to lessons, students and lecturers and the different facilities within the university (e.g. library, English language club).

I also share the same culture, nationality, religion and language as the research participants, which offered significant advantages during the data collection process. For example, speaking the language made a huge impact on the way I communicated with students and in understanding cultural connotations and clues

that inform the language. Arabic was usually used to introduce the research topic in a clear manner, especially in assuring students of anonymity and confidentiality. More importantly, it allowed students to be given the option to use either Arabic or English to conduct their interviews, or even a mixture of both languages. Some students felt encouraged to participate when they knew that using Arabic was an acceptable alternative.

In addition, being familiar with the culture influenced how students were approached. As some of the students were too busy to meet because of classes or simply too tired after a long academic day, I suggested that the meetings could take place at an alternative location of their choosing. Meeting students at different locations such as coffee shops made them feel more relaxed during the interviews and downplayed the power of student-lecturer relations, since students viewed me as a formal lecturer at the university. I believe I was able to create a rapport with many student participants, which was demonstrated in their willingness to often share details and experiences of their personal lives.

However, the insider position came with its challenges that had to be overcome. One of the major challenges was my over-familiarity and pre-existing assumptions about the research context. The interpretive epistemological perspective adopted in this study emphasises the importance of researchers being mindful of their positions in that they should question their pre-existing views and values in relation to the way they conduct social research (Savin-Baden and Major, 2010). This meant that I had to always question my own understanding of the participants and their context. The double hermeneutic process, as discussed in section 4.1, was especially useful in overcoming this problem. It allowed me as a researcher to question my own views and understanding by ensuring that any interpretations made were reviewed in relation to the wider literature. Also, I had to always keep in mind the constructivist ontological position that guides this study, which emphasises that individuals construct their own meaning and understanding of reality. Moreover, when participants expected me to grasp the hidden meaning by saying things like

‘as you already know’, I always requested further clarifications by asking follow-up probing questions in order to elicit more detailed responses.

In relation to being an outsider, there are two interrelated issues. The first issue is that for the last couple of years I have been studying in the United Kingdom. While in the UK I was able to enhance my experiences by interacting with a different academic culture. This led to questions about various aspects of teaching and learning in general as well as the norms of higher education institutions (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). This meant that I entered the research context with new experiences at hand.

The other issue has to do with gender segregation in Saudi higher education. As a male researcher it was not possible to interview female students within the university as interaction between males and females is not permitted due to cultural reasons. However, as a Saudi citizen such a limitation was expected prior to the data collection process. Not being able to interview female students meant that the study focuses exclusively on undergraduate male students in the EFL programme, which is considered to be a limitation in this study (see section 4.10 for further discussion).

4.5. Research method

The research method is a technique for the data collection process, which plays a key stage in any research project. In case study research, a major strength of data collection is the opportunity to use multiple sources of evidence. A good case study uses different sources for gathering information (Yin, 2013). In order to analyse the students’ learning experiences in the EFL programme, this study uses three different methods for data collection, which are semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. Each of these tools is discussed separately in the following three sections.

4.5.1. Document review

Document review is a qualitative research method in which existing documents are analysed. It is defined as a systematic procedure for evaluating and interpreting printed and/or electronic documents (e.g. agendas and minutes of meetings; background papers, books and journals; portfolios, memos, reports and newspapers) in order to develop one's understanding and empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Documents may be internal or external to a programme, institution or organisation. Atkinson and Coffey (2004, p. 58) regard documents as "social facts... [that] construct particular kinds of representations using their own conventions". Unlike interviews and questionnaires, documents are considered to be a source of data that has not been generated by the researcher and thus are more likely to reveal authentic and meaningful information about the phenomena under study (Bryman, 2016). The importance of document analysis in case study research is that it supports the expansion of evidence from different sources (Yin, 2013). Bowen (2009, p. 30) summarises some of the several purposes which documents serve in any research:

In sum, documents provide background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development, and verification of findings [triangulation].

However, Yin (2013) cautions against the abundance of materials available, especially online, in wasting much of the researcher's time and effort, and emphasises the "need to have a strong sense of [the] case study inquiry and focus on the most pertinent information" (p. 109). It was therefore highly important to critically examine documents in the data collection process and focus on the most relevant information.

In the context of the current study, it was important to review different documents in relation to higher education in Saudi Arabia (e.g. external documents on higher education policies in KSA affecting English language teaching in institutions), CU as an institution (e.g. internal documents on the university's general admission policies, particularly for the College of Arts and Humanities), and the EFL

programme (e.g. internal documents about the programme's aim and design) (see Appendix 4). The review of these documents served several purposes in this study, which include examining the field of higher education in KSA; analysing the different policies and practices of the MoE-HE on EFL programmes in higher education in general; the position of CU in the field of higher education; and the policies and practices of CU that affect the EFL programme. The review of documents also played a role in supporting the development and refinement of the interview questions. Although most of the documents reviewed in this study were easily accessible online, being an insider (see section, 4.4) helped in accessing other internal documents, particularly those in relation to the EFL programme, as most of the documents were not available online.

4.5.2. Observation

Observation is a method of data collection that helps the researcher to observe and note down behaviours, reactions, events and settings in the context of the research environment (Creswell, 2014; Cohen et al. 2011). The value of observation in this study is that it enabled me to observe students and lecturers in their natural setting. As this study acknowledges that students construct their own realities in the context of the EFL programme, it was necessary to talk to them. It was also important to observe their behaviours and interactions inside the classroom environment. This is because research participants may behave differently from what they say. Observation therefore offers a type of data that cannot be collected through questionnaires or interviews. Cohen et al. (2011), distinguish between two types of structured observation: highly structured and semi-structured. In highly-structured observation, the researcher knows in advance exactly what to look for and uses a checklist of pre-defined rules, factors and procedures (e.g. frequency of behaviour that will be observed in the situation). In semi-structured observation, the researcher has a list of issues to observe, and is conducted in a less deterministic manner. This allows new issues to emerge during observation.

A further classification of the actual act of observation is participant and non-participant observation (Bryman, 2016). The former describes a situation in which the researcher is not a mere passive observer, but instead is immersed in the social setting in order to observe the behaviours of members of that setting and to elicit meanings from their behaviour. The latter describes a situation in which the researcher does not participate in what is going on in the social setting, but rather sits quietly, observes, and takes notes. Although taking part in classroom activities was never intended, NES lecturers often involved me in classroom discussions. This might have been a result of the nature of the teaching styles that these lecturers chose to deploy in their teaching, which emphasises classroom discussion (see Chapter 7 for detailed discussion). Participating in such classes was useful in experiencing the context as a participant, while taking scratch notes (i.e. simple phrases and key words) of how students negotiate their learning.

In a different classification, Taylor-Powell and Steele (1996) also divide observation into two types: overt and covert. The former is an observation that occurs when all participants know that they are being observed, which may result in unnatural behaviour from the participants. The latter, on the other hand, is about observing participants without their knowledge or without informing them that they are being observed. As such, researchers are able to observe the natural behaviour of the participants. Although conducting covert observations would have been beneficial in understanding the way in which students behave and interact within different facilities at the university (e.g. library, cafeteria, and English language club), I decided not to use this type of observation, due to ethical considerations (see section 4.9). Therefore, the type of observation carried out in this study is described as overt in that participants were aware and informed of the observation process.

In the current study, I used semi-structured observation. The purpose of using observation was to observe the lecturer's teaching approaches, and the student-lecturer and student-student interactions in their natural learning setting. When classrooms were visited, I introduced myself and gave a brief summary of the purpose of the study. Thus participants were always aware of the purpose of the

study and that they were being watched. In total, 7 lessons were observed and each lesson ranged from 50-90 minutes.

A number of observations (i.e. three) took place in the first stages of the data collection process and before any interviews were carried out. This was done to familiarise myself with the context and to further develop and refine interview questions. I also took the opportunity at the end of the first three observations to recruit student interviewees and to further explain the rationale of the research in order for them to give up some of their valuable time (see section 4.6. for sampling). However, the remaining observations (i.e. four) were conducted toward the final stages of the data collection process. This strategy was useful in cross-checking and witnessing the behaviours and activities described by participants during the interviews.

It is worth noting that one major challenge during the observation process was gaining access to lessons conducted by Saudi lecturers. Despite several attempts at the beginning, it seemed that they did not welcome the idea of being observed. While NES lecturers were much more willing to be observed, Saudi lecturers were very reluctant. After discussing this matter with a couple of lecturers it seemed that this might have to do with concerns about their image inside the classroom. Lecturers were concerned that students might think that I was there to observe and judge the lecturer's teaching practices, which could harm their image in front of their students. However, after clearly explaining to them that prior to the observation, students would be fully aware that no one was being judged and that the teaching approaches and the students' interactions with the teaching approaches were the purpose of the observation, some agreed and allowed access to their lessons.

4.5.3. Interviews

Conversation is a basic mode of human interaction, in which people get to know each other, their experiences, attitudes and the everyday world they live in

(Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Using interviews therefore signals “a move away from obtaining knowledge primarily through external manipulation of human subjects, towards an understanding by means of conversations with the human beings to be understood” (Kvale, 1996, p. 11). Interviews give voice to people, enabling them to openly express their life experiences in their own words. In qualitative research, interviews are probably the most widely used technique in gathering information (Bryman, 2016), and are an essential source of evidence in case study research (Yin, 2013). Depending on the degree of structure, interviews are commonly divided into three types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Cohen et al., 2011). The structured interview, also known as the standardised interview, entails the administration of an exact set of close-ended questions, specifically designed to collect accurate answers from respondents. The aim of these interviews is to minimise the variability between interviews and to generate data that can be aggregated and compared (Bryman, 2016). This type of structured interview was not suitable for the current study because it focuses on answering a specific set of questions, and gives no space for me as a researcher to pursue emerging issues or for respondents to fully express their viewpoints about their learning experiences in the EFL programme.

By contrast, unstructured interviews are much like everyday conversations (Fontana and Frey, 1994). However, although as an interpretivist who seeks to gain a deeper understanding of students’ learning, it might have been useful to use unstructured interviews, since it enables an intensive and detailed examination of the students’ experiences, this type of interview was impractical in the present study. First, the unstructured nature of this type of interview meant that the researcher has little control over the conversation, which may divert from the focus of the study. Second, the rich data sets these interviews usually produce would have been a challenge to organise and analyse in the context of the limited time and financial resources of this project.

Semi-structured interviews have a clear outline of topics to be covered, with a set of suggested questions to be asked (Kvale, 1996). A fairly clear semi-structured

interview guide ensures that researchers are able to cover a specific range of issues or themes within a limited time frame. The semi-structured aspect of these interviews also provides respondents with the chance to talk freely whilst preventing the researcher from excessively directing the conversation. Thus, the advantage of this type of interview is that it provides the researcher with a level of control over the conversation, while giving respondents the opportunity to speak freely and discuss issues they see as important, and for unanticipated themes to possibly emerge. Semi-structured interviews were therefore carried out in this study to interview students in the EFL programme.

The student interview guide (see Appendix 7) was organised into three main themes that address each research question, which are the institutional influences on students' learning, the influence of family educational background on students' learning, and the way in which teaching approaches in the EFL classroom affect their learning. During the interviews, students were invited to discuss and comment on a specific range of topics that related to the research questions, such as their past learning experiences; their motivations for studying in the EFL programme; their attitudes toward the programme, their economic conditions and family support; their perceptions of EFL lecturers, teaching approaches, classroom activities, assessment, syllabus; and their interactions with lecturers and peers in the classroom. Throughout the interviews, students were given the opportunity to add any further information they would like to share.

After the initial observations, students were asked to arrange a date for the interviews. Student volunteers then provided their contact details and most arrangements were made via the WhatsApp application. Each student was later interviewed once, either on-campus (e.g. classrooms, the English language club, or study room in the library) or off-campus (e.g. various coffee shops in the city). The average length for each interview was about 36 minutes (see Table 2 section 4.6). Prior to each interview, an information sheet was handed out, and students were asked to read and sign the consent form (see Appendix 9), and to give permission to be audio-recorded. Interviews were either conducted in Arabic (see section 4.7.4.

for issues related to translation), or English, or a combination of both languages. Out of the 21 student interviews conducted, nearly two-thirds were carried out in the students' mother-tongue, Arabic. This approach allowed students who were not confident enough or comfortable about using English, to talk freely about their experiences without any language barriers.

The student interview guide was completed after piloting the interview prior to the fieldwork. In case study research, Flyvbjerg (2006) emphasises the value of piloting the research tools in enhancing the quality of data obtained, and ensuring the trustworthiness of the study. In total, two Saudi students were asked to participate. The first student was doing a pre-session course in the Language Centre at the University of Sussex and the interview was conducted in English. The second interview was carried out in Saudi Arabia with a student who was doing a Bachelor's degree in English at Taif University. Overall, the piloting phase proved to be helpful for several reasons, including receiving feedback on the clarity of the concepts used in the interview guide, cross-checking the accuracy of questions between English and Arabic, raising important issues about the translation process, identifying emerging themes, thinking carefully about the language used in relation to sensitive issues about the students' backgrounds, and determining the expected length of each interview. Moreover, during the data collection process, the first couple of interviews were immediately transcribed after they had been carried out, which helped in identifying major issues raised by the students. This was especially useful in reviewing the interview guide and thus some questions were either added, removed, or altered in further interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with lecturers in the EFL programme. The aim of these interviews was to provide information on lecturers' teaching approaches and the institutional influences on their teaching, as well as insights into the students' backgrounds. The interview guide (see Appendix 8) included questions related to the effects of different policies and practices implemented by the institution, and of the EFL programme on the lecturers' teaching approaches

and their views about learning, teaching, assessment and students. This guide was completed after a pilot interview with an EFL lecturer at Taif University in KSA.

Interviews with the lecturers were conducted in English and were carried out once at their offices in the department for an average length of 38 minutes (see Table 3 section 4.6). Initially, the intention was to interview lecturers after they had been observed. However, this strategy was not possible, due to their busy schedules. Therefore, lectures were interviewed according to their availability. Prior to the interviews, the topic of the study was explained and the lecturers were asked to read and sign the consent form. All interviews were audio-taped, except for one interview, in which the lecturer declined to be recorded and thus notes were taken.

Some challenges occurred during the interviews with students and lecturers. In general, most of the research participants were not comfortable with the idea of being audio-recorded. It was therefore important to guarantee all participants the privacy and the confidentiality of their data, and assure them that their information would not be used for any other purpose than this study. It was also made clear to participants that they could refrain from answering any question they felt uncomfortable with. Moreover, the use of Arabic with some students was helpful in allowing them to speak freely about their experiences in more detail. This is because some students who decided to use English during their interviews were very focused on the fact they were being audio-recorded, and did not want to make any grammatical mistakes, which was distracting to them. Thus a useful technique to avoid distracting students was to place the recorder discreetly away from the interviewee. Another challenge faced was convincing lecturers to participate in the interviews. Many of them were reluctant at the beginning. However, my position as an insider helped in this matter and when introducing myself as a colleague of theirs at CU, lecturers were more keen to participate.

4.6. Sampling

Sampling refers to the selection of a portion of the population to participate in a study. Within qualitative research, there are several forms of sampling techniques that researchers use. Purposive or non-probability sampling is one of the most common techniques used in qualitative research. In contrast to probability sampling, which is commonly used in quantitative research, purposive sampling does not aim at the generalisation of findings or results (Cohen et al., 2011). Instead, it draws on a small scale of participants with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation, and to learn about ‘how’ and ‘why’ people behave, think, and make sense of the social world (Fossey et al., 2002). Bryman (2016) adds that most qualitative sampling entails some kind of purposive sampling. This is because the selection of the case (i.e. people, organisations, departments and so on) is directly related to the research question being asked.

As the aim of this study is to understand how learning is experienced by certain students in a specific higher education institution in KSA, purposive sampling was used. The target population included students and EFL lecturers at the EFL programme at CU. It is worth noting that in relation to the student sample no further distinguishing characteristics or features, other than the family’s educational background, was pursued. The rationale behind not considering any other features such as ethnicity, culture, religion, or gender among the students can be explained in relation to the nature of Saudi society. In general, it can be described to some degree as a *homogeneous* society that shares the same culture and religion, and this is reflected in the student population at the EFL programme at CU. To the best of my knowledge, all the students at the EFL programme were Arab Muslim students who shared to a large extent the same cultural norms. It was therefore not practical to distribute students according to such characteristics. Gender differences were also not considered, due to the segregated culture in Saudi higher education. However, the notion of nativeness and non-nativeness was pursued in the lecturer sample.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the EFL programme is taught over a period of six academic semesters (i.e. three academic years). Out of the student population of approximately 600 students in the EFL programme, 21 students volunteered to participate in the current study (see Table 2.). The students were recruited on a voluntary basis during the observation process. The purposive sample included seven students from the second academic year, seven from the third, and seven from the fourth and final one. This selection aims to provide a holistic understanding of students' learning experiences in the EFL programme.

The EFL lecturer population was 18, and the sample was 7 EFL lecturers who teach at the programme and agreed to participate in the study. Three native English-speaking (NES) lecturers and four Saudi or non-native English-speaking (NNES) lecturers volunteered for the study. All lecturers had a minimum of five years of experience and a post-graduate qualification (i.e., Masters or PhD). The lecturers were selected to reflect the views of both native and non-native English speaking lecturers within the programme. All lecturers were recruited via their email addresses, which were obtained from the programme's official web-page.

*Table 2. The student sample**

No	Code	Length of interview	Date of interview (2014)	Academic year	Family educational background
1	S1	31m	17 th Sep	2 nd	Father is a Maths teacher; mother has a Bachelor's degree and works as a nursery teacher; one sibling attending the same university.
2	S2	38m	18 th Sep	4 th	Both parents are illiterate; first son to join university in the family.
3	S3	40m	7 th Oct	3 rd	No information given, student preferred not to speak about his family background.
4	S4	32m	8 th Oct	4 th	Father has intermediate level education and works in a dairy company, mother is uneducated; none of his siblings attended university.
5	S5	45m	10 th Oct	3 rd	Father has primary level education and works as a taxi driver; mother did not attend any schooling.
6	S6	51m	13 th Oct	4 th	Father has primary level education and works as a police officer; mother is uneducated.
7	S7	47m	13 th Oct	2 nd	Father has secondary level education and works in a company; mother has primary education and does not work.
8	S8	41m	15 th Oct	3 rd	Father is an English language teacher; mother is a science teacher; two siblings are university graduates; and one sibling at school.
9	S9	34m	16 th Oct	2 nd	Father has a Master's degree in English; mother has a Bachelor's degree; both parents speak fluent English.
10	S10	36m	18 th Oct	2 nd	Father has primary level education; one sibling attending the same EFL programme.

11	S11	40m	19 th Oct	3 rd	Both parents have an primary level education.
12	S12	42m	19 th Oct	4 th	Father works in the military and has secondary degree diploma; mother does not work and has primary level education.
13	S13	46m	22 nd Oct	4 th	Father has primary education and works as a taxi driver; mother is uneducated and is unemployed.
14	S14	28m	27 th Oct	2 nd	Two of his siblings are studying at CU; the eldest studies medicine; and the youngest is in the information technology department.
15	S15	33m	28 th Oct	2 nd	Father works as a taxi driver and is uneducated; mother does not work and has primary level education.
16	S16	39m	28 th Oct	3 rd	Father works at a company and has a secondary degree diploma; mother is a teacher; none of the family speaks English.
17	S17	24m	29 th Oct	2 nd	Father has secondary level education; mother uneducated.
18	S18	35m	4 th Nov	4 th	Mother has secondary level education and does not work; one younger sibling at school.
19	S19	41m	4 th Nov	3 rd	Student did not feel comfortable talking about this topic, thus no information was provided.
20	S20	48m	12 th Nov	4 th	Father has Bachelor's degree in engineering and works at ARAMCO [the Saudi oil company] and speaks fluent English.
21	S21	32m	15 th Nov	3 rd	Both parents are uneducated; the first in his family to attend university.

**The data presented in this table was generated from the interviews*

Table 3. The EFL lecturer sample*

No.	Code	Gender	Age	Length of Interview	Qualifications	From	Teaching experience
1	L1	Male	35-40	41m	Master's degree in TESOL	USA	10-15
2	L2	Male	50-55	45m	Doctoral degree in Linguistics	Saudi Arabia	15-20
3	L3	Male	50-55	42m	Professor of Literature	USA	20-25
4	L4	Male	50-55	39m	Doctoral degree in Linguistics	Saudi Arabia	20-25
5	L5	Male	30-35	37m	Doctoral degree in Linguistics	Saudi Arabia	5-10
6	L6	Male	40-45	41m	Master's degree in TESOL	UK	15-20
7	L7	Male	50-55	27m	Professor of Linguistics	Saudi Arabia	20-25

**The data presented in this table was generated from interviews and the EFL programme's web-page.*

4.7. Data Analysis

Analysing qualitative data can be a considerable challenge. This is because qualitative methods can generate a large and rich data set, which is difficult to

navigate. It was therefore vital to take certain steps to guard against being overwhelmed by the data and to achieve a focused analysis. These steps included starting the data analysis process as early as possible; constantly reading and re-reading the transcripts, field notes, and documents; and focusing on the most pertinent information that answered the research questions and related to the research literature (Bryman, 2016). (See Table 4 section 4.7.3. for the data-set used to answer each research sub-question). These steps meant that in the current research the early stages of data analysis started during the data collection process. The next section explains how the data analysis process was carried out and some of the challenges faced.

4.7.1. Documentary analysis

The data collected from documentary sources was used as supporting evidence in this study, except for analysing the institutional influences on the EFL programme (see Chapter 5). With the research question in focus, qualitative content-analysis, which entails the “searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analysed” (Bryman, 2016, p. 563), was used to analyse the different documents obtained in relation to Saudi higher education, CU, the College of Arts and Humanities, the EFL programme, and teaching and learning English in CU. The analysis was conducted by carefully reading and re-reading the documents to recognise emerging themes. The data was organised into different themes that addressed the research sub-questions. Although the data obtained from the documents was used to inform different parts of the study, it was proven to be most beneficial in identifying the institutional influences on the EFL programme.

4.7.2. Observations

In the current study, the data collected from observations served several purposes. These observations served as a supporting source of evidence in that they helped in honing the interview guides, and supported the development of the interview questions for both students and EFL lecturers. The observations were also significant in witnessing the teaching practices employed by EFL lecturers, and in

observing student-student and lecturer-student interactions and classroom activities. These observations were important in contextualising the study by asserting the data needed to address the purpose of the study. The data generated from the observations was therefore constantly cross-checked with the emerging themes from the interview data.

4.7.3. Interviews

Interviews were conducted in either English or Arabic, with the majority of student interviews being in Arabic. Although therefore a number of the interviews had to be translated first, all went through a similar process of thematic analysis. After the translation process was completed and all interviews were transcribed, the analysis process began by extracting as many codes as possible from the data, codes were then compressed and organised into various categories and patterns. These were later organised to form different themes. The use of semi-structured interviews was especially useful in analysing the data in that the interview guide helped in organising the data into themes that addressed the research questions. It is important to note that the early phases in analysing the interviews actually started during the data collection process. A selected number of interviews were immediately transcribed and analysed after they had been conducted. This initial phase was essential in identifying any further issues that needed to be explored. The following table highlights the data set used in addressing the research sub-questions.

Table 4. The data set used in addressing the research sub-questions

Research sub-questions	The data sets used
1. How do institutional influences affect teaching and learning in the EFL programme?	Interviews Documents Observations
2. How does the educational background of the family influence students' learning experiences in the EFL programme?	Interviews Observations
3. How do the teaching approaches adopted by lecturers affect students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom?	Interviews Documents Observations

4.7.4. Translating the data

One difficulty encountered during analysis was translating the interviews from Arabic into English without compromising the language and meaning of the original data. Addressing this issue was especially important because of the philosophical assumptions adopted in this study. Temple and Young (2004, p. 164) argue that researchers working within the interpretivist paradigm must clearly discuss translation since it forms a “part of the process of knowledge production”. This meant that several language-related issues related to the quality of translation had to be addressed. Regmi et al. (2010), Birbili (2000) and Vulliamy (1990) identified

a number of factors that influence the quality of translation in qualitative research when the researcher and the translator are the same person, and these include the linguistic competence of the researcher, and the researcher's knowledge of the language and culture of the people under study. As a Saudi bilingual researcher who is well acquainted with both languages as well as the context and culture of the students, I was able to translate the interviews from Arabic to English while being mindful of contextual and cultural issues.

Birbili (2000) and Temple (1997) identify other potential translation-related problems. They argue that when the language of those under study is different from that of the final research report, the question of conceptual equivalence or the comparability of meaning needs to be addressed. This is because when translating from one language to the other some words may "carry emotional connotations that direct [lexicon] equivalents in a different language may not have" (Temple, 1997, p. 611). In this case Overing (1987) states that the focus should not be on the literal meaning, but on translating it by using another word. My knowledge of the Saudi culture and research context, and competence in both Arabic and English, helped in overcoming this difficulty.

However, this issue does raise an essential question about the overall translation approach adopted in this study. An important decision that a researcher/translator has make is whether to go for a 'literal' or 'free' approach in translating the data (Birbili, 2000). Although the literal approach (i.e. translating word-by-word) could be considered as giving more justice to what the participants have said, it can reduce the readability of the text and could lead to "muddled analyses and muddled arguments" (Overing, 1987, p. 76). In contrast, researchers who adopt the more 'elegant' free translation approach face the risk of changing the meaning initially intended by the participants. In an attempt to take both arguments into consideration, I decided to adopt a mixed approach that focused on maintaining the neutrality of quotations while making them more readable for the audience.

Another key step in ensuring the quality of translation was by consulting other

bilinguals. Several of my colleagues in Saudi Arabia and in the UK were consulted during the translation process. These consultations provided valuable feedback on the accuracy of language and meaning. Brislin et al. (1973) suggest that such consultations can play an important role in eliminating translation-related problems. Student interviewees were also given the opportunity to go over the translated transcripts of their interviews. Although consulting the students was important for ethical considerations, students provided very little feedback on language-related issues. In addition, these consultations with professionals and students were one of the measures taken to establish the credibility of this study (see section 4.8. for trustworthiness).

4.8. Trustworthiness

In quantitative research, measures of validity (the accuracy of the research findings) and reliability (the extent to which findings can be replicated) are used to judge the quality of research. However, qualitative research adheres to a different set of criteria to establish its validity and rigour. Qualitative research is assessed based on measures of trustworthiness and authenticity (Shenton, 2004; Lincoln and Guba, 1986). The reason why qualitative research uses a different set of concepts is that the application of validity and reliability within conventional standards presupposes that a single absolute account of social reality is possible and the researcher's role is to reveal such a reality (Bryman, 2016). In contrast, qualitative research assumes multiple realities and the researcher's role is to interpret these realities. Fossey et al. (2002, p. 885) argue that this difference also:

stems from the fact that qualitative research often relies primarily on the informants' own formulations and constructions of reality checked against those of other similarly situated informants or the observations of an informed observer [while quantitative research relies on statistical measurements].

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is demonstrated through the researcher's reflexivity, the use of appropriate methodology, and the methods of data collection (Flyvbjerg 2006; Fossey et al., 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1986) propose a set of criteria that parallel those of the positivist paradigm (i.e. internal validity, external

validity, reliability, and objectivity), and that qualitative research should address in order to establish trustworthiness, which are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility is considered one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research (Shenton, 2004; Lincoln and Guba, 1985a). It is described as being an equivalent measurement of internal validity in quantitative research, and is concerned with the question of how congruent the findings are with reality or to what extent the research actually measures what it is supposed to (Fossey et al., 2002; Lincoln and Guba, 1986). After all, there can be a number of possible interpretations of a social phenomenon, and it is the credibility of the interpretation that a researcher arrives at that determines its acceptability by others (Bryman, 2016). In order to establish credibility in the research findings, researchers need to take several steps that can increase the confidence in their research, such as prolonging engagement with data sources, and using triangulation, tactics to help ensure honesty in participants, respondent validation, peer scrutiny of the research project, and in-depth description of the phenomenon under study (Shenton, 2004; Ambert et al., 1995; Lincoln and Guba, 1990).

Transferability is concerned with the extent to which findings have applicability in other contexts and settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Since the findings of qualitative studies are specific to the context in which they occur, many researchers argue that it is impossible to demonstrate such transferability. Yet a different view is presented by researchers such as Denscombe (2010) and Stake (2003) who argue for the possibility of demonstrating transferability in qualitative research. They argue that in qualitative studies each case is an example of a larger group, therefore the idea of transferability should not be dismissed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also indicate that qualitative research generates a 'thick description' of the phenomena under scrutiny, which enhances the possibility of the transferability of findings. Therefore, qualitative researchers need to provide an in-depth and rich description in their study so researchers in similar or different contexts are able to relate to their findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1986, 1990).

Dependability addresses the question of whether the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Shenton (2004) suggests that in practice demonstrating the creditability of a piece of research also involves showing its dependability. This is because the two measurements are closely tied. Nevertheless, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that dependability can be achieved through the use of 'overlapping methods' such as interviews, focus groups, and observations. Shenton (2004) further suggests that including a detailed report of the research process within the study acts as a 'prototype model' that gives other researchers the opportunity to develop a thorough understanding of the methods used and their effectiveness, and to repeat the same work if necessary.

Confirmability is concerned with whether the research findings are truthful, in that they represent the experiences and ideas of the participants rather than the biases, interests and perspectives of the inquirer (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In order to ensure that the findings represent the views of the participants and not those of the researcher, two important techniques are often employed to establish the confirmability within qualitative research: the triangulation of different sources of data collection, and the reflexivity of the researchers (Shenton, 2004; Huberman and Miles, 1994).

Establishing the trustworthiness of the current study occurred by taking several measures. The first measure was the prolonged engagement with the data source. While in the field, a sufficient amount of time was spent on gaining an understanding of the phenomenon under study and to build a rapport with the participants. During that period, much of the time was spent in observing participants inside the classroom and beyond, and discussing the research in detail with different stakeholders in the field.

Second, as discussed before, triangulation plays a significant role in establishing trustworthiness and is achieved through a number of different procedures including *data triangulation*, *theoretical triangulation*, *researcher triangulation* and *methodological triangulation* (Bryman, 2016; Stake, 2003; Denzin, 1970). In this

study two types of triangulations have been applied: data and methodological. The data triangulation was achieved by collecting information from a variety of participants: students from different academic levels and NES and NNES lecturers, as well as the programme's administration staff. This meant that different viewpoints were fairly represented in the findings. In addition, methodological triangulation was established by using multiple methods of data collection including interviews, observation and documents. These methods were used to construct a reality from different perspectives which could be triangulated during the analysis process to maximise the credibility of the findings.

The third measure of establishing trustworthiness was through the way in which participants were recruited. As mentioned in section 4.6, all participants were recruited on a voluntary basis during early observations. This strategy eliminated any possible bias from the part of the researcher in selecting the participants. In addition, Stake (2004, p. 66) indicates that in order to encourage participants to be honest when contributing data,

each person who is approached should be given opportunities to refuse to participate in the project so as to ensure that the data collection sessions involve only those who are genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely.

Throughout the interviews, it was made clear to all participants that they could refrain from answering any question they felt uncomfortable with, and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without giving any reasons.

Fourth, respondent validation is described as a process whereby the research gives participants the opportunity to check the findings (Bryman, 2016). This measure was especially significant in this study since the students' viewpoints were central in understanding their learning experiences. Respondent validation was carried out by asking interviewees to cross-check the transcripts and the translations to ensure these reflected their viewpoints. In addition, at the end of each interview, participants were informed that they could add, change or omit anything they had

said, even after the interview was completed. Although in both cases little feedback was given by students, some lecturers did add to some of their answers. The main aim of this measure was to enhance confidence in the findings.

The fifth measure of establishing trustworthiness was by peer scrutiny of the research project. From the early stages of this project and until its final stage, different academics such as supervisors and colleagues offered constructive feedback on the research process and content. The research was presented in seminars and conferences within Sussex University and beyond. These critical perspectives were fundamental in ensuring that the research process and outcomes were constantly under scrutiny.

Finally, throughout this project it was imperative to ensure that an in-depth description of the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme at CU was given. For example, the introduction chapter provides a thorough discussion about the background and rationale that guide this inquiry. The context chapter offers a detailed description of the research context. Chapters three and four discuss the literature and the methodology used in much detail. These levels of description enhance the trustworthiness of this study and the confidence in its findings.

4.9. Ethical considerations

Social research is interested in exploring, investigating and describing people in their natural settings. The awareness of ethical considerations is therefore strongly emphasised in social research and is clearly related to the integrity and trustworthiness of research. Discussions about ethics in social research draws attention to concerns about issues such as the treatment of the individuals on whom we conduct research, and the activities in which we engage in our relations with them (Bryman, 2016). The discussion also brings into focus the role of professional associations, such as the *Social Research Association* (SRA) and the *British Sociological Association* (BSA). In general, ethical principles governing social research can be summarised into five broad issues (Bryman, 2016; Cohen et al., 2011).

The first set of ethical issues can be described as *the principle of no harm*. This is concerned with whether the research may cause any intentional or unintentional harm to the participants. This entails the participants' protection from distress, physical discomfort, harm to participants' development, loss of self-esteem, asking participants to perform undignified acts, and so on. As the SRA (2003, p. 14) ethical guidelines clearly state: "social researchers must strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research".

In the current study this issue was addressed by taking appropriate measures to ensure that the participant's identities and records were protected from any kind of public disclosure. Their identities and responses were always kept anonymous and confidential. This meant that the names of participants and any information that could lead to their identification were anonymised in the research findings. The initial data containing the real identities and records of participants was stored safely with restricted access. Furthermore, students and lecturers' critical opinions about each other were not revealed to the opposite party. This was done to avoid any possible retaliation against the students. Likewise, the lecturers' unfavourable views about the university or the English Language Department were not revealed to the administration, to avoid causing harm to their academic careers or distress in their working environment.

The second ethical issue is related to the informed consent of respondents, which ensures that their participation in the research is voluntary. As the SRA (2003, p. 24) indicates:

Inquiries involving human subjects should be based as far as practicable on the freely given informed consent of subjects...In voluntary inquiries, subjects should not be under the impression that they are required to participate. They should be aware of their entitlement to refuse at any stage for whatever reason and to withdraw data just supplied.

This issue was addressed by obtaining written consent from all the participants in this study (see Appendix 9). After the aims of research had been explained to them, all interviewees who took part in this study were asked to read and sign a consent

form. It was made clear that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any specific reasons. The advantage of such a form is to safeguard against deception in that participants are fully aware of the aims of the study and the consequences of their participation, if any. It also acts as a signed record of their consent and willingness to take part in the research. Moreover, consent was obtained from the CU's management (see Appendix 6) to conduct the study on its campus, and so the university officials were aware of the aim of the research and the participants who were involved in the study.

A third ethical issue is concerned with the invasion of the participants' privacy. This is closely linked to the notion of informed consent, in that "covert methods violate the principles of informed consent and may invade the privacy [rights] of those being studied" (BSA, 2017, p. 5). Although covert methods of observation would have offered some useful insights into the students' behaviours outside the formal classroom setting, these were not pursued in respect of their privacy. Therefore, all data gathered from the participants in this study was in accordance with the consent form.

A fourth ethical consideration is related to the deception of participants. It occurs when researchers mislead participants by concealing the true purpose of their research project. Bryman (2016, p. 134) claims that in social research "it is rarely feasible or desirable to provide participants with a totally complete account of what your research is about". Despite such a claim, this study provided participants with as much detail about the project as possible. They were explicitly informed that the study aimed to understand the students' learning experiences in relation to EFL teaching and learning in higher education. Further details were also given about the different perspectives that guided this study. The nature of the study was therefore made clear to the participants.

The final set of ethical issues is related to the accurate and careful analysis of data. In other words, researchers need to avoid any type of personal bias in the way they

manage and represent their findings. Avoiding such issues was central in establishing the trustworthiness of this research. As mentioned before, a number of measures were taken to establish the credibility of the findings in this study, including respondent validation of the transcripts and peer scrutiny of the project (see section 4.8. for trustworthiness). Such measures ensured that a careful management and analysis of the data was achieved.

By taking these issues into consideration, this study was able to establish good practice and avoid ethical transgression. I was able to make informed ethical judgments and decisions throughout the research. This study therefore can be described as abiding by the general ethical guidelines that inform social research and the University of Sussex Research Code of Practice in particular.

4.10. Limitations

This section discusses a number of limitations related to this study. The first limitation is the use of the case study as a research design. The case study can be defined as a strategy in which one particular phenomenon is selected and studied in depth as it naturally occurs (Denscombe, 1998). Proponents of the positivist paradigm often criticise case studies as being restricted in that they lack the ability to produce generalised knowledge. Yin (2013) argues that statistical generalisations in case studies are nearly impossible because the sample is too small to adequately represent any large population. Thus, the idea of generalisation based on statistical analysis is considered a flaw in case study research. Yet Flyvbjerg (2006) and Shenton (2004) argue that, although each case study is unique and context-specific, it represents an example and can form a component of a broader consensus. If the case study presents a detailed description and analysis of the phenomenon under study, other researchers can relate to aspects of that case study in their own context (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Shenton, 2004). This study offers a thorough analysis of the students' EFL learning experience in Saudi higher education. It is therefore expected that researchers working in similar contexts can relate to the findings of this study and build on them for future investigation.

The second limitation is related to the relatively small sample used in the study. This sample did not represent the entire student population in the EFL programme. Instead it was based on those participants who willingly volunteered to take part in the study. This means that it might be difficult to draw detailed conclusions about the broader population within the programme. However, in attempt to overcome this limitation, the sampling technique included an equal number of students from all three academic years in the EFL programme. This was done to provide a holistic understanding of the students' experiences in the entire programme.

The third limitation is associated with the use of the snapshot case study approach. Snapshot or cross-sectional case studies can be defined as a detailed study of one research entity at one point in time. Unlike longitudinal case studies, in which data is gathered over multiple points of time, cross-sectional case studies provide data over a specific period of time. This means that I may face the risk of not being able to fully understand the research context. However, through the use of multiple sources of evidence, I was able to overcome some of the limitations.

The fourth limitation of the current research is that only male participants were involved in the studies. Initially I was hoping to also interview female participants for this study, which would have added valuable insights to the research. However, the cultural norms in Saudi Arabia in general and the university regulations in particular prevented that from happening. Within Saudi society, the mixing between males and females is highly discouraged and to some degree frowned upon. The university also strictly follows such norms, as manifested in segregated campuses for male and female students. Therefore, this study was limited to the viewpoints of male participants in investigating the phenomena under study.

4.11. Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology that was used for this research. It began with a discussion of the philosophical (interpretivist epistemological and constructivist ontological) assumptions, and the qualitative methodological orientation that

guided this study. It then discussed the case study research design adopted for this inquiry. The study used a case study design to conduct an in-depth analysis of a small sample of students and lecturers in the EFL programme at CU.

After this, the implications of the researcher's position were addressed. The chapter then moved on to discuss the research methods used in this inquiry. By adopting a case study design, the study was able to employ a variety of data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews, observations and documentary review.

The chapter then outlined the sampling strategy and the participants involved in the study. The data analysis approach was then discussed, with a detailed account of the translation process. The chapter concluded with a consideration of ethical issues and the limitations of the research.

The next chapter presents the analysis of the institutional influences on teaching and learning in the EFL programme at CU.

Chapter Five: Institutional influences on teaching and learning in the EFL programme

This chapter presents the findings about the institutional influences on teaching and learning in the EFL programme. As discussed in section 3.2 of the literature review, examining the policies and practices of the educational institution helps in understanding how institutional influences affect the students' learning experiences. Drawing on data gathered from interviews and documents as well as observations, this chapter aims to answer the first sub-question, *'How do the institutional influences affect teaching and learning in the EFL programme?'*

The chapter begins by examining the field of higher education in KSA and the EFL programmes offered by Saudi higher education institutions. This is followed by a discussion of the position of CU in the field of higher education and the position of the CAH within the university. Finally, these institutional influences are analysed by examining different components of the programme, which are: the entry requirements for the EFL programme, lecturers' perceptions of students, class size, the use of English inside the classroom, and assessment. The data gathered from documents, interviews as well as observations show that these components have a significant impact on teaching and learning in the EFL programme at CU.

5.1. Examining the field of higher education in Saudi Arabia

As discussed in section 3.2, all higher education institutions operate within the field of higher education (McDonough, 1997). In order to understand the position of CU as an institution, it is important to first understand the field in which it operates. In this study, higher education in KSA is conceptualised as a field in which different institutions operate and each institution positions itself according to the capital that it excels in (i.e., economic, cultural and social), with different policies and practices within the field (Ahmed, 2012; Ashwin, 2009).

The Ministry of Education – Higher Education division (MoE-HE) was established in 1975 with responsibility for supervising, planning and coordinating the

Kingdom's higher education. It is a government institution responsible for policy development and funding for the higher education sector and for ensuring its quality. It also supervises educational offices abroad, international academic relations and scholarship programmes (MoE, 2017a). With 26 government universities, 42 technical colleges, 11 private universities and 38 private colleges geographically distributed in the Kingdom's various regions, the ministry's mission is to provide higher education:

...to all in an appropriate Educational Environment within the framework of the KSA Education Policy, as well as to promote the quality of Education Outcomes, increase the effectiveness of Scientific Research, encourage Creativity and Innovation, develop Community Partnership and promote the Skills, and Capabilities of students. (MoE, 2015, para. 2).

In recent years, the MoE-HE has been compelled to increase the capacity of many of its universities. This was a result of the rapid increase in university enrolment in Saudi Arabia (Pavan, 2016). In an attempt to ensure that the increased access to higher education does not affect the quality of education, the Ministry has introduced several initiatives intended to raise the quality of education in Saudi universities. These include developing the creativity and excellence of university faculty members and supporting the establishment of centres for research and scientific excellence in universities. Hence, the MoE-HE established the National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation (NCAAA) which aims at "raising the quality in governmental and private higher education institutions, maintaining transparency, and providing codified standards for academic performance" (MoE, 2017b, para. 4).

The Ministry has also established the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education (NCAHE) to regulate university admission requirements and achieve equity in higher education (MoE-HE, 2017c). However, not all universities follow the MoE-HE's recommendations to the full extent and most public universities do enjoy a large degree of independence in both academic and administrative matters (Alrashidi, 2015). The extent to which a university follows the MoE-HE's recommendations depends on different factors, such as funding, university size and

the number of qualified faculty members. This is true even amongst elite Saudi universities. For example, a leading university such as King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) (associated with Saudi Aramco, the biggest oil company in the world) ranked 1st in KSA (according to QS Top Universities, 2017) and has a reputation for its rigorous entry requirements; excellent faculty members; state of the art facilities; conducting and publishing quality research, uses English as the only means of instruction which goes against the MoE-HE's regulations which state that "Arabic is the language of instruction in universities" (MoE, 1994, p. 5). (See section 5.2 for a further discussion).

Many leading public universities such as CU are aware of their national responsibilities. CU promotes a model of 'accessible higher education' for all students, while trying to maintain the quality of its higher education by promoting "knowledge development, research, innovation and entrepreneurship" (KAU, 2015a). Due to its size and large number of colleges and departments, CU accounts for one of the highest numbers of student applicants and graduates in KSA each year. In 2015, CU announced that it has accepted more than 25,000 students out of the initial 158,760 applicants (KAU, 2015b). Students were enrolled in various colleges according to their grade point average (GPA), skills, abilities and other entry requirements. This open admission policy has led to an imbalance in the distribution of students to different colleges within CU, with higher-grade students enrolling in STEM colleges (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) and lower-grade students enrolling in the Arts, Humanities and Social Science colleges (e.g. Department of English Language). This is mainly because STEM colleges have more rigorous entry requirements than other colleges within CU. In addition, colleges such as the CAH and its different departments are overwhelmed with the number of students enrolling in their departments in general and English department in particular each year. (See section 5.3 for further discussion).

5.2. English language programmes in higher education

The use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education has become a priority for many Saudi universities despite the language policy concerning higher education, which emphasises that:

Arabic is the language of instruction in universities. Another language can be used if necessary; however, this should be made by a decision from the council of the university concerned (MoE, 1994, p. 5).

Nowadays, many Saudi universities have become more reliant on English in their teaching and it has become the medium of instruction in most technical education and medicine colleges. Currently, all multi-disciplinary universities in KSA have English language departments and English language institutes (ELI). These ELIs provide intensive EFL courses to students in their preparatory year programmes (PYP), in order to enhance their English language skills. These programmes may also include an English for Specific purposes (ESP) programme, which has a narrower focus on the specific linguistic demands of a particular area of study, such as business or medicine.

The aim, length and intensity of these preparatory EFL programmes differ according to the university's policies with regard to the use of English as a medium of instruction. For example, KFUPM offers more than 20 hours per week of EFL training over a one-year period and extra English classes over the summer vacation and weekends for students in need of support. The aim of the programme is to enable students to achieve a level of English commensurate with an internationally recognised benchmark TOEFL score of 500 and above (KFUPM, 2017). The aim and intensity of such a programme reflects the university's adopted policy of using English as the only medium of instruction. On the other hand, other multi-disciplinary universities, including CU, offers 18 hours per week of EFL training in their preparatory year (see Appendix II for course syllabus). The lower number of EFL hours per week and lack of extra support reflect the university's policy toward the use of English as the medium of instruction. Unlike KFUPM, CU follows the MoE-HE's policy of using Arabic as the main language of instruction. However,

there are some exceptions. For example, the College of Medicine in CU uses English as the main language of Instruction (Al-Hazmi, 2007).

Within CU, the mission of the preparatory EFL programme is to “provide quality intensive instruction of English as a foreign language...to the university preparatory year students in order to enhance their English language skills and facilitate their college entry” (ELI, 2017a, p. 2). It aims to improve students’ basic language skills and is designed to help students achieve an *intermediate* level of language proficiency before enrolling in different departments (ELI, 2017b). Yet such goals are not always achieved and some students struggle with English throughout their second year after enrolling in different colleges. In the following quote, the Head of the English Language Department describes how some students still struggle with the language even after passing the PYP:

Well, the major challenge is that students have very poor pre-college knowledge of the English language. They come here [students] and they struggle with learning the language. Not to mention literature and linguistics courses which are taught in English and require strong knowledge of the English language, which most students don’t really achieve after one year of language training [in the PYP].

L7, Head of English Department, Interview, Monday 10th November 2014

The failure to adequately develop students’ language skills in their preparatory year can become a real challenge for some students, especially in the English department. For example, a 4th year English language student describes his struggle after finishing the preparatory year and joining the English department:

As you know, most of us came to the department with little or no English background, although we did study English for the 6 years in public schools. When I first started at the department...I was expecting that they would start with us from the beginning and would teach us all the basics but was surprised that the department had high expectations from second year students. They expected that we were intermediate or advanced English learners but in reality a lot of us were just beginners. The focus on the major skills was little and we went into more specialised courses within the department.

Student 12, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014 (4th year)

In another example, S1, who just joined the English department, describes how he was astonished that one of his classmates did not even understand the feedback the lecturer was providing:

For example, one of my classmates got 16/100 in the writing test, and the lecturer was telling him “You got a 16 because of this, and this and this”. And when we went outside, he told me, “Come here.” I said, “What?” He said, “What did he tell me?” Meaning he didn’t even have the basics.

Student 1, Interview, Wednesday 17th September 2014 (2nd year)

These examples clearly suggest that although students complete an EFL component as part of the PYP, many still have undeveloped language skills. Nevertheless, these preparatory EFL programmes play a role, to some extent, in improving students’ basic language skills to enable them to succeed in their education (Albousaif, 2011). These programmes were introduced as a result of the MoE-HE attempt to improve the quality of higher education and since 2010 all Saudi universities teach EFL courses as a compulsory subject in their preparatory year programmes (Yushau and Omar, 2007).

The second common English programmes offered by multi-disciplinary Saudi universities, including CU, are the specialised English as a Foreign Language programmes. These programmes offer students a Bachelor’s degree in English Language with a focus on linguistics, literature or translation (as discussed in section 2.6). In CU, the undergraduate EFL programme is offered by the Department of European Languages and Literature – English Department which is part of the CAH. It offers a Bachelor’s degree in English with a focus on linguistics and literature. The aims of the EFL programme are to prepare qualified graduates proficient in English for the job market; prepare qualified English teachers for education; and enable students to acquire different intellectual skills and methods through specializing in a foreign language, to understand modern theories in English literature and linguistics, and to communicate with individuals of other cultures while keeping a sense of personal pride and trust in themselves, in their cultural principles, and in their identity (KAU, 2016a). The programme also promotes itself as meeting the community’s demand of qualified English specialists

that can work in various areas in the country (KAU, 2011). Combined with a high demand for English language professionals in KSA, many students join the programme for its vocational qualifications and to develop the necessary skills to succeed in the future. The following quotations describe why some students join the English department:

Many of them are here just to get their certificate, you know, at any price and get a job later on, absolutely.

NNES Lecturer 4, Interview, Tuesday 21st October 2014

I joined the department to learn the language and to get a degree. Because that will lead to a bright future where I can find a better job in the work force.

Student 7, Interview, Monday 13th October 2014 (2nd year)

It is also a good way to increase and improve your income and if you put your money on English to the end, I mean complete a PG degree in English, that will improve your life.

Student 10, Interview, Saturday 18th October 2014 (2nd year)

If you learn this language and get a certificate you will feel safe and you will be able to connect with many people.

Student 17, Interview, Wednesday 29th October 2014 (2nd year)

Lecturers at the EFL programme explain why, in their opinion, students join the department in the first place. Lecturer 4 states that many students join the department for its vocational qualifications. Students view the programme as a gateway to a better future and an assured job. These reasons were echoed by many of the students. Words and phrases like ‘job’, ‘safety’, ‘secure future’, and ‘increased income’ were some of the main reasons why students joined the programme. Students’ reflections show that many of them view the EFL programme as a way to improve their social and financial status in society.

5.3. CU’s position in the field of higher education

CU is a multi-disciplinary public university ranked 3rd in Saudi Arabia and 4th in the Arab region (QS Top Universities, 2017). It is located in the western region of Saudi

Arabia and is considered to be the largest public university in the city of Jeddah. Two other universities exist in the north of Jeddah (KAUST and Jeddah University). KAUST is a public postgraduate Science and Technology University, with international students accounting for two-thirds of its student population (McPhedran, 2013). Founded in 2009 with a \$10-billion endowment and known for its strict entry requirements and high quality research, KAUST has “one of the fastest growing research and citation records in the world right now” (McPhedran, 2013, para. 5). On the other hand, Jeddah University is a new multi-disciplinary university that was established in April 2014 and until 2016 was under the administrative and academic supervision of CU. The nature and location of these universities has made CU the first choice for many undergraduate and postgraduate students in the region. According to MoH-HE records, in 2016 CU accounted for one of the highest number of student enrolment in Saudi Arabia, with more than 166,300 students enrolled at CU; 7,889 faculty members and more than 20 colleges in different locations throughout the Kingdom (MoE, 2016b). CU also offers distance-learning programmes, where students appear annually for their exams.

CU is well known for its contribution to scientific research and its production of well-educated learners, especially in specific scientific areas. Its position has been identified by the MoE-HE as “one of the distinguished universities in terms of *the number of students*, the number of scientific and theoretical fields of study and the exclusiveness of certain specializations such as seas sciences, geology, nuclear engineering, medical engineering, meteorology and aviation and mineralization” (MoE, 2014, para. 6). CU’s reputation in the fields of science and technical education goes hand-in-hand with the MoE-HE’s recommendations. In its 2010 ‘Plan to Achieve Excellence in Science and Technology’, the MoE-HE clearly states that it “seeks to give priority to scientific and technical disciplines through consolidating the infrastructure, such as research centres and advanced labs; developing and qualifying personnel, scientifically and technically, as well as developing the educational process and expanding graduate studies and multidisciplinary programmes” (MoHE, 2010, p. 2). Therefore, the development and upgrading of science and technical programmes has been a priority for CU. For example, in recent

years, CU established the Centre of Excellence in Genomic Medicine Research (CEGMR), which strives to be a centre of excellence in the area of genomic medicine research (KAU, 2012).

As mentioned before, CU promotes a model of ‘accessible higher education’, which translates into thousands of students from various backgrounds enrolling in the university each year. As a result of these policies, students with lower grades and students who have been rejected from STEM colleges end up being accepted in other colleges and departments, including the department of English. Faculty members of the English department commented on the academic level of their students:

There has been a decline in the level of students joining the English department. In the old days it was, I can say, the elite who would join the department. That was in the old days. And then these people started to go to other colleges. Mainly science, business, economics. And the faculty of arts in general, including the English language department, would be left for those who could not join other major colleges. So you can safely say that the faculty of arts and humanities does not attract the cream of society.

L7, Head of English Department, Interview, Monday 10th of November 2014

I don't think they [students] are the right choice for us. Plenty of them come here against our will, to be honest. We do not – if it was up to me I wouldn't accept most of them – to be honest.

NNES Lecturer 4, Interview, Tuesday 21st October 2014

The academic level of students enrolling in the EFL programme was of concern to many faculty members. The head of the English department and other EFL lecturers expressed their disapproval of the academic level of many of their students and clearly stated that many of them joined the department “against our will” (L4). This has to do with the position of the College of Arts and Humanities as a whole in CU and the university's entry requirements (as discussed in sections 5.3.1 and 5.4.1 below).

5.3.1. The Position of the College of Arts and Humanities in CU

In 2013, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) issued a report highlighting concerns about the low enrolment rates for arts and humanities in the United States and worries that the emphasis on science education risked diminishing other disciplines (AAAS, 2013). The nationwide report revealed that in 2010 a mere 7.6% of Bachelor's degrees were granted in arts and humanities. Harvard University also reported a decline in 2012, with only 20% of its undergraduates majoring in the humanities in the U.S. Concerns about unemployment were one of the main reasons for the decline. However, somewhat of an opposite pattern can be observed in Saudi higher education. Currently, almost 50% of Saudi higher education graduates are enrolled in the humanities, arts and education streams (Al-Ohali and Burdon, 2013). In CU, official documents show that a higher number of students enrol in the humanities and administrative track of the PYP than the natural science track. For example, in 2012 the student population in the science track was less than 8,000 whereas the humanities the administrative track had a total of 44000 students (MoE, 2016b). This means that more students eventually enrol in colleges that are allocated for the humanities and administrative track (i.e. Arts and Humanities, Law, Economics and Administration, and Communication and Media) than in other STEM colleges.

Within the humanities and administrative track, the College of Arts and Humanities has one of the highest enrolment rates and the English department is one of the most favourable departments for students. This is due to the high demand for English professionals in KSA. The majority of students clearly stated that the English department was their primary choice when applying at CU.

There are a lot of majors in the school of humanities, such as psychology, social science and others but I searched for the major that has more job opportunities in KSA and I found many of these majors don't have future job opportunities and that's why I chose English. I found that majoring in English had vast job opportunities in the private and government sectors, and I hope it was the right choice. My choice was not based on interest – it was merely to find a job.

Student II, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014 (3rd year)

There are people here [College of Arts and Humanities] who study other majors and by the second and third year they become depressed because they see their friends that have graduated from the same department not able to find a job and some of them have good GPAs and I don't want to make the same mistakes as them.

Student 6, Interview, Monday 13th October 2014 (4th year)

I guess they join the department because they guarantee a job and because other majors in the college are, you know, hardly acceptable in the market but English is and there's a big demand for professional English speakers in Saudi...if they can't get a place in other colleges, like medicine or engineering or other fields, they [students] think English is one of the best majors for getting a job nowadays in Saudi Arabia.

NNES Lecturer 2, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014

These quotes reveal that many students enrolled in the EFL programme are aware of the job market in Saudi Arabia. In their opinion, majoring in English and obtaining a bachelor's degree in English is more likely to yield a positive future career, compared to other disciplines at the CAH. (S11) and (S6) expressed their fears of unemployment and stated that this is mostly based on previous experiences of students that have graduated from other disciplines within the college. This suggests that students are aware of the difference between disciplines in relation to their market value, and many believe that due to the need of EFL teachers in the country, the English department is their best career choice. This supports Ashwin (2009) suggestion that the notion field can be examined from different levels within an institution (i.e. the college and departmental level) and that each sub-field develops its own forms of symbolic capital. Moreover, in many cases, students who fail to obtain the minimum requirements to join any of the STEM colleges at CU decide to join the English language department. The following students state that joining the English department was their second choice:

Studying English as a major was not my first choice. At first I wanted to be an engineer but my GPA was lower than what the university required for that major, so I decided to study in the English department because it's the next best thing.

Student 5, Interview, Friday 10th October 2014 (3rd year)

When in high school I was thinking to enrol in the engineering department. Actually, I hate the language, the English language, and my

English grades were really low in high school. When I graduated and registered with the university I couldn't get admission to the engineering department and I decided to apply to the English department.

Student 4, Interview, Wednesday 8th October 2014 (4th year)

These students show that they first applied to STEM colleges (e.g. engineering) and not the CAH. When these students were unsuccessful in joining STEM colleges, they decided to apply for the English department because it was the “next best thing” (S5). These quotes suggest that there is a large influx of students joining the CAH in general and the English language department in particular.

5.4. Institutional influences of CU on the EFL programme

This section presents the institutional influences of CU on the EFL programme. These influences are analysed by examining different components of the programme such as the entry requirements for the EFL programme, class size, lecturers' attitudes and perceptions of students, the use of English as the medium of instruction, and assessment. The data collected from documents and interviews as well as observations show that these components have a significant impact on teaching and learning in the EFL programme. Thus, the analysis provides an in-depth understanding of how the programme is affected by institutional influences.

5.4.1. Entry requirements for the EFL programme

As mentioned in section 2.4, in order to secure a seat at one of CU's colleges, students must first pass all courses in their first two semesters of the preparatory year programme. According to CU's *Handbook Guide to the Preparatory year* (KAU, 2017b), the PYP is divided into two tracks ('natural sciences' and 'humanities and administrative'), which are closely associated with their route in secondary school. Students who enrol in the humanities and administrative track of the PYP are allocated into one of four specific colleges. The placement process is based on a competition mechanism in terms of a student's Grade Point Average (GPA), preference, the department's accommodation capacity and number of faculty members, and its specific admission criteria. Students who join the natural science

track are allocated to various departments in different STEM colleges (science, technology, engineering and maths), which have a higher level of student competition and more rigorous entry requirements than other colleges and departments in CU. When these students are unsuccessful in joining any of the STEM colleges, they are given the opportunity to apply for other university colleges including the College of Arts and Humanities.

In addition to the university general admission policy, each department can have its own specific requirements. For example, all students joining the English department must first undertake a writing test. The aim of the test is to determine the students' language skills and their suitability for the department. However, not all students pass the test and the department usually ends up lowering its entry requirements to maintain a certain number of students each semester allocated by the college and university. The Head of the English department comments on this issue as follow:

Unfortunately, we usually accept students that have not achieved the minimum entry requirements for the department and some have not passed the writing test. This is because we have a certain number of students that we have to accept every semester.

L7, Head of English Department, Interview, Monday 10th November 2014

The above quote reveals how the department's administration lowers its entry requirements to attain the number of students assigned by the college and university.

There's a placement test which I don't think really accurately depicts who can and who cannot successfully complete any of our courses. I think there should also be a one on one interview with at least one member of the faculty here. And in the English department of European languages, you need to interview that student.

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th October 2014

Other lecturers criticise the pre-entry test and argue for more rigorous assessment of prospective students by conducting "one on one interview[s]" with students (L1). Furthermore, this admission policy has a ripple effect on different aspects of the EFL

programme including class size (see section 5.4.2), teacher-student relations (see section 5.4.3), the use of English inside the classroom (see section 5.4.4) and assessment (see section 5.4.5), as discussed below.

5.4.2. Large class size

The university's open admission policy, combined with the large influx of students to the humanities and administrative track in general and the CAH and its EFL programme in particular, has a direct link to the lecture-student ratio and the high number of students inside the classroom. Despite the NCAAA recommendation's that the number of students should not exceed 25 per class, the average number of students in the EFL classroom is around 40. L4 describes this issue in detail:

Well, the recommendation of the NCAAA is for the class size to not exceed 25 under any circumstances. Unfortunately, however, this rule is often violated. I have taught (and still teach) classes that have 40 students in them. And I know that in other departments, e.g. Engineering, a class can reach 100 or exceed it. I find it a big problem especially while teaching language skills.

I discussed the problem of large class sizes with the head of the department when I used to teach basic language skills courses (by the way, I consider any language skills class that exceeds 15 a big class since it automatically affects students participation negatively), and he told me that we have to be flexible with the class sizes depending on our semester intake in the department and depending on the number of classes that we have the capacity to operate based on the number of staff available.

NNES Lecturer 4, Interview, Tuesday 21th October 2014

Notably, large class sizes affect the lecturers' pedagogical strategies and interaction with students. Due to the high number of students per class, lecturers complain that they are not able to interact with students and monitor their development and progress. This obviously has a negative impact on the students' learning experiences, with students having less time to interact and participate during classes (see Chapter 7).

5.4.3. EFL lecturers' perceptions of students

As mentioned before, many lecturers in the department are disappointed with the academic level of their students and disagree with department's administration policy in relation to the language level of students being accepted in the EFL programme. This affects the lecturer-student relations in the programme. L4 (see below) describes his students as unworthy of being in the programme and believes that many of them will never complete the programme. L2 describes his students as being "naive" in relation to their academic abilities. The following quotes illustrate these attitudes:

They come here with the idea of learning English from scratch, to be honest, you know, and they are shocked that that's not what we are doing here, in fact plenty of them can't carry on; I can see some of them will just spend three semesters maximum, and then they have to go somewhere else; they can't stay here, they can't make it.

NNES Lecturer 4, Interview, Tuesday 21st October 2014

I think there is a mixture, but I really do think if I had to say out of ten students here I would say, probably, three or four of them have the necessary academic skills. I would describe my students as somewhat naive, particularly in an academic sense.

NNES Lecturer 2, Interview, Sunday 19th of October 2014

These kinds of negative attitudes toward the students affect the teaching strategies these lecturers adopt. For example, some lecturers felt the need to create boundaries on the students' learning, by giving students explicit instructions to follow. Although these lecturers would argue that these instructions are given to assist the students in their learning, they can have a negative effect on their learning experience in the EFL programme (see section 7.2.3).

5.4.4. The use of English as the medium of instruction

With regard to the use of the English language inside the classroom, the department encourages all EFL lecturers to use English in their teaching. Yet not all lecturers adhere to such recommendations, for one main reason. Due to the open admission policy and the lowering of entry requirements for the EFL programme, many

students in the programme have poor English backgrounds and struggle with basic language skills. Therefore, some NNEST lecturers feel compelled to use Arabic in their teaching:

What you will sometimes find is that some lecturers are using Arabic in the class, because it's what they can do... the only way to explain the ideas is to explain it in Arabic, because, as I said, the syllabus in the high school is not that good. So, the students need a lot of time to get into the programme, to learn English, to learn basic English.

NNEST Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th of October 2014

However, in an attempt to prevent lecturers from using Arabic in their classes, especially in the early stages of the programme, the department's administration has assigned the communication language courses (listening/speaking) to NNEST lecturers (see section 7.3).

5.4.5. Assessment

Assessment in the EFL programme is also highly affected by the university's policies and practices. As mentioned before, the university's open admission policy has led to the lowering of the entry requirements for the EFL programme, which has several consequences. These include the weak English background of students enrolled; lecturers' negative attitudes and perceptions of students; and large class sizes. These issues have had an impact on the assessment practices used by all EFL lecturers. Average assessment standards ensure that students from weak educational backgrounds can still have a chance to gain a degree. With the exception of oral exams, assessment criteria in the EFL programme are mainly based on written exams that are administered throughout and at the end of the semester. The data shows that these exams are designed by lecturers with a combination of essays and multiple choice, short-answer, and true-false questions. The assessment is based on two mid-term exams with a total of 40 marks (20 marks each) and a final paper-based exam (worth 40 marks), while the remaining 20 marks are determined by lecturers to use as they see fit. The following comment shows the independence that lecturers have in relation to course assessment:

The one thing that [the head of the of department] said to me, in a very supporting way, “[L1], you’re in charge of your class. The only thing we ask is that you use the prescribed textbook. Use the prescribed textbook, that’s it. Everything else is up to you. The tests, the grades, everything, but just use the book”.

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th October 2014

Due to students’ weak English backgrounds and lecturers’ negative attitudes towards the students, some lecturers feel that their students “need to be pushed” to pass their courses. L4 explains this point by linking students’ low academic levels with lecturers’ assessment decisions:

Now, they are totally different from those we had, say in the past. Now they come here and they need to be pushed, you know, by force to do it, otherwise I don’t think they are up to the level. Plenty of them, I would say; the majority need help to pass.

NNES Lecturer 4, Interview, Tuesday 21st October 2014

Lecturers usually use different strategies to ensure that students can easily obtain the remaining 20 marks, which will give them a better chance to pass a given course. Assigning marks for students’ attendance, participation and course assignments are some of the strategies that lecturers use to help their students. For example, some lecturers complain that students lack the motivation to attend classes, and therefore assign 10 marks for classroom attendance to encourage students to attend classes and also to help them easily obtain such marks. L2 illustrates this point by stating:

A large number of students do not take full advantage of the course. In fact, they don’t worry about going to class because they don’t see it as their obligation. They just want the degree. That’s why I give marks for their attendance.

NNES Lecturer 2, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014

Some lecturers use course assignments as a means to help their students. The assignment can be in the form of a research paper or a classroom presentation. The goal of such an assignment is to encourage student participation in the classroom and to help students also obtain the full marks assigned for the task. L5 illustrates this point:

I currently teach two courses. I will properly ask for a research paper in one of the courses and an oral presentation in the other. I really don't want to focus on attendance because some of them are usually absent.

NNES lecturer 5, Interview, Sunday 26th October 2014

However, some lecturers and students voice their disapproval of such strategies and the consequences they have on students' learning development and progress. For example, L1 points out his disappointment of how some lecturers allow their students to easily pass their courses, especially students taking basic language skill courses of reading, writing, speaking, and listening:

Usually first year students can't pass the 200-level classes [i.e. basic language skill courses]. Although some will always automatically pass, which is disappointing.

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th October 2014

SL6 also expresses his concerns below about how some of his classmates pass their basic English courses, and states that this might be a result of the assessment practices used by lecturers. He explains that many of the lecturers use multiple-choice questions in their assessment, which are "not that difficult to pass". SL6 further argues that even if these students pass these courses they will struggle in future advanced ones:

I'm not sure how some of my friends pass, but I think it has to do with the way exams are designed. Many of our lecturers use multiple-choice questions, which are not that difficult to pass. The problem is that they [students] pass without a strong solid foundation and if you don't have a foundation how are you going to build the rest of the house? It's going to fall over. Or you're not going to build it.

Student 16, Interview, Tuesday 28th October 2014 (3rd year)

Similarly, S8 describes (see below) how some of his third year classmates are still struggling with their basic English language skills. This suggests that students are passing their basic language courses with underdeveloped skills.

Some of my friends are not able communicate in English. They can't even hold a five minute conversation. I'm not sure how they passed the courses or how they're going to find a job. I mean if you can't communicate in English no one will hire you.

Student 8, Interview, Wednesday 15th October 2014 (3rd year)

Moreover, the students' poor English backgrounds results in unacceptable behaviours by some students. L1 indicates that newly enrolled students do not even have the basic language skills to write a research paper on their own. Thus, many of them will end up plagiarising.

They don't understand plagiarism, the concepts of that, the concepts of intellectual property. Many of them will end up copying it off the Internet.

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th October 2014

Large class sizes also have a strong impact on the assessment practices used by EFL lecturers. According to L5 (see below), the majority of lecturers in the programme intentionally avoid using essay-type questions in their exams. Instead, these lecturers almost exclusively rely on multiple-choice questions and believe it is "the best thing that has been invented" (L5). This suggests that using multiple-choice question in assessment is common practice in the EFL programme. The lecturers' main excuse is that they have too many students per class, and essay-type questions are time-consuming to mark. In contrast, multiple-choice questions are much easier to administer and can be marked electronically. L5 also mentions that another reason why many lecturers use such question is that in the past, lecturers used to get paid extra per exam sheet if they included essay questions in their tests. However, such additional were stopped a while ago. For these reasons, many of the lecturers use content-based multiple choice examinations.

Most of the lecturers rely on the multiple-choice questions. Their excuse of course is that we don't have the time, we have too many students, we don't get anything extra if we include the essay-type questions, so why would we waste time marking papers, because in the past they used to give them extra per exam sheet if it included essay-type questions, but they stopped this a couple of years ago. What they did as a reaction is that they stopped using essay-type questions in their exams...

...don't get me wrong: these types of exams are time-consuming to prepare, but they are definitely easier when it comes to the marking stage, especially now that we can do this electronically. Basically, the students highlight their answers and then it goes through a machine. As I said, the majority of lecturers, everyone that I have come across so far,

thinks that multiple-choice questions in the exams are the best thing that has been invented.

NNES lecturer 5, Interview, Sunday 26th October 2014

L5 further explains below that he has raised his concerns about these practices in departmental meetings. The lecture clearly indicates that these assessment practices deny students valuable opportunities to practise the language and further develop their skills. He specifically mentions that it is not acceptable that some of the EFL students cannot even write a full correct sentence in English. This highlights the effects these practices have on students' learning. The lecturer also argues that it is the responsibility of all EFL lecturers to focus on developing the students' four basic skills and to always keep in mind that improving these skills is a priority regardless of the course being taught.

I am trying my best to change that, and I have proposed the topic a couple of times in the department meetings and told them that this is not the best way of assessment and that we are teaching in the English department and some of our students cannot write a full English sentence. I believe it is one of the drawbacks of exclusively using these kind of questions [multiple-choice]. Of course, the more students write, the more it will help their overall development.

Even if you are testing literature or a linguistic knowledge or applied linguistics or whatever you are teaching, at the end of the day, you are basically teaching all the four skills and need to have graduates that are good at all of these skills, even if it is not the main focus of the course.

NNES lecturer 5, Interview, Sunday 26th October 2014

Surprisingly, although L5 was very critical of the use of multiple-choice questions and the negative effects it had on students' language development, the lecturer acknowledges that he himself usually relies on such practices in evaluating students, as he indicates:

I know it is not the best type of assessment to ask students to recall knowledge, but I can't deny that I use it. For example, numerate, define etc. But sometimes I do try to aim for the higher cognitive skills instead of memorising, so I ask them to compare or analyse.

NNES lecturer 5, Interview, Sunday 26th October 2014

Overall, lecturers in the EFL programme do enjoy a certain degree of independence with regard to assessment. Apart from the 40 marks assigned for the final paper exam, lecturers have the authority to assess the remaining 60 marks as they see fit. They usually assign 40 marks to two mid-term exams. However, the university's open admission policy towards the EFL programme has had several effects on the assessment practices lecturers use. Some lecturers feel the need to help their students pass their courses, especially newly enrolled students. This can be observed in the specific assessment practices used by some lecturers, such as assigning marks for attendance, participation, and course assignments that are intended to help students obtain these marks. Also, the large number of students in classes has led many lecturers to avoid using essay-type questions and to rely entirely on multiple-choice questions, which are easily marked. Assessment practices are further discussed in Chapter 7, in relation to the different teaching approaches used in the EFL programme.

5.5. Summary

This chapter highlighted the institutional influences affecting teaching and learning in the EFL programme. It examined CU's position in the field of higher education in comparison to other universities in Saudi Arabia. The analysis revealed that CU defines its capital as 'accessible higher education', which translates into thousands of students enrolling into its colleges every year. The open admission policy results in many students with low academic levels obtaining a university degree. However, such policy does negatively affect the quality of education in the university in general, and in certain colleges and departments in particular.

As a result of the open admission policy, the CAH has been forced to lower its entry requirements for the EFL programme in order to accommodate the high number of students applying to the university. This has meant that students who have not achieved the minimum entry requirements are accepted onto the EFL programme. These policies and practices have an impact on the quality of education in the EFL programme, as manifested in relation to class size, student-teacher relations, the use of Arabic in teaching, and assessment practices.

The next chapter presents the findings of how the family's educational background affects students' learning experiences in the EFL programme.

Chapter Six: Class and family educational background in the EFL programme

This chapter discusses the ways in which students' cultural capital influences their learning experiences in the EFL programme. In his work, Bourdieu maintains that cultural experiences in the home facilitate children's educational attainment, thereby transforming cultural resources into what he calls *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1977). The concept of *capital* therefore has enabled researchers to view culture as an asset that, under certain conditions, may be transmitted from one generation to the next (Sullivan, 2001). Cultural capital is seen as knowledge, skills and attitudes, that is competence, which students actively or passively acquire from their families. The concept of cultural capital is directly linked to family tradition and early childhood training and "in the case of educational qualifications ... is what makes the difference between the [cultural] capital of the autodidact, which may be called into question at any time, ... and the cultural capital academically sanctioned by legally guaranteed qualifications" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47).

"Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction seeks to explain the link between social class of origin and social class of destination, in terms of the impact of cultural capital on educational attainment" (Sullivan, 2007, p.1). Cultural capital is seen as an important mechanism of social reproduction that facilitates the acquisition of educational credentials, and educational credentials are an important mechanism through which wealth and power are transmitted (Sullivan, 2007). Bourdieu's view is that cultural capital is inculcated in the upper-class home, which enables students to gain higher educational credentials. This allows individuals to maintain their class position, and legitimates their dominant position. Indeed, one could argue that cultural capital communicates social status precisely because it is generally linked to a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes. However, by no means does the presence or absence of cultural capital within a family fully *determine* a person's social class. Rather, it gives an insight into how people are positioned in the wider

social structure based on their cultural capital (Munk & Krarup, 2011; Lareau and Weininger, 2003).

Using data collected from student and lecturer interviewees, this chapter aims to answer the second research sub-question, which is '*How does the educational background of the family influence students' learning in the EFL programme?*'. The chapter begins by discussing the ways in which the families' active involvement supports the development of the students' cultural capital. After this, it describes the ways in which families passively communicate their cultural capital to the students. The chapter concludes by discussing the ways in which the absence of cultural capital among families can affect students' learning experiences in the EFL programme at CU.

6.1. The influence of the family's active transmission of cultural capital on students' learning experiences

The active involvement of family members (e.g. parents or siblings) can play an important role in the transmission of cultural capital to the students. The transmission of such capital is based on two presumptions: the first is that the family actually possesses cultural capital, and the second is that they actively or passively engage in the development of their children's cultural capital (Alhawsawi, 2013). The level of education among family members can be an indicator of the possession and/or dispossession of cultural capital in a family (Sullivan, 2007). Family members who have obtained higher education qualifications are often seen to influence the nature of activities to which their families and children are exposed. Thus, family members with a higher education qualification (i.e. university degree) can influence the student's learning experiences by transmitting such capital to the student (Lee and Bowen, 2006). Having educated family members indicates the existence of an institutionalised form of cultural capital within a household, and that family members with a higher education background can transmit this form of cultural capital to the student. The existence of such capital indicates the amount of knowledge and experience among family members who have experienced higher

education, which can be actively or passively passed down to other members of the family.

In the context of the current study, the students who were exposed to an institutionalised form of cultural capital belonged to families with higher education experiences. This means that these students were privileged by being exposed to family members who had experienced higher education and who understood the demands of pursuing a university degree. These experiences were transmitted to the students. Data gathered from student and lecturer interviewees indicates that family members with higher education credentials (such as Bachelor's or Master's degree) positively influence the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme. This is done through the transmission of knowledge and learning skills to the students, which are rewarded in the academic setting of the EFL programme, thus enabling students to succeed at the university level (Andersen and Hansen, 2011). This positive influence is explained by the following quote from L2:

Students that come from upper middle class families, I mean, their English is much better than the other students. Why? Because those students have been exposed to the language, either because their parents were educated or studied abroad and they've been accompanied by them so they studied English, ... so those students, of course, I mean, speak much better, far better than the other students, and lecturers can acknowledge it immediately from the first meeting.

NNES Lecturer 2, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014

This quote illustrates the positive influence that families' educational backgrounds have on the students in the EFL programme. According to L2, students who belong to educated families are seen to be upper middle class students. The data shows that these students come from families where at least one parent has experienced higher education (see Table 2 in section 4.6). Interestingly, L2 recognises the value of having educated family members and describes its effects on the students' learning experience in the EFL programme, with regard to their English language competence. Here, he explains how educated parents influence their children, and states that these students were more likely to be "exposed" to the language, therefore, "their English is much better than [that of] other students". He further

explains how lecturers, due to the students' language proficiency, immediately identify such students. This indicates that the knowledge, skills and attitudes (i.e., forms of cultural capital) that students acquire from their families are rewarded in the academic setting of the EFL programme, which positions these students in an advantageous position to succeed from the start. L1 illustrates this point in the following quote:

I think there are some students in the [English] department that do recognise the importance of hard work. I think they are most greatly influenced to think this way from their parents. Perhaps their parents are educated or might have lived abroad. Maybe that child has been exposed to different cultures. He understands and appreciates that hard work; most of the time, equals success... and that hard work does pay off eventually.

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th October 2014

In this quote L1 also describes the impact of educated parents on the students' learning experiences in the programme. L1 states that students belonging to educated families "recognise the importance of hard work". Here, L1 attributes the students' appreciation of "hard work" to their parents' educational backgrounds and embodied values. Values such as "hard work... equals success" are forms of embodied capital acquired by educated family members from their previous learning experiences. Family support and encouragement have a significant impact on the students' learning. S8 explains such an influence below:

Both my parents are teachers. My father is an English language teacher and my mother is a Science teacher and they encouraged me to join the English department and told me that learning English will enable me to learn anything and communicate with different people around the globe...my father helps with some of my course assignments, especially the linguistic courses.

Student 8, Interview, Wednesday 15th October 2014 (3rd year)

Educated parents also influence students' choice about what degree to pursue (Alhawsawi, 2013; Thomas and Quinn, 2007). This is exemplified in the above quote. Both parents of S8 are university graduates who have obtained Bachelor's degrees in English and Science. This indicates the presence of an institutionalised form of cultural capital that reflects the parents' embodied knowledge and experiences of learning in higher education. S8 describes how his parents

encouraged him to pursue a degree in English and how they described the value of such a degree. This suggests that the parents understood the importance of obtaining a university degree (i.e., a form of capital) and actively encouraged their son to acquire such capital. This demonstrates the active transmission of cultural capital from one family member to the other. For students to fully benefit from such capital, educated family members must actively transmit this institutionalised form of capital to the students.

Additionally, the father is an English language teacher, which means that he has experienced higher education as an EFL student. Here, cultural capital includes the “first-hand” knowledge that parents have of being university students, particularly knowledge that they do not obtain from schools (e.g. university admission process, job market requirements) (McDonough, 1997). Hence, having family members that have gone through similar experiences can positively influence students’ learning experience. S8 describes how his father helps him with his linguistic course assignments. This active passing of knowledge and learning experiences from father to son can boost the student’s confidence and ensure his success in the EFL programme.

Likewise, S20 (see quote below) describes how his father had an important influence on his choice of degree. His father is an engineer who graduated from KAUST and works for Saudi ARAMCO (Saudi Arabian Oil Company). He speaks English fluently, which indicates the existence of an institutionalised form of cultural capital that demonstrates the father’s knowledge and skills that he obtained from his university education. S20 talks about how his father tried to persuade him to become an engineer. However, S20 did not want to do this. His father then advised him to join the English Language department at CU, and explained to his son the value of such a degree. Such guidance from educated family members can have an important impact on students’ future academic choices, in relation to the field of study they choose at the university level. In the case of S20, his father was able to persuade his son to join the EFL programme at CU.

S20 further describes how his father actively supports his language learning, particularly his speaking/listening skills. By encouraging his son to practise the language, S20's father was able to provide his son with a valuable opportunity to use the language outside the classroom environment, at a time when many students at the EFL programme complain about the lack of opportunities they have to use the language in real life situations.

My dad had a huge influence on my choice of degree. He works for ARAMCO [the Saudi oil company] and he wanted me to become an engineer just like him, but I always hated maths in high school so he suggested that I join the English Language department and said that it was required in our society... he always encouraged me to practise my speaking skills with him and I hope that I can be as fluent as he is.

Student 20, Interview, Wednesday 12th November 2014 (4th year)

Furthermore, the students belonging to families with educational backgrounds possessed high economic capital. With one or both parents working in full-time jobs (e.g. as a teacher or engineer), these families are able to afford different educational resources to support their children's learning. This means that upper middle class parents with stable incomes can support their children's education by mobilising different educational resources to their advantage. These resources are considered to be an objectified form of cultural capital that can be used to improve the students' learning experiences, which often results in the children's educational and occupational success (Devine, 2016, Lee and Bowen, 2006; Sullivan, 2001). Therefore, to ensure that their children succeed, parents use various resources, such as books, dictionaries, computers, games and different media programmes to support the students' learning process. Such support is explained in the following quote:

When in high school my dad told me about the BBC Learning English website and said it was one of the techniques he used for learning English in college... now I listen to the broadcast, especially while I am driving.

Student 20, Interview, Wednesday 12th November 2014 (4th year)

The above quote demonstrates how parents mobilise different resources to the advantage of their children. Here, S20's father suggests to his son a specific learning

technique that he had used in college to support his English language learning. By encouraging his son to visit the BBC website (i.e. an objectified capital) and make use of its wide range of materials and listen to its English language broadcast, the parent was able to mobilise such a resource to the advantage of his son. This active support from the parent also demonstrates how different forms of cultural capital (embodied, institutionalized and objectified) are transmitted to the student. As mentioned before, the father is a university graduate, which indicates the existence of an institutionalised form of cultural capital. Furthermore, because of his previous learning experiences, the parent was able to understand the value of such a resource (an embodied capital) and use it to his son's advantage. Therefore, families' awareness of such resources is key in supporting the students' learning experiences. This example supports Bourdieu's (1986) argument that cultural capital in its objectified state is only explained by its relationship with cultural capital in its embodied form.

In a similar example, S1 (see below) is a second year student in the EFL programme and when interviewed he showed a high level of English language competency. With a native-like American accent, S1 reflected on how he acquired the language. He describes how he started learning the language during his early high school years. Despite how he "hated" the language before, S1 explains how he became interested in learning English because of his father's reading habits. Through his father's encouragement and investment of time and effort, S1 started to read these books and learning English became interesting to him. This supports Sullivan (2001) suggestion that reading is significant for students' educational attainment, and that its effect is due to the provision of intellectual resources that help students learning. This also supports the argument that in order for students to best benefit from cultural capital, family members must invest time and effort to support their children.

Most of it [English] was self-taught...but nobody was born a genius or a scientist. I remember that I hated it so much. But then, I think it was in the beginning of high school that I took interest in it. Mainly because of my father's comic books that we sometimes read together.

Student 1, Interview, Wednesday 17th September 2014 (2nd year)

Unlike many Saudi students who often struggle to acquire their English listening/speaking skills (Assulaimani, 2014; Alhawsawi, 2013; Al-Roomy, 2013), S1 possessed the strong communicative skills that are essential for an EFL student. Having never travelled abroad, S1 explains (see quote below) how he refined his listening/speaking skills by using video games as a learning tool. Here, video games are seen as an objectified form of cultural capital, and in the case of S1 they were used as a learning tool. S1 reflects on how his interest in video games fuelled his motivation to learn the language and describes how gaming gave him the opportunity to challenge himself and introduced him to many of his English-speaking friends, which offered a valuable opportunity to practise and improve his English language skills.

I am also fond of video games and I used to be so frustrated at a video game when I couldn't get past a certain level, because the objectives aren't clear to me. Or I don't know it at all, maybe a puzzle...I also made friends with many native speakers during playing online and that's how I got to learn, step by step.

Student 1, Interview, Wednesday 17th September 2014 (2nd year)

6.2. The influence of the family's passive transmission of cultural capital on students' learning experiences

Thus far the development of students' cultural capital has been seen as the active involvement of educated families in developing students' cultural capital through various activities. However, in some cases, cultural capital can also be passively transmitted between family members (Sullivan, 2001). In this case, different forms of cultural capital (embodied, objectified and institutionalised) are passively transmitted from educated family members to the students. This is done through students' exposure to different practices and family possessions (such as books or machines). For example, S9 discusses how he used to watch his father read English novels and how this motivated him to start reading:

My father has a collection of English novels. I remember watching him read his books as a kid... I then started to try to read some of them but at that time my English was weak.

Student 9, Interview, Tuesday 16th October 2014 (2nd year)

This quote demonstrates the passive transmission of cultural capital from one family to the other. The father is an English language teacher who was interested in collecting and reading English novels. His interest in reading such books was later passively transmitted to his son. By observing his father, S9 started to develop his own reading skills, which are highly associated with academic success, critical thinking, examination results and styles of expression (Abu-Rizaizah, 2010; Sullivan, 2001; De Graaf, 2000; Crook, 1997). Indeed, the student's interest in reading was exemplified during his interview and he was eager to show off his possession of such capital. During the interview, the student mentioned his interest in the writings of famous authors such as Jane Austen and Mark Twain.

Interestingly, S9 complained about how his writing skills were not well developed. This was a skill he never mentioned being exposed to from any members of his family members. The fact that the student's advanced reading skills did not match his writing skills infers that the father's reading habits had an important impact on developing the student's reading skills. Through the exposure to his father's book collection and reading habits, S9 was able to develop his own reading skills at an early stage, whereas, no attention was given to develop his writing skills. This exemplifies the importance of educational resources available for students within their home environment. It also illustrates the value of having educated parents or siblings who can act as role models that passively transmit positive learning skills to the students. In the case of S9, the passive transmission of such capital played an important role in improving his learning experiences in the EFL programme, as his reading skills were considerably advanced for a second year EFL student.

Likewise, S14 describes (see quote below) his experience of having two of his siblings studying at the same university. In this quote S14 describes how he sees his siblings as role models who motivate him in his studies. Having siblings or parents who have or are experiencing higher education can pave a path to success for a student. By observing how his siblings study and prepare for exams, S14 describes how his two siblings passively influenced him to succeed. The siblings were not aware of their influence on their brother, thus demonstrating the passive transmission of an

institutionalised form of cultural capital from family members to the students, which encouraged S14 to do his best in the EFL programme.

Two of my brothers are studying here at CU...the oldest studies medicine and the other is in IT...seeing them study and prepare for their exams encourages me to do my best to succeed. I do ask them for their advice, especially my oldest brother because he speaks perfect English.

Student 14, Interview, Monday 27th October 2014 (2th year)

Thus far the focus has been on advantaged students belonging to upper middle class families who possessed different forms of cultural capital, most importantly an institutionalised form of cultural capital. Sections 6.1 and 6.2 respectively examined the active and passive transmission of cultural capital from educated family members to the students and the influence it had on the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme. It was found that different forms of cultural capital were transmitted to the students, which improved their learning experiences in the EFL programme. The influence of such capital on the students' learning experiences was more obvious when family members were actively involved in developing the students' knowledge, skills and attitudes. However, no attention has been given to students who belong to families with no higher education experiences and how this influences their learning experiences in the EFL programme. The next section addresses this issue.

6.3. The family's lack of cultural capital and students' learning experiences

As discussed before, the influence of family educational background on the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme is based on the presumption that families possess different forms of cultural capital, most importantly an institutionalised form of cultural capital, and actively or passively transmit such capital to the students. Yet, in the case of this study, the majority of student interviewees indicated that their families had no previous higher education experience and for some this was a first generation experience (see Table 2 section 4.6. for student sampling). In the context of the current study, these students are considered to be disadvantaged.

Thus, this section examines the influence of the absence of cultural capital among families on the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme. Such influence is seen in relation to issues such as the students' low level of English language competency, difficulties in adapting to the demands of the EFL programme, and lack of family support in course assignments. The following quote by L5 provides a description of disadvantaged students and their language level:

I would say that the majority of our students come from lower middle class families...and most of them I would say are very poor in English because they haven't been exposed to the language although they've studied English at school.

NNES lecturer 5, Interview, Sunday 26th October 2014

The above quote describes disadvantaged students that belong to families with no higher education backgrounds. L5 describes these students as belonging to lower middle class families and unlike advantaged students from upper middle class families, these students enrol in the EFL programme with low English language competency. This can be explained in relation to the unsatisfactory level of English taught at schools. Researchers (Khan, 2011; Fareh, 2010; Al-Johani, 2009) have concluded that although Saudi students study English for nine years in school prior to university, many graduate with low levels of English language skills. However, data as seen in the previous sections shows that students who were exposed to the language (a form of capital) by their families have a much stronger command over the language when joining the programme. This suggests that families that have no knowledge of the language usually struggle to support their children's language learning. Many of these students therefore join the EFL programme with the expectation of learning the language from the start. L4 illustrates this point:

Plenty of them join the department hoping to learn English from A, B, C, and then they are faced with courses like literature, linguistics and other things and they become totally lost here. They come here with the idea of learning English from scratch and they are shocked that that's not what we are doing here; in fact plenty of them can't carry on; I can see some of them will just spend three semesters maximum, and then they have to go somewhere else; they can't stay here, they can't make it.

NNES Lecturer 4, Interview, Tuesday 21st October 2014

L4 argues (see quote above) that students with low English language competency join the EFL programme with expectations of learning English from “scratch”. When faced with the demands of the EFL programme (such as the linguistic and literature courses), these students struggle to adjust to the programme. As a result, some disadvantaged students drop out of the EFL programme and join other Arabic-based programmes within the College of Arts and Humanities. The fact that some of these students drop out of the programme demonstrates the negative effects of the department’s decision in lowering the entry requirements for the EFL programme. These students did not achieve the minimum enrolment requirements for the programme and therefore face many challenges in their studies (see section 5.4.1). For example, S15 describes the linguistic challenges he faces in the programme and is therefore considering to transfer to a different department.

As you know, most of us came to the department with little or no English background, although we did study English in public schools. However, the lecturers expect us to have intermediate language skills, which most of us don’t have. To be honest I’m struggling with the language demands in the programme and I’m thinking of changing my major.

Student 15, Interview, Tuesday 28th October 2014 (2nd year)

In the above quote, S15 mentions that he is considering dropping out of the EFL programme and transferring to another department. This is because the student could not cope with linguistic demands of the programme. The student describes that even after years of studying English at school his language skills are still underdeveloped. S15 further states that when joining the EFL programme lecturers expect students to have at least an intermediate level of English proficiency, which they do not have. This highlights one of the major challenges disadvantaged students face when joining the programme, which is their poor English language skills. In a different example, L3 describes some of the challenges these students face.

I think many of the students don’t appreciate the opportunity they have [of being university students] and they don’t understand, because they don’t come from families that have academic backgrounds...they struggle in effectively transitioning from thinking like a high school boy, to acting like a university student. They just want the degree. Unless they come from those educated elites. So a lot of our students for example, come from Bedouin families and

for some this is a first generation experience for their kids. Their kids are at school for the first time, their parents are not educated...you can't teach what you don't know.

NES lecturer 3, Interview, Monday 20th October 2014

In the above quote, L3 describes disadvantaged students as coming from “Bedouin families” (desert dwellers who traditionally live in rural areas). These families have mostly never experienced higher education and for some of these families this is “a first generation experience for their kids”. These students were never exposed to an institutionalised form of cultural capital. Many therefore “struggle in effectively transitioning from thinking like a high school boy, to acting like a university student” (L3). These students struggle to adapt to the new environment and the demands of being a university student, as a result of the lack of support from their families. However, L3 does exclude those students who come from “elite” educated families. This implicitly means that students who belong to educated families, have been exposed to an institutionalised form of cultural capital and understand the value of higher education, easily adapt to the demands of being a university student, whereas disadvantaged students struggle as they join the programme. For example, S11 describes how he used to become stressed over course assignments:

I remember when I first joined the programme, I was praying that our lecturer doesn't give us homework and when he did, it came down on me, just like thunder. I feel like I'm being paralysed, 'oh, homework'. Then I go back home, I open the book, I look at it and then I cry.

Student 11, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014 (3rd year)

The above quote gives an example of how disadvantaged students struggle with the language. Here, S11 reflects on how he became anxious every time he was assigned homework, and felt that course assignments were an obstacle that he could not overcome during his first year as an EFL student. The fact that many disadvantaged students struggle to cope with the demands of the EFL programme can be explained in relation to the lack of academic guidance and support from their families. These students come from families that lack cultural capital and have never experienced higher education. Therefore, these students usually struggle in their studies, especially at the beginning of the programme. In order to help such students, some

lecturers try to fill in the gaps by providing extra support and guidance. L3 reflects on this issue:

My office hours are actually in the park for one hour every day, but this is something they appreciate, because they don't have a lot of guidance from their families and older generation...and that older generation did not receive an education, except in a religious context.

NES lecturer 3, Interview, Monday 20th October 2014

In addition, in relation to the economic status of disadvantaged students, L4 (see quote below) describes them as being financially poor. Data shows that in the case of disadvantaged students at least one of their parents is unemployed (most often the mother) and their fathers usually work in low-paid jobs such as the 'military' or 'taxi drivers'. This suggests that these families were not able to provide their children with the necessary educational resources (an objectified form of cultural capital) to support their learning. The data also shows that illiteracy rates are high in such families, and in many cases one or both parents are uneducated. Therefore, disadvantaged students enrol in the EFL programme with the hope of improving their economic status. L4 discusses the economic status of these students and their families.

I think that the majority of students are poor; they come from poor [economic] backgrounds, and I think they come just to get a certificate and improve their living standards. We do have those who are privileged, you know, wealthy and being brought up in educated families where English is a piece of cake for them and they are excellent; these are the best students we have here, but most of them don't come to the English department, they go to medicine, engineering – things like that. But you do have some of them here. Plus, the majority are here to improve their living situations when they finish. I would say the majority of them here.

NNES Lecturer 4, Interview, Tuesday 21st October 2014

This quote explains the economic status of disadvantaged students enrolled in the EFL programme. Here, L4 states that the "majority of students...come from poor [economic] backgrounds" and their main goal is to "improve their living standards". Data shows that many of these students work part-time jobs in order to support themselves and their families. Thus, obtaining an English language certificate (a

Bachelor's degree) is regarded as an opportunity for these students to improve their economic status, an aim which in some cases can play a key role in motivating them to complete their university degree. L4 further suggests that these students belong to uneducated families, which indicates that they were never exposed to an institutionalised form of culture capital. On the other hand, L4 describes his best students as belonging to educated families and having been exposed to the language, so that "English is a piece of cake for them". This quote also suggests that many of the advantaged students initially apply to STEM colleges, and the EFL programme is regarded as a second choice for many of them. The following quote by S12 gives a good summary of the concerns, challenges and financial conditions of disadvantaged students in the EFL programme:

...When I first started at the department I was a part-time student and was working in the military and by the second year I quit my job and joined the department as a full time student. I was expecting that they would start with us from the beginning and teach us all the basics but was surprised that the department had high expectations for second year students. They expected that we were intermediate or advanced English learner but in reality a lot of us were just beginners.

The focus on the major skills was little and we went into more specialised courses within the department. I am a married man with kids and I don't have much time to study at home and most of my spare time I try to work as a taxi driver to support my family. I am an English language graduate student in my final year but I am not satisfied with my language competence.

Student 12, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014 (4th year)

To sum up, the majority of the students in this study belonged to families that lack in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes in relation to English and learning in higher education. These families are described by lecturers as lower middle class, which have never experienced higher education. Such a lack in cultural capital appears to disadvantage these students in the EFL programme as manifested in relation to their poor English backgrounds, difficulties in adapting to the linguistic and academic demands of the EFL programme, and lack of family support in course assignments.

6.4. Summary

This chapter explored the influence of the family's educational background on a student's learning experiences in the EFL programme at CU. It uses the notion of cultural capital to analyse such an effect. The findings reveal that families' educational backgrounds do play an important role in the students' success in the programme. It was found that affluent upper middle class families used their learning experiences and resources to support their children's education. Through the active or passive transmission of knowledge and skills from educated family members, these students were more likely to succeed in their studies. Their families were also able to mobilise different resources (such as books and media) to the advantage of the students.

Moreover, EFL lecturers in the programme acknowledge the influence of the family background on students' learning, and clearly state that students from upper middle class families had a much better command over the language when compared to other students, which confirms the positive influence educated families have on the students.

The final section looked at the influence of families with no higher education backgrounds. These families were described by lecturers as lower-middle class families that lack cultural capital, especially in its institutionalised form. Data shows that disadvantaged students had low levels of English language competency when joining the programme, which led to many of them struggling to cope with the demands of the programme.

The next chapter presents the findings of the effects of teaching approaches on students' learning experiences in the EFL programme.

Chapter Seven: Lecturers' teaching approaches and students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom

This chapter provides insights into the classroom environment of the EFL programme at CU. Specifically, it highlights the teaching approaches used by lecturers and the influence these have on students' learning experiences. As the literature indicates (see section 3.4), the pedagogical approaches adopted by lecturers are related to their views about their role as well as that of the students, and can enhance or limit students' interaction and participation in the EFL classroom (Alhawsawi, 2016; Ahmed, 2012; Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi, 2012; Ansari, 2012; Christiansen, 2010; Barnawi, 2009; Rabab'ah, 2005; Prosser, 1999; Prosser et al., 1994). Drawing on data gathered from interviews, documents and classroom observations, this chapter aims to answer the third research sub-question: *'How do the teaching approaches adopted by lecturers affect students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom?'*

As mentioned before (see sampling section 4.6), seven lecturers in total were interviewed, six of whom were observed in their classroom settings: three native English speaking (NES) lecturers and three non-native English speaking (NNES) lecturers. The data shows a clear difference between the teaching approaches of these two groups of lecturers and consequentially their interactions with students in the EFL classroom. The findings show that in their teaching, the NNES (Saudi) lecturers adopted what is generally described as a teacher-centred approach; while the NES lecturers used a student-centred approach in their teaching. Such a distinction is commonly used by researchers in the field of second/foreign language teaching and learning (Inan, 2012; Moussu & Llurda, 2008; Arva and Medgyes, 2000).

However, it is worth stressing that while this chapter depicts a distinction between native and non-native lecturers in relation to their teaching approaches and interactions with students, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the overall population of lecturers in the EFL programme. This is mainly because the small

sample of lecturers interviewed and observed in this study do not fully represent the entire lecturer population in the programme. This type of limitation is commonly associated with case study research (see section 4.10).

This chapter is divided into four main sections. Section 7.1. outlines the teaching approaches used in the EFL programme in general. Section 7.2. discusses the teaching approach used by NNEST lecturers and is further divided into sub-sections according to the lecturers' views, their teaching practices and the effects it has on students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom. Section 7.3. looks at similar issues with a focus on NES lecturers. Section 7.4. examines the assessment practices of both groups of lecturers in the EFL programme.

7.1. The teaching approaches used in the EFL programme at CU

The academic plan and description of the EFL programme curriculum (see Appendix 4) suggest that teaching in the programme seeks to provide a student-centred approach. However, the data collected from interviews as well as classroom observations suggest that teaching in the EFL programme includes both teacher-centred and student-centred teaching approaches with the former being influenced by a behaviourist understanding of teaching and learning and the latter by a constructivist understanding thereof. For example, when asked about the teaching approaches implemented in the EFL programme and whether lecturers have different philosophies in relation to teaching and learning, the Head of the English Department stated:

Generally, we have two teaching philosophies in the programme. Some lecturers focus on how well students are able to accumulate the knowledge they teach...these lecturers focus on testing how well students are able to recall the content of the textbook. Other lecturers in the department use a communicative style in teaching language where the focus is on encouraging students to become more actively involved in developing their skills.

L7, Head of English Department, Interview, Monday 10th November 2014

7.2. The teaching approaches adopted by NNES lecturers and students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom

The analysis of data suggests that NNES lecturers generally adopt a teaching approach that can be described as teacher-centred. Their choice of pedagogy is informed by the way in which lecturers view their role as well as that of the students. The data further suggests that their teaching practices are influenced by structural issues such as the students' lack of cultural capital – particularly a poor English language background – and large class sizes. These different issues are discussed respectively.

7.2.1. NNES lecturers' views about teaching, their roles and students

First, NNES lecturers understand their role as being that of knowledge transmitters and they emphasise the importance of the textbook in their teaching. They see their roles as transmitting the knowledge from the textbook to the students. Lecturers who view their role in such a way often focus on the knowledge and information as detailed in the curriculum or textbook. This is exemplified in the following quote:

I believe that my primary job is to teach students a certain syllabus. I have a set of topics in the textbook that I need to cover. I choose the topics that I think are most relevant to the students...in doing so, students are able to understand what they need to learn and can use the textbook as guide when they study.

NNES Lecturer 2, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014

The above-described teaching strategy is mostly teacher-led. L2 discusses the way in which he views his role as a lecturer as well as that of the students. The lecturer considers his role as being that of a knowledge transmitter in which his “job” is to teach the students a “certain syllabus”. Here, the lecturer and the textbook are the source of knowledge and the students are at the receiving end of such knowledge. As such, the emphasis is on the lecturer and the syllabus and not on the students. This strategy implies that L2 creates a controlled learning environment where students learning is confined to the textbook. In this case, the focus of teaching is around the lecturer's own expertise which is supported by the textbook, while students are expected to absorb the knowledge transmitted by him.

Moreover, when asked about the role that students have in the decision-making in relation to the topics they are being taught, L2 (see below) states that the lecturer alone has the power to change anything in the syllabus. This demonstrates how the lecturer carefully follows the textbook with little consideration of the students' prior knowledge or individual needs.

The lecturers are those who have the power to make such decisions, you know, change something in the syllabus or textbook.

NNES Lecturer 2, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014

L5 similarly describes his views about teaching as:

My philosophy is that I believe that we are assigned a textbook which we need to follow when teaching in the programme... Actually, for me, the textbook is the main source for the course and I think all lecturers should follow it... If they [students] are able to acquire the knowledge in the textbook, they are most likely to pass the test.

NNES lecturer 5, Interview, Sunday 26th October 2014

The above quote suggests that this lecturer largely depends on the textbook in his lesson preparation and classroom activities. In order to pass the course, students are expected to master the knowledge as presented in the textbook and transmitted by the lecturer. Students are therefore not given the chance to negotiate their learning and are instructed to follow and abide to the exact textbook. Because learning is confined to the textbook, students' voices are limited in the teaching and learning process.

Second, data collected from classroom observations suggest that NNES lecturers take on an authoritative role in which students are somewhat submissive. Williams (2005) describes this issue as not being limited to teaching and learning in Saudi universities, but rather as a reflection of the overall culture. Unlike western societies in which critical thinking is encouraged, the Saudi culture is "predominantly one of uncritical submission to authority" (Allamnakhras, 2013, p. 205). These attitudes can be traced to early childhood where children are trained to defer to authority and are discouraged from challenging their parents or educators. Allamnakhras (2013, p. 206) argues that:

In Saudi Arabia, aversion to critical thinking extends beyond educational practice and is inextricably bound up with Saudi culture...[which] actively encourages submission to authority in all spheres: social, educational, political and domestic. This is then reflected and perpetuated in the education system.

Such a cultural issue was further noticeable in the formal way these lecturers interacted with the students, who were often reluctant to engage in a two-way dialogue with the NNES lecturers or challenge the knowledge they transmitted. If the students tried to challenge the lecturer's position this might be regarded as a disruption to the teaching-learning process. It is worth noting that Saudi lecturers were the most reluctant to allow me access to their classroom setting. This might be due to concerns that my presence would harm their image in front of their students. This fear of being judged by students or colleagues is common among NNES language educators in general, and often leads to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt (Tum, 2013).

Third, a recurrent issue in NNES lecturers' interviews is their negative attitudes toward many of the students in the EFL programme. This is mainly because of the students' lack of knowledge and skills in relation to the English language (see section, 5.4.3). As discussed before, many of the students accepted in the EFL programme are disadvantaged students (i.e. students belonging to lower-middle class families, who lack cultural capital) (see section 6.3). These students join the programme with the assumption that they will learn English 'from scratch' and eventually struggle with the academic and linguistic demands of the programme. NNES lecturers therefore argue that their teaching strategies take into consideration the students' weak English language levels and help to equalise the impact of their backgrounds, as well as assisting disadvantaged students to catch up with their peers (Schweisfurth, 2011). In the following quote, L4 describes the English language background of many of his students and the demands this puts on his teaching:

Many [students] come without any knowledge of English. They don't have English, absolutely. You don't know how they can make it. I mean, I can't discuss this, but the majority come here without English. They come for the sake of learning English here. They think we are an English language centre

where they can learn English, but it's not an English language centre here. So, they are way behind compared to some of their peers and we have to start teaching them the very basics for them to even have a chance...to be honest I don't think the majority of them can make it, they just come here, waste time and then go to other departments...out of say 100 students you barely get ten who are really here to do their best.

NNES Lecturer 4, Interview, Tuesday 21st October 2014

The fourth issue affecting NNES lecturers' teaching practices is the large number of students per class. As mentioned before (see section 5.4.2), the university's open admission policy has resulted in the overcrowding of the EFL programme. Large class sizes are an influential factor in the way lecturers implement their teaching practices (Muchiri and Kiriungi, 2015). L4, for example, describes how the number of students determine the way in which he teaches:

Sometimes, we're forced to teach these big classes, and it becomes almost impossible to develop these basic skills in the students appropriately. For example, when I had a listening and speaking class that had over 30 students, I had to focus on teaching listening for the most part, since it would've been almost impossible to do all the speaking activities, e.g. debates, mini presentations, discussions, in a way appropriate to developing the language skills of a novice L2 learner.

When I taught reading to such classes, I wasn't able to allow for actual in-class student reading in which I can allow each student to read aloud in order to correct their pronunciation. Instead, I used to only allow for silent reading (skimming and scanning) then I'd read the passages aloud and ask them to do the reading activities at home.

NNES Lecturer 4, Interview, Tuesday 21st October 2014

The above quote by L4 gives two important examples of how NNES lecturers use teacher-centred practices to deal with the issue of large class sizes. In the first example, L4 describes how in his listening and speaking class he was not able to develop the students' speaking skills because of the number of students, and decided to focus only on teaching listening. This indicates that students were not given the opportunity to practise such a crucial language skill. Similarly, in the reading class the lecturer "was not able to allow for actual in-class student reading" and instead asked the students to read the passage silently. What is most interesting in both examples is that the lecturer never mentioned the use of group or pair work

as way of overcoming this issue and allowing students to actually practise these skills.

7.2.2. NNES lecturers' teaching practices in the EFL classroom

The teaching practices used by NNES lecturers are generally described as teacher-centred. In addition to their reliance on the textbook in their teaching, the data shows that all NNES lecturers use a lecture-based strategy in their teaching. Alnassar & Lee Dow (2013, p. 53) mention that in Saudi higher education institutions, “large group teaching” or “one-way communication method” is commonly used in teaching. They argue that this method of teaching can be dull, boring and repetitive for students. In the context of the EFL programme, observational data shows that NNES lecturers usually start their lessons with a brief revision and then move on to introducing the topic of the new lesson. Meanwhile, students sit quietly and listen. After the lecturer has completed all of his comments, students are allowed to ask questions and participate at the end of the lesson. This lecture-based strategy gives lecturers more control over classroom interactions, by keeping student participation to the minimum, and confirms their authority and credibility in front of their students. In the example below, L5 describes his teaching strategy as follows:

I mainly use lecturing in my teaching and use slides during the lessons. I begin by explaining the new topic and concepts of the lesson from the slides and textbook and students are given time to ask questions at the end.

NNES lecturer 5, Interview, Sunday 26th October 2014

Another teaching strategy used by NNES lecturers in the classroom is the use of instructions. In the example below, L2 describes how, at the beginning of each semester and on the first day of class, he gives his students strict instructions to follow. Students are instructed on how to pass the course and are warned against not following these instructions. This suggests that students who act according to these instructions are believed to be good learners and are expected to pass the course, while those who do not abide to these instructions would fail the course and it would be their “fault”. Although L2 argues that this strategy is used to assist

students in learning, it provides no opportunities for students to negotiate their learning. Students therefore become discouraged about voicing their opinions and have to put their “trust” in the lecturer in relation to their learning.

On the first day of class [the beginning of a semester] I’ve got to say, look, you have to trust me. If you listen to me and do what I tell you to do, you will get an A. If you don’t, you’re going to get an F. I’m going to show you exactly how to get an A in my class. If you don’t do it, it’s your fault.

NNES Lecturer 2, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014

7.2.3. Students’ learning experiences of the teacher-centred approach

Surprisingly, despite the fact that many of the student participants in this study are considered to be disadvantaged, and it is argued by the lecturers that a teacher-centred approach is appropriate for their English language backgrounds, many students expressed negative attitudes to the teaching strategies adopted by NNES lecturers. This could be explained in relation to the fact that these students share a common concern, which is that their time spent in the EFL classroom is one of their few chances to actually practise and develop their knowledge and skills. These students are aware of the importance of honing their skills and acquiring the necessary knowledge before graduating from the programme and entering the job market. This awareness acted as a motivational factor for these students to be concerned about their learning and progress, as illustrated in the following quotes:

Learning the language is very important because my future depends on it, and it is now my major, so I really need to get the language right and speak correctly because it is a real problem if someone graduates from an English department and he cannot write or cannot speak proper English.

Student 15, Interview, Tuesday 28th October 2014 (2nd year)

I joined the department to learn the language and to get a degree. Because that will lead to a bright future where I can find a better job in the work force.

Student 7, Interview, Monday 13th October 2014 (2nd year)

I always want to improve my English and communicate with different people.

It is also the first language in the world. I also hope that I can find a job.

Student 12, Interview, Sunday 19th October 2014 (4th year)

Many of the disadvantaged students felt that teacher-centred strategies did not allow them room to interact and participate in the process of knowledge construction. For example, in the quote below, S2 describes his frustration with the amount of knowledge disseminated by the NNES lecturer. This student was overwhelmed by so much theoretical knowledge and felt disappointed with the limited time he had in which to actually practise the language. This led S2 to lose motivation and interest in the lessons, as he illustrates:

I have a short attention span. I would like it if he [NNES] made the lessons a little bit shorter and allowed us to practise the language more often. He just tries to cram it all into a specific time and students don't have a long attention span, it is 15-20 minutes and that is it. Everything he says beyond that will go in one ear and out the other.

Student 2, Interview, Thursday 18th September 2014 (4th year)

Similarly, S3 (see below) discusses his disapproval of the teaching practices adopted by the NNES lecturer in his reading class. S3 describes how the lecturer asks one of the students to read from the textbook and uses words such as 'stop' and 'wrong' to correct the students. Here, the lecturer is correcting the students' mistakes by reinforcing new habits, a practice commonly associated with a behaviouristic understanding of EFL teaching and learning (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). However, this can have a negative effect on students' motivational levels and self-confidence. Excessive and negative feedback can prevent them from taking the necessary steps to develop their skill; in other words, they might feel hesitant about participating unless they are sure that what they are going to say is correct (Martínez, 2006). S3 further mentions that he hoped the class would be more active, enjoyable and educational. Having fun while learning can have a positive influence on students' learning. Lucardie (2014) argues that fun and enjoyment in the learning environment increase the students' motivation to attend classes and their willingness to learn the knowledge and skills, improve their concentration levels,

help in the absorption of learning and build a socially connected learning environment.

Although I like the lecturer [NNES], I kind of expected more from him. Like, he will ask one of the students to read in the class. Then whenever someone pronounces a word wrong, he will be like, 'Stop, you pronounced this wrong. Who can correct him? Yes, you correct him. No, wrong, you'. Like that, you know. I was hoping for a little bit of activity in the class, that would be much more fun and much more educational. Much more fun for the class.

Student 3, Interview, Tuesday 7th October 2014 (3rd year)

Moreover, disadvantaged students were generally aware of the NNES lecturers' attitudes towards maintaining control and their authority in front of the students. Thus, students often feel hesitant to put forward their own opinions or to participate in the classroom. In Saudi higher education, challenging the lecturer in the knowledge he transmits is not considered to be standard practice and may result in failing a course (Allamnakhrah, 2013). For example, S15 (see quote below) feels that disagreeing with NNES lecturers is considered a 'risky' thing. The student describes how the lecturer might feel humiliated if a student corrects him during the lesson and therefore the students need to avoid such an act. S15 gives an example of a classmate who used to disagree with the lecturer and later was asked to stay quiet, which demonstrates how NNES lectures discourage students from fully participating in the EFL classroom, as S15 illustrates:

Most students feel hesitant about disagreeing with Saudi [NNES] lecturers. They are afraid that this will affect their grading. The lecturer might feel humiliated if a student challenges the knowledge he provides. Although some of the intelligent students will disagree with the lecturers...I remember one student that kept on disagreeing with the lecturer, which I think is risky, and in the end he was asked to be silent.

Student 15, Interview, Tuesday 28th October 2014 (2nd year)

Students also avoid criticising the teaching practices adopted by NNES lecturers because of fear that this might affect their grading and their ability to pass the course. The following quote describes these fears:

Students avoid any kind of disagreement with Saudi [NNES] lecturers...I mean you do not want to fail the course.

Student 19, Interview, Tuesday 4th October 2014 (3rd year)

Despite the widespread negative attitudes toward the teacher-centred approach among

disadvantaged students, a few students did express their preference for such an approach. This is because Saudi students are more familiar in their pre-university education with learning in a controlled learning environment in which they expect the teacher and the textbook to tell them what and how to learn (Ansari, 2012). For example, S21 describes (see below) how he prefers to rely completely on the textbook in his learning. This places boundaries on his learning and allows him to focus on acquiring the exact target skills and knowledge needed for each course. This demonstrates how disadvantaged students can sometimes benefit from these strategies:

Some [lecturers] always rely on the textbook and others use it as a reference and depend on outside sources. However, I prefer to use the textbook because that gives me boundaries that I can follow.

Student 21, Interview, Saturday 15th November 2014 (3rd year)

Like many of their classmates, advantaged students also expressed critical views of the teacher-centred approach used by NNES lectures. These students complained that these teaching practices did not take into focus their previous knowledge nor their individual needs. For example, S1 (see below) is critical of the teaching practice used by the NNES lecturer in the reading class. Here, the lack of classroom interaction and creativity and the lecturer's over-reliance on using the textbook made the lesson 'boring' and the student was 'not interested'. S1 further expresses his distress about not being able to read what he wants and enjoys. This also affects the way in which S1 views the lecturer. He sees this as a sign of weakness, and that the lecturer uses this strategy to hide his shortcomings. The student concludes by discussing his own views on learning and his future intentions of when he becomes a teacher. The student describes how his students will be able to choose their own learning materials. Such a statement indicates the strong attitudes S1 has about this matter. The following quote by him highlights these issues:

Mr... [NNES lecturer] always makes us read the textbook in the classroom and it is boring and he takes control of what we read, even if we are not interested. I think students should be allowed to read what they like and enjoy. But I think it depends on the lecturer: if he's good he won't completely rely on the textbook...when I become a teacher I will rely more on exciting outside sources in my class and allow the students to have the right to choose their material. That is my opinion.

Student 1, Interview, Wednesday 17th September 2014 (2nd year)

In a similar example, S14 (see below) states that the materials used by NNES lecturers did not pose any challenge to his learning. This suggests that lecturers using the teaching-centred approach pay little attention to the students' prior knowledge and what they bring to the learning environment. Instead all students are considered to be at the same level of learning and are therefore taught in a similar manner. S14 describes how this hinders their learning:

Some of the materials used by Saudi [NNES] lecturers are a little bit low when it comes to my level. Like I would have to force myself to study them. You can even find better explanations of the topics online than the ones in the book. I would like it if the lecturer brought new materials that would pose a challenge for students who actually want to learn, who want to further their education when it comes to English.

Student 14, Interview, Monday 27th October 2014 (2nd year)

Advantaged students were also aware of the formal way in which NNES lecturers interact with them. S9 (see below), for example, makes a comparison between NES and NNES lecturers at the EFL programme. The student describes how NES lecturers allow students to “disagree with what they say” and “believe that [students] have the right as adult students to voice [their] opinions”. By contrast, S3 describes how NNES lecturers dislike being challenged or admitting to their mistakes. This might be because these lecturers fear that showing any kind of weakness in their language skills may undermine their credibility as EFL lecturers. Interestingly, the student uses the term ‘PhD holders’ to describe NNES lecturers. Here, the term is used in a cynical manner to indicate that because these lecturers hold a post-graduate degree they dislike being challenged about the knowledge they impart. This means that students are aware of these lecturers’ attitudes. As such, students avoid challenging these lecturers, often feel discouraged from fully participating in the classroom and prefer to ‘stay quiet’. These feelings are regarded as major barriers in learning a second language (Arnold & Brown, 1999).

The foreign [NES] lecturers do not mind if a student disagrees with what they are saying: they believe that we have the right as adult students to voice our opinions. On the other hand, there are some Saudi lecturers, “PhD holders”, that do not like to be challenged on what they say even if they make a mistake,

so I'd rather stay quiet.

Student 9, Interview, Thursday 16th October 2014 (2nd year)

To sum up, NNEST lectures adopt a teacher-centred approach in their teaching. These lecturers view their role as that of being knowledge transmitters, where students become passive learners with the role of absorbing the lecturer's knowledge. Practices including lecturing, giving students strict instructions to follow and frequent use of the textbook are commonly implemented in their teaching. The findings further indicate that these practices are also influenced by structural issues such as the students' lack of knowledge and skills in relation to English as well as large class sizes. Furthermore, power relations between the students and the lecturers were highlighted in the formal and authoritative manner in which NES lecturers interacted with students in the EFL classroom.

7.3. The teaching approaches adopted by NES lecturers and students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom

Unlike Saudi lecturers, NES lecturers use a teaching approach that is best described as student-focused. This is informed by several issues: the lecturers' views about their roles, the roles of students as well as the teaching responsibilities they are given by the department. These issues are discussed in the following section.

7.3.1. NES lecturers' views about teaching, their roles and students

The data gathered from interviews and observations show that NES lecturers view their roles as facilitators and consider the students' active participation in the process of learning as essential. The data further indicates that the department's administration has intentionally assigned to these lecturers the responsibility of teaching the communication language skill courses (listening and speaking). These courses are taught at the beginning levels of the EFL programme (see Appendix 3 for a description of the programme structure). This policy is applied in order to prevent lecturers and students from using Arabic in their communication (see section 5.4.4.), especially as students start the programme. This suggests that NES

lecturers are tasked with the responsibility of helping newly enrolled students adapt to the academic and linguistic demands of the EFL programme, as L1 illustrates:

I personally and professionally believe that my role is to facilitate the students' learning and help them transition to the programme. I find the students to be innocent especially in terms of how to transition from a high school student to a professional student. I always tell my second year students that I am going to teach you English 95% of the time, but 5% of the time I have to be a good strong uncle to you in order to get you to think critically, like a professional student.

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th October 2014

The above quote describes how L1 understands his role in the EFL classroom. He explains that an important role he plays is to facilitate the students' learning and help them transition from acting like secondary school students to being university level ones. As such, L1 is concerned with bringing about new ways of thinking in his students. This is exemplified when L1 describes (see below) his attempts to explain and develop in his students the concept of 'intellectual property'. This is done in order to deter students from plagiarising their course assignments.

They don't understand plagiarism, the concepts of that, the concepts of intellectual property. Many of them will end up copying it off the Internet.

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th of October 2014

In order to successfully facilitate the students' transition, NES lecturers highlight the importance of having good relationships with the students. The data shows that these lecturers empathise with the students and try to develop a friendly and safe learning environment. This is done to support the students' transition into the programme, encourage their participation, and construct positive attitudes toward the target language. Sánchez et al. (2013, p. 116) argue that "university students' sense of well-being, attitudes, and willingness to learn are improved when teachers demonstrate empathy, interest in student development, and respect". Positive lecturer-student relationships therefore can have a significant impact on the students' motivational levels and attitudes toward learning the language (Sánchez et al., 2013). These issues are highlighted in the following quote:

I think a lot of us forget that we are here for the students. The students are the

customers; we need to put ourselves in their shoes. I think it would be a better environment if we think that way... I try to make them feel at ease as a lecturer and then build up a positive attitude toward the language. I guess, I mean, they will build up a very positive attitude toward the language and they will learn very well.

NES lecturer 6, Interview, Sunday 2nd November 2014

The sense of empathy that NES lecturers have towards the students is a common theme in the interview data. These lecturers try to overcome the traditional cultural barriers that govern student-lecturer relationships and interactions in Saudi higher education. As mentioned before, Saudi lecturers interact with students in a formal and somewhat authoritative manner and any interactions are usually confined to the classroom settings. However, NES lecturers try to construct a rapport with the students which extends outside the EFL classroom. For example, L3 (see below) discusses how he views the students as his “kids” that need his guidance and support. In order to make the students feel comfortable, L3 has his office hours in the university park. He further mentions that he meets the students once or twice a week at a restaurant nearby to discuss literature. Such good relationships might explain why many students in this study expressed positive attitudes towards NES lecturers and their teaching.

These are my kids and they are nice kids. I am like a father to them, they are like sons to me. Okay? That means you can teach them anything if they know you care about them... Really, when I look at my kids, they're my sons and they know that, they know I care about them and I'm going to push them a little bit harder. By the way, we get together for dinner once or twice a week, those are my office hours, okay? My office hours are actually in the park for one hour every day, but this is something they appreciate, because they don't have a lot of guidance from their families and older generation... and that older generation did not receive an education, except in a religious context. That's also part of the culture... I have kids who will come on a Thursday evening to Ruby Tuesdays [restaurant] and spend two hours talking about literature. And I'm thrilled by that, that's why I'm here. I'm here to help them.

NES lecturer 3, Interview, Monday 20th October 2014

7.3.2. NES lecturers' teaching practices in the EFL classroom

The data shows that NES lecturers adopt a student-centred approach using teaching practices such as group and pair work, discussions, debates and presentations.

These lecturers also stress the importance of student feedback in improving their teaching. These practices are implemented to encourage student participation and active involvement in the classroom. For example, L1 describes (see below) how he organises his students into groups in order to discuss and debate topics among each other. This lecturer uses this practice to develop the students' communicative skills and confidence in using English. This teaching practice also allows the lecturer to overcome the problem of large class sizes.

I encourage my students to work with each other in groups to discuss and debate topics. My goal is to make them practise speaking in English by using very simple phrases, simple sentences, just to push them to use English, because that is their biggest challenge.

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th October 2014

The point of developing the students' communicative skills and encouraging them to use English in their interactions is further elaborated in the quote below. L1 expressed his disapproval with regard to the use of Arabic in teaching. He clearly stated that using Arabic in explaining the meaning of concepts and ideas was unhelpful for the students. He believed that lecturers should give their explanations in English and provide students with plenty of examples in order to deduce the meaning. The lecturer also advised his students to always "use an English-English dictionary when studying rather than an Arabic one" as this method allows students to learn new words and further develop their skills.

What you will sometimes find is that some lecturers are using Arabic in the class, because it's what they can do... they believe the only way to explain the ideas is to explain it in Arabic...but I think this is a wrong approach in teaching. Lecturers should explain new concepts in English and give students plenty of examples to comprehend the meaning. I encourage my students to use an English-English dictionary when studying rather than an Arabic one. This way students are able to build their vocabulary and learn new words.

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th October 2014

Another practice highlighted by NES lecturers is the important role that student feedback plays in their teaching. NES lecturers regard student feedback as a valuable source of input to improve their teaching practices and address each student's

individual needs. Schweisfurth (2013) believes that a key difference between learner-centred and traditional teaching methods is that in the former, there is a collaborative effort between teachers and students, since students are closely involved in the decision-making process regarding their learning. In the following quote, L6 describes how listening to the students' feedback gives him a unique perspective about them and their learning habits:

During classroom activities I try to go around and listen to understand how the students learn, what they care about, and what they don't care about, what they don't think is important. This gives me a unique perspective about the students and their learning.

NES lecturer 6, Interview, Sunday 2nd November 2014

Moreover, NES lecturers using the student-centred approach work on developing the students' critical thinking skills. L3 describes (see below) his teaching role as helping students develop these skills. Here, the lecturer reflects on the best strategy to make students broaden their perspectives and develop their critical thinking. In addition to the basic language course this lecturer teaches, he teaches an advanced literature course. In this quote, L3 describes the challenges he faces in helping students critically analyse a given text and understanding different literary themes. The lecturer attributes this lack of critical analysis to the students' cultural attitudes and their unfamiliarity with "different forms of critical thinking". This is mainly because the students' prior education did not emphasis the training and development of these skills (Kafe, 2009; Al-Sagoube, 2009)

How can we get the students – how can we get young Saudi men – to think outside of themselves? To put themselves into another person's perspective. That's... I think that is a direct cultural thing. And I don't think there's a short answer, solution to that, I really don't. Their cultural attitude towards a given text is profoundly literal. So they're not accustomed to working with different forms of critical thinking as it relates to literature, and art, and symbolism... I don't just work on improving their skills, but also helping them to understand some of the great themes. You know, Bildungsroman and narratives of education, because they are at the point in their lives when they could benefit from some of those themes.

NES lecturer 3, Interview, Monday 20th October 2014

An important issue can be inferred from the above data. It seems that NES lecturers tend to try and understand the students' home culture and the way it may impact their learning. They exemplify the student-centred approach by seeking to engage with the students to understand the way they learn consequently identifying any barriers that may hinder their learning. Troudi (2005) argues that it is important for language educators to develop a critical understanding of the students' cultures, attitudes and learning experiences, as this will provide a more meaningful learning opportunity for the students.

In contrast to NNEST lecturers who follow the textbook step-by-step in their lesson preparation and teaching, NES lecturers using the student-centred approach do not rely completely on the textbook. For example, L1 describes (see below) how he uses the textbook in his teaching. The lecturer considers the textbook as a suggestion-based guidebook that gives him an overview of what needs to be covered. He then selects the appropriate topics according to his knowledge, experience and student feedback. L1 then tries to simplify the new concepts and ideas by using language that is understandable to the students. He also checks for comprehension throughout the lesson.

I use the textbook as a suggestion-based guidebook. I will look at what I need to cover. I mean, the first thing I'm going to do is I'm going to look at the things that we did for accreditation, which are: goals, learning outcomes, learning objectives of each course... So, I have a book in front of me. It's a guidebook, and I'm the tour guide. The students are on the trip, and I'm going to take them on a journey. I will choose what I should teach and what I should not teach from my experience, knowledge and student feedback... So I take a complicated idea, and I break it down into concepts that they will be able to understand. And I check through, checking for understanding to make sure they do understand. If not, I simplify it even more...

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th October 2014

7.3.3. Students' learning experiences of the student-centred approach

In general, the findings show that the majority of the student respondents reacted positively to the student-centred approach deployed by NES lecturers. For example, during classroom observations, it was observed that all NES lecturers conducted their lessons in an interactive and informal manner in which students were very

active. Students were able to openly ask questions and share their ideas throughout the lesson. This made them feel that their voices were respected in the classroom, as S9 illustrates:

The foreign [NES] lecturers don't mind if a student disagrees with what they are saying; they believe that we have the right as adult students to voice our opinions...

Student 9, Interview, Thursday 16th October 2014 (2nd year)

Such an interactive classroom environment enables students to interact in English and improve their communicative proficiencies. Learning through interaction is considered a much better way to learn and practise English. S2, for example, mentions that through the interaction with 'non-Muslim' lecturers (i.e. NES), he was able to learn the language and broaden his perspective.

I think learning English opened my eyes to new things, through research and also the interaction with lecturers especially non-Muslims, because they only interact with us in English.

Student 2, Interview, Thursday 18th September 2014 (4th year)

S2 further describes (see below) how NES lecturers require students to only use English in the classroom discussions, and the impact it has on his language skills. Through group and pair work, the student is able to come into contact with some of his more advanced classmates and improve his English skills. Two important issues can be inferred from this. First, NES lecturers using the student-centred approach are able to create an interactive and safe learning environment in which students learn from each other without the fear of being judged. Second, disadvantaged students can partly compensate for their lack of cultural capital by acquiring such capital from other students.

They [NES lecturers] don't allow us to use Arabic during the lesson. I remember I used to come into contact, or start off conversation with some of my classmates who were better than me in English, and that is how I got to it.

Student 2, Interview, Thursday 18th September 2014 (4th year)

Students associating their skills development with the teaching practices used by NES lecturers is further illustrated in the next quote. S18 describes his enthusiasm and motivation in his writing class and feels that his writing skills are continually improving. The student attributes these positive attitudes and development to the teaching of the NES lecture. The student further mentions that he is enjoying learning at the same time. Enabling students to enjoy learning is considered one of the characteristics associated with using a student-centred approach (Littlewood, 2007).

In the writing class I take notes and I study. Do you know why? The lecturer is a native speaker and he's serious about his job. I'm actually learning new stuff with him, I'm learning how to become a professional writer. I mean, I can write, it's not my best expertise but I'm learning. I'm making it stronger. My writing is becoming stronger. I'm having fun with his class. Even though I don't score an A+ necessarily, but I'm learning so it's going to benefit me in the long run.

Student 18, Interview, Thursday 4th November 2014 (4th year)

As discussed before, NES lecturers emphasise the importance of building positive attitudes among the students towards the target language. This is done through the good relationships these lecturers have with the students, which have enabled them to construct such positive attitudes in their students. This is exemplified in the following quote in which S20 describes how NES lecturers were able to make him “love” the language and eventually improve his grades.

In the first year of the university [i.e. PYP] they [i.e. NNEST lecturers] taught me all levels of English and during that time I struggled with the language and got bad grades. Then in the second year many of my lecturers were native speakers and they made me love English, so now I like the language and my grades are better.

Student 20, Interview, Wednesday 12th November 2014 (4th year)

However, some disadvantaged students did express negative attitudes toward the student-centred approach used by NES lecturers. These students were not familiar in their pre-university education with teaching practices that required their active involvement in the process of learning and therefore struggled to form new learning habits (Batawi, 2006; Rabab'ah, 2005). For example, in the speaking course the NES

lecturer encourages students to practise the language and build up confidence by giving short classroom presentations. However, S10 (see below) expresses how he feels uncomfortable presenting in front of the class. This is because the student is afraid that this might expose his shortcomings and embarrass him in front of his classmates. Fear of making mistakes is considered to be one of the main factors of students' reluctance in speaking English (Juhana, 2012). This is because students are afraid of looking foolish or losing face in front of their classmates. Lecturers should therefore be aware of such issues and ensure that their teaching practices do not affect the students' self-esteem.

I do feel uncomfortable using English in the class. For example, when I'm giving a presentation in class I feel uncomfortable because I know that all the students are trying to correct my mistakes and are focused on the language I use.

Student 10, Interview, Saturday 18th October 2014 (2nd year)

In conclusion, NES lectures employ a student-focused approach in their teaching. These lecturers view their roles as facilitators and encourage students' active involvement and participation in the classroom. These lecturers use pedagogical strategies such as group and pair discussions, debates and presentations in their teaching. Lessons were carried out in a less formal manner, which was manifested in students feeling comfortable in voicing their opinions in relation to their learning and learning needs.

7.4. Assessment

The common practice of assessment in the EFL programme cuts across both native and non-native lecturers and teacher-centred and student-centred approaches. This is mainly because of issues related to policy and therefore it is discussed as a separate section. As considered in section 5.4.5, assessment in the EFL programme is significantly affected by the university's policies and practices. Students' low English competencies, negative attitudes toward students, and large class sizes are some of the main challenges that affect the assessment practices implemented by NNEs and NES lectures alike. This has led to the widespread use of content-based, multiple-

choice questions in written exams throughout the different courses in the EFL programme.

It is argued that despite the fact that assessment practices are generally informed by the teaching approaches deployed by lecturers, it did not seem to be the primary force behind the lecturers' assessment procedures. Their choice was mainly impacted by the institutional influence on the EFL programme, and in particular the large number of students per class. This is exemplified in the following quotes:

If you have 40 students in most of your classes, it becomes really difficult to assess and monitor each individual student. It's very time consuming and can take valuable time away from teaching and other activities. That's why I use this method [multiple-choice questions], it helps in managing such a number of students.

NES lecturer 6, Interview, Sunday 2nd November 2014

Most of the lecturers rely on multiple-choice questions. Their excuse of course is that we don't have the time, we have too many students, we don't get anything extra if we include essay-type questions, so why would we waste time marking papers, because in the past they used to give them extra per exam sheet if it included essay-type questions, but they stopped this a couple of years ago. What they [lecturers] did as a reaction is that they stopped using essay-type questions in their exams...

NNES lecturer 5, Interview, Sunday 26th October 2014

Therefore, lectures use assessment practices that are described as content-based, which focuses on measuring how well students are able to recall and memorise the knowledge they have been taught. Although these practices have negative effects on students' language development, they also enable disadvantaged students with weak language backgrounds to pass their courses. Some students indicated that by memorising the contents of the textbook prior to the exam, they were able to recall such knowledge and successfully pass the course, as S5 highlights:

Exams can be a real struggle. To be honest I try to memorise as much as I can at least a week before the exam. That's how I mostly study and prepare for exams and it works.

Student 5, Interview, Friday 10th October 2014 (3rd year)

Likewise, S7 describes how he prepares for his exams by trying to memorise key points from the textbook :

When I prepare for exams I focus on the textbook topics that are most likely to be included in the exam. I identify the key points of each topic and go over them several times. By doing so, I'm able to recall the information in the exam.

Student 7, Interview, Monday 13th October 2014 (2nd year)

Although many of the lecturers in the EFL programme use content examinations as an instrument merely to judge the students' achievement levels, some of the NES lecturers did describe their assessment practices as an on-going process that feeds into the teaching-learning process. For example, in the following quotation, L1 describes assessment as an integral part of the teaching-learning process. The lecturer uses formative forms of assessment (e.g., assignments, quizzes and classroom presentations) throughout the semester to monitor the students' progress. This informs the lecturer about the students' strengths and weaknesses and provides him with important feedback "about the teaching and the learning that is happening inside the classroom". Such continuous assessment is commonly associated with the student-centred approach.

Assessment is definitely an integral part of the teaching and learning process. There are different kind of assessment that I normally use. One of them is the summative assessment, which takes place at the end of the semester or course, and there are the formative assessments. So a formative assessment is what I basically give my students throughout the semester. If I give the students assignments or ask them some questions, basically the answers that I get are supposed to feed into the teaching-learning process. It tells me about the weaknesses, and about the students' strengths, so it is basically on-going feedback that I get about the teaching and the learning that is happening inside the classroom. Normally I use assignments, quizzes and presentations and it shows me if there are some weaknesses that I need to work on. The other kind of assessment that I normally use [summative] is to judge the students' level of understanding of the course: if they should pass or not, if they have reached the learning outcomes intended.

NES Lecturer 1, Interview, Tuesday 14th October 2014

7.5. Summary

This chapter has discussed the teaching approaches used by EFL lecturers and the effects these approaches have had on student learning. The findings revealed a distinction between NES and NNES lecturers in relation to their teaching approaches and interactions with students in the classroom. It was found that Saudi lecturers adopted a teacher-centred approach that was informed by several issues, including the way they view their roles and that of students, as well as the students' poor English backgrounds, and large class sizes.

These lecturers focused on transmitting the knowledge from the syllabus as dictated by the textbooks to their students. Lessons were conducted in a formal lecture-based manner and students were given strict instructions to follow. During these lessons, students would take on a passive role as they sat quietly, took notes and listened. This minimised the students' participation and interactions in the classroom.

In general, most student respondents expressed negative attitudes toward a teacher-centred approach and felt that it denied them valuable opportunities to interact, practise, and develop their English language skills. Students also felt threatened about challenging the knowledge transmitted by Saudi lecturers, and preferred to stay quiet. However, a few disadvantaged students did favour this type of approach because it helped them focus on the exact skills and knowledge needed to pass the test.

In contrast, NES lectures adopted a student-focused approach in their teaching. These lecturers took on a facilitator role and were focused on helping students' transition into the EFL programme. These lecturers integrated a range of interactive and communicative practices into their teaching, most commonly group and pair discussions. These practices were used to encourage student participation and to enable them to develop the necessary skills to succeed in their studies. The practices also allowed students to fully participate in class discussions and activities. With the exception of a few disadvantaged students, the majority of students reacted

positively to these practices because of the progress they saw in their English language skills.

The assessment practices seemed to be mainly impacted by the institutional influences on the EFL programme rather than by the teaching approaches adopted. Content-based multiple-choice evaluation techniques were common practice in the programme. This denies students valuable and authentic opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge. However, one of the NES lecturers did state that he regards his assessment practices as a continuous process which helps him in monitoring the students' progress.

Overall, this chapter has highlighted the two main teaching approaches used by NES and NNEST lecturers in the EFL programme. It also discussed the effects of these teaching approaches on the students' learning experiences.

The following chapter summarises the main findings of this study as well as the implications of these findings for EFL lecturers, CU, policymakers, and future researchers.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This thesis began by mentioning the Saudi government's recent announcement of its ambitious vision for 2030. Its primary object is to transition the country's economy away from its over-reliance on oil revenues and towards a more diversified economy. As part of this vision, the government is paying close attention to the development of its entire educational system. As English is the common lingua franca across the globe and is considered to be the modern language of science and knowledge production, the focus on improving the quality of English language teaching and learning in the Saudi education system is no surprise. In particular, the government deems the development of EFL programmes offered by its different educational institutions as vital for the success of its 2030 vision.

Despite the government's efforts, however, the average level of English proficiency amongst Saudi students at almost every level of learning remains below expectation. In particular, the low level of many students graduating from higher education EFL programmes is a major concern (Alhawsawi, 2013; Albousaif, 2011; Alsaif, 2011; Rabab'ah, 2005; Al-Hazmi, 2003). This is because these undergraduate programmes provide the country with its supply of EFL teachers and specialists who can support its 2030 vision. Thus, this study examined students' learning experiences in the undergraduate EFL programme at CU, KSA. It reported on the students' experiences from the perspective of the students and lecturers, accompanied by an understanding of the wider social context.

In order to answer the main research question, i.e. **How do students experience learning in the undergraduate EFL programme at CU?**, the study uses a qualitative methodology and a case study research design. The case is the undergraduate EFL programme at CU. Semi-structured interviews with students and lecturers, classroom observations and documentary review were used as the main methods of data collection. The collection and analysis of the data aimed to address the three sub-questions that respectively focus on issues related to the impact of CU as an institution on teaching and learning in the EFL programme, the

influence of family educational background, and the influence of the teaching approaches adopted by EFL lecturers on students' learning experiences.

This chapter begins by summarising the main findings of the study. It then provides a discussion of the main findings. After this, it presents the contribution of the study and then discusses the implications. The chapter concludes with reflections on my theoretical understanding, methodological orientation and personal research journey.

8.1. Summary of findings

This section provides a summary of the main findings of this study. It begins by discussing the institutional influences on teaching and learning in the EFL programme. After this, it highlights the influence of the family's educational background, in relation to cultural capital, on students' learning experiences. The section concludes by summarising the impact of the teaching approaches employed by lecturers on students' learning in the EFL classroom.

Chapter Five focused on answering the first research sub-question, '*How do the institutional influences affect teaching and learning in the EFL programme?*' It draws on Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus to examine the institutional influences on the EFL programme. It analysed how CU's institutional policies and practices impact teaching and learning in the EFL programme and therefore students' learning experiences. The chapter conceptualised higher education in KSA as a field in which different institutions operate and each institution is positioned according to its capital (Ahmad, 2012; Ashwin, 2009). The findings show that CU promotes a model of 'accessible higher education' and is considered to be one of the leading Saudi universities in relation to the number of students admitted each year (MoE, 2016b). This open admissions policy allows many disadvantaged students with weak English backgrounds the opportunity to enrol in the university and obtain an undergraduate degree. However, this policy negatively affects the quality

of education in the university in general, and in certain colleges and departments in particular.

After gaining admission, students first complete a preparatory year programme (PYP) before being allocated to one of the university's colleges (KAU, 2017b). The PYP has an EFL component that provides English language training for newly enrolled students. The aim, length, and intensity of the EFL programme differs from one university to another according to its policies in relation to the use of English as the medium of instruction. In the case of CU, the university follows the MoE-HE's recommendations in using Arabic as the main medium of instruction. This is reflected in the fact that the programme aims to develop students' language skills to an intermediate level of English proficiency (ELI, 2017b). This suggests that the programme is not preparing its students for a medium of instruction in which English is the main language. This is also reflected in the fewer hours of English training per week the PYP programme offers and the lack of extra support compared to other leading universities in KSA that use English as the only medium of instruction (e.g. KFUPM). The findings further show that many students in the English language department still struggle with the basic language skills even after completing the PYP. This suggests that the preparatory EFL programme is not able to fully achieve its intended goals.

As discussed before, the university's open admissions policy has resulted in the admission of large numbers of disadvantaged students. This has exerted pressure on the university's different colleges and departments to accommodate such numbers. The findings show that the CAH has one of the highest numbers of student admissions amongst other university colleges (KAU, 2017c). This has a negative effect on the quality of education in the EFL programme, as manifested in relation to its entry requirements, class size, student-teacher relations, the use of English as the medium of instruction, and assessment practices, as discussed below:

Lowering the entry requirements for the EFL programme: It was found that CU's open admissions policy significantly affected the CAH, in particular its EFL

programme. This is evident in the college's decision to lower the entry requirements for its undergraduate EFL programme in order to allocate the large number of students accepted. Many of these students had poor English backgrounds, which meant that the EFL programme accepted a number of disadvantaged students that had not fulfilled the minimum admission requirements. As a result, these students faced academic and linguistic challenges in their studies and sometimes resorted to unacceptable behaviour such as plagiarism.

Class size: One of the more obvious effects on teaching and learning in the EFL programme was the large number of students per class. The average number of students was 40, which violates the recommendations by the MoE-HE and the National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation (NASAA) of a maximum number of 25 students per class. This negatively impacted the teaching and assessment practices used by lecturers. Many lecturers expressed their frustration at such numbers and felt restricted in their interactions with students, especially those lecturers teaching basic English language skills.

Student-lecturer relations: The findings show that the student-lecturer relations were significantly affected by the university's admission policy toward the EFL programme. It can be said that almost all the lecturers interviewed had a negative attitude towards the students' lack of cultural capital, in particular their poor English language backgrounds. Lecturers felt that these students did not have the necessary language and academic skills to succeed in the programme.

The use of English as the medium of instruction: The findings indicate that some EFL lecturers used Arabic in their classroom instructions, particularly NNEST ones. This was because many of the students had poor communication skills and therefore lecturers felt compelled to use Arabic in their teaching. This went against the department's policy of only using English as the medium of instruction, and led the administration to take action and assign basic communication skill courses (listening and speaking) to NES lecturers to prevent the use of Arabic in teaching.

This is because NES lecturers do not speak Arabic and therefore all teaching and interactions are conducted in English.

Assessment: It was found that assessment practices in the EFL programme are highly impacted by the university's policies. Lecturers felt the need to help students pass their courses and used different strategies to ensure that they could obtain as many marks as possible. These included assigning marks for classroom participation and attendance. Moreover, due to large class sizes, lecturers deliberately avoided using essay-type questions, which focus on higher cognitive skills. Instead, it was found that multiple-choice questions were commonly used in exams, which can be easily graded electronically. However, these practices helped disadvantaged students to pass their exams by simply memorising and recalling the content of the textbook.

In general, Bourdieu's notions of field, capital, and habitus helped to identify the institutional influences in this study (Bourdieu 1993, 1990). These influences were highlighted by examining how CU's policies and practices impacted teaching and learning in the EFL programme. The findings show that these institutional influences had a significant impact on the academic and linguistic levels of students being accepted in the programme and the teaching practices and interactions occurring inside the EFL classroom.

Chapter Six aimed to answer the second research sub-question, '*How does the educational background of the family influence the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme?*' The chapter uses the notion of cultural capital to analyse the impact of family educational background on students' learning experiences. Here, cultural capital is understood as the knowledge, skills and attitudes that family members (i.e. parents and/or siblings) have acquired from their higher education experiences and that is transmitted to the students (Brown et al., 2016; Alhawsawi, 2013; De Graaf, 1986). The findings reveal that the possession/dispossession of cultural capital plays a key role in terms of the students' progress in higher education in general, and the EFL programme in particular.

The findings indicate that students who belonged to families with higher education backgrounds were regarded as upper middle class. These students were positively influenced by their families' possession of different forms of cultural capital, especially an institutionalised form of capital. Family members that had experienced higher education and understood the value and demands of pursuing a higher education degree were able to support the students' learning through the active or passive transmission of cultural capital.

The active transmission of cultural capital entails family members being directly involved in developing the students' learning (Sullivan, 2007). This means that family members spend time and effort in transmitting their institutionalised and embodied capital to the students. Cultural capital in its objectified form was also transmitted through the mobilisation of different educational resources, such as books, radio and computers to support the students' learning. This demonstrates how family members understood the importance of these resources and were able to use them in favour of the students' learning. In general, the active transmission of cultural capital from family members to the students can be summarised in a number of ways:

- Developing the students' basic English language skills and igniting their interest in learning the language: for example, parents helped their children develop their reading skills from a young age
- Encouraging students to pursue a higher education degree and influencing their choice of major by discussing its value
- Sharing their first-hand experiences and skills of being an EFL undergraduate student: for example, helping students with course assignments
- Mobilizing different educational resources to support the students' English language skills, particularly the use of radio broadcasting programmes (e.g. the BBC) and books in developing their basic skills.

The findings further show that cultural capital was also passively transmitted to the students (Brown et al., 2016; Lee and Bowen, 2006). In this case, family members were not consciously aware of their influence on the students; but rather acted as role models that students could follow. However, this type of transmission was less obvious amongst the students and was mainly seen in the form of projecting positive reading behaviours to the students.

Furthermore, it can be said that there is consensus between lecturers that students that belong to families with higher education backgrounds have a higher level of English proficiency when compared to other students. They were generally described by the lecturers as being the best students and possessing the necessary knowledge and skills to progress in the programme. This confirms the positive influence families have on the students. This further suggests that the possession of cultural capital is identified and rewarded in the educational setting of the EFL programme, which places advantaged students on a path of educational success.

The final section of chapter six looks at the influence of families with no higher education background on students' learning experiences. These families were described by lecturers as lower-middle class (or Bedouin) families that lack cultural capital, especially institutionalised forms of cultural capital. Many disadvantaged students, for example, stated that one or even both parents only possessed a primary level of education. For many of these families, higher education was a first generation experience for their children. Table 2 (see section 4.6) shows that the majority of the student sample (almost two third) can be described as belonging to such families. The effects this had on students' learning experiences was manifested in several ways:

- The lack of family support in developing the students' English language knowledge and skills was an important contributing factor to their poor English language competencies

- The wide spread assumption among disadvantaged students that teaching in EFL programme would start from a beginner's level of English, might be a result of the absence of family guidance in relation to the linguistic requirements of being a higher education EFL student
- The absence of family support in relation to course assignments
- The absence of family support and the students' poor English language competencies resulted in students struggling to cope with the linguistic and academic demands of the programme. Consequently some changed their majors to an Arabic-based discipline or dropped out of university
- The lack of family support accompanied by the students' poor English backgrounds resulted in unacceptable behaviour such as plagiarism
- The lack of higher education experience of these families and their economic situation suggest that they did not understand the value of educational resources in developing the students' language skills or could not afford to support them

However, in some cases, the socioeconomic conditions of these families acted as a catalyst in motivating the students to succeed in the EFL programme (Alhawsawi, 2013). For example, some students described their desire to improve and perfect their language skills before graduation in order to increase their chances of future employment.

The findings further indicate that NES lecturers offered disadvantaged students extra support and guidance. These lecturers focused on building good relationships with the students in order to overcome some of the challenges the latter faced in the EFL programme.

Overall, the notion of cultural capital proved to be useful in understanding the impact of family educational background on students' learning experiences. More

importantly, it highlighted one of the major consequences of CU's policy in lowering the entry requirements for the EFL programme, which is the admission of many disadvantaged students with a poor English language background.

Chapter Seven focused on answering the third research sub-question, which is '*How do the teaching approaches adopted by lecturers affect students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom?*' It analysed the teaching approaches used by EFL lecturers and the effects these have on students' learning experiences (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Ahmed, 2012; Muller et al., 2012; Entwistle and Smith, 2002). The findings suggest a distinction between NES and NNES lecturers in relation to the teaching approaches they used and their interactions with students in the classroom environment.

The findings show that Saudi (NNES) lecturers used teaching practices that can be described as teacher-centred. Their choice of approach was informed by how lecturers viewed their roles, the role of students, the students' poor English backgrounds, and large class sizes. These lecturers perceive their role as that of knowledge transmitters and emphasised the importance of the textbook in their teaching. Lessons were conducted in a lecture-based manner where the lecturer is in control of class discussions and activities. In this case, students' roles were minimised to absorbing the knowledge transmitted by the lecturer and from the textbook. As such, students did not take part of in the construction of knowledge. Instead, they were mostly passive during the lessons.

Although NNES lecturers would argue that their teacher-centred practices took into consideration the students' backgrounds in relation to their level of English (Schweisfurth, 2011), the majority of the students reacted negatively to these practices, and expressed their frustration at the amount of knowledge disseminated during lessons and the lack of opportunity to practise the language. Students felt hesitant to interact with Saudi lecturers in a way that might undermine the lecturers' credibility and authority. This was observable in the formal way in which the Saudi lecturers interacted with the students. As such, students could not openly

express their opinions and felt that the lecturer had complete power over their learning. However, a few disadvantaged students did express positive attitudes toward such teaching practices and stated that it helped them focus on the exact knowledge and skills needed to pass the exams. This is mainly because the teacher-centred approach does not assume any prior knowledge or experience, and can therefore be satisfying, in some cases, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Schweisfurth, 2013).

By contrast, NES lectures espoused a student-focused and interactive approach in their teaching (Zahid, 2016; Alseweed, 2012). These lecturers viewed their roles as facilitating student learning and implemented interactive methods in their teaching, such as group work, classroom discussions, and presentations. NNES lecturers also emphasised the importance of building good relationships with the students in order to support their transition into the EFL programme and further develop their communicative language skills. Lessons were managed in an informal manner in which students could freely ask questions and express their thoughts. As a result, the power relations between the lecturers and students were downplayed and students felt encouraged to participate in classroom discussions and activities. However, a few students did express their dislike of such practices. This was because of their unfamiliarity with such teaching practices that required their active involvement in the construction of the knowledge. It also had to do with the students' poor English background and the fact that NES lecturers conducted their lessons entirely in English. For example, some students did not understand the lecturers' feedback in relation to their course assignments and had to ask for help from their peers.

In relation to assessment, the findings demonstrate that assessment practices in the EFL programme were significantly influenced by CU's policies rather than the teaching approaches that lecturers adopted. Large class sizes led lecturers to avoid using essay-type questions that required students to analyse or compare. Instead, content-based multiple-choice questions were commonly used by NES and NNES lecturers alike. Although such practices did reduce the students' opportunities to

develop their skills, it enabled many to pass their exams by simply memorising the content of the textbook. However, in one case the NES lecturer did express the view that his assessment practices were an on-going process that supports his teaching.

8.2. Discussion of findings

The analysis provided in the three findings chapters reflect how students' learning experiences is an interlinked phenomenon influenced by structural issues such as CU's policies and practices, family educational background, and teaching approaches in the EFL programme. In this understanding, learning is not viewed as being determined by structure; but rather as a dynamic and complex phenomenon in which students construct their own meaning impacted by structures in society in general and at the institutional and home level in particular. This section further reflects this understanding by discussing some of the major cross question themes that emerge from this study.

8.2.1. The tension between equitable access and quality education in CU

A significant challenge facing CU today is the complex issue of equitable access and quality education. The discussion of equitable access to higher education and quality education is central to educational policy (Escarre and Boldrini, 2017; Tshabangu et al, 2013; Gidley et al, 2010; Neves et al., 2007). By examining the field of higher education in KSA (see Chapter 5), it was obvious that the MoE-HE is focused on increasing access to higher education and has therefore founded new institutions and expanded the capacity of existing ones. This has been exemplified in the number of institutions established over the last decade in KSA, and is further demonstrated in the Ministry's acknowledgment and praise of CU as being one of the distinguished universities in terms of its number of students. The Ministry has also established different independent bodies such the National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation (NCAAA) and the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education (NCAHE) to assure standards and quality of its institutions. However, the findings suggest a tension between the Ministry's policy to increase access and CU's attempts to mediate this policy whilst still ensuring the

quality of education in its programmes. The findings show that this policy placed pressures on the university's capacity and consequently affected the quality of education in the EFL programme.

A clear example of this tension is the lowering of entry requirements for the EFL programme. Due to increased access, the CAH and the English language department were forced to lower the admission criteria for the EFL programme, and thus disadvantaged students with poor English backgrounds were allowed increased access to the programme. However, without any clear support mechanisms in place, these students' learning was impeded in the EFL programme. This was obvious in the academic and linguistic challenges faced by disadvantaged students and the fact that some of them eventually transferred to other programmes or dropped out of university.

Many disadvantaged students expressed their concerns about the mismatch between their actual knowledge and skills and what was expected of them in the EFL programme. Such a gap in the students' knowledge and skills is a result of their family educational background and pre-university learning experiences. This hints to an important issue in relation to student support. While equitable access is commonly associated with social inclusion, Gidley et al. (2010, p. 2) argue that "equitable access and success are intimately linked with the notion of social inclusion in higher education". This suggests that social inclusion is not achieved by merely allowing students from disadvantaged backgrounds access to higher education; but rather by the provision of the necessary educational support that enables them to obtain a meaningful and enriching higher education experience. The findings suggest that CU lacks the support mechanisms and policies that can bridge the gap between its open access policy and preparing disadvantaged students for the rigours of higher education and the EFL programme (see section 8.4.1 for implications for policy-makers).

Another example of the tension between equitable access and quality education is the large number of students in the EFL programme. The findings show that large

class sizes significantly impact teaching and learning in the programme. The issue of large class sizes and its effects on teaching and assessment practices were common themes in the lecturers' interviews. Both of these examples (i.e. lowering of entry requirements and class size) highlight the tension between the Ministry's increased access policy and the way CU implements this policy while trying to maintain its position as a leading university in KSA (see section 8.4.1 for implications for policy-makers).

A third dimension related to the discussion of equitable access and quality at CU is the rising cost of higher education in KSA. In the past, the issue of cost was never a dilemma for the Saudi government due to high oil prices. However, in the light of falling oil prices and the ongoing attempts to manage the country's budget, the government is seriously considering cutting down the cost of higher education. For example, the Minister of Education has recently stated that the government is moving toward a more sustainable and effective financial management of its higher education sector. He further suggests that the Ministry is revisiting its policy of increased access altogether (Shar, 2017). This indicates that the Saudi government is experiencing serious challenges in ensuring the quality and accessibility of its higher education sector in face of competing spending priorities.

8.2.2. The impact of cultural capital on students' learning experiences

The findings of this study (see Chapter 6) discuss the significant impact that cultural capital has on students' learning experiences in the EFL programme. The findings show that advantaged students who belong to upper middle class families and possess cultural capital were more likely to succeed in the programme. In contrast, disadvantaged students from lower middle class families lacking in cultural capital encountered academic and linguistic difficulties. However, this does not mean that cultural capital is seen as fully determining students' learning and success in higher education and the EFL programme. Sablan and Tierney (2014) and Edgerton and Roberts (2014) argue that many educational studies using Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital as a framework view such a social structure in a static and deterministic way in which student agency is limited.

In the context of the current study, the fact that many disadvantaged students were able to partly compensate for their lack of knowledge and skills and successfully complete their undergraduate degrees is a clear example of how they were able to mitigate such a structural constraint. These students were able to acquire cultural capital through their academic learning at the university and their interactions with lecturers and peers. Students' active agency played an important role in enabling them to acquire the cultural capital which they could not from their family backgrounds. From this it can be inferred that class, as a social structure, is a determining factor but does not fully determine students' learning in the EFL programme. In other words, cultural capital is a necessary but not a sufficient factor in fully explaining students' learning experiences.

8.2.3. The diverse teaching approaches used in the EFL programme

The findings of Chapter 7 highlight the two teaching approaches generally used by NNEs and NES lecturers in the EFL programme: namely, the teacher-centred and student-centred approaches. The discussion in that chapter further focused on how students from different backgrounds interacted with these teaching approaches and how it influenced their learning (Ahmed, 2012; Ansari, 2012). In regards to advantaged students, the analysis of the data indicates that there is an alignment between class and students' preference of teaching approaches. This is because students from privileged backgrounds reacted positively to the student-centred approach used by NES lecturers. These students found that such teaching practices accounted for their past learning experiences and addressed their needs. In other words, these students disliked the teacher-centred approach used by NNEs lecturers because it did not take into consideration their possession of cultural capital.

In regard to disadvantaged students, a few of them did express their preference for the teacher-centred approach used by NNEs lecturers. These students were more familiar with the teaching-centred approach from their past learning experiences

and were most probably never exposed to teaching practices that required their full engagement in the process of knowledge construction. However, what was most surprising is that many disadvantaged students expressed positive attitudes towards the student-centred approach adopted by NES lecturers. This challenges contemporary knowledge that argues that students from lower class backgrounds are more likely to be satisfied with the teacher-centred approach (Alhawsawi, 2013; Schweisfurth, 2013). There seem to be two main reasons for this.

First, it appears that many of disadvantaged students were highly motivated to develop and improve their English language skills, in particular their communication skills. They understood that these skills were a necessity for an EFL student to find a job after graduation, and therefore many of them preferred the interactive nature of the lessons conducted by the NES lecturers. Second, it is further argued that the students' positive attitude towards the student-centred approach was not only because of their preference for one approach over the other, but also due to the positive relationships that the NES lecturers had with the students. The impact of this is discussed in the theme of the following sub-section.

8.2.4. The influence of positive lecturer-student relationships on students' learning experiences

One of the interesting themes that emerged from this study is the impact of positive lecturer-student relationships on students' learning experiences in the EFL programme. The findings, as discussed in Chapter 7, show that NES lecturers expressed strong feelings of empathy toward the students and emphasised the importance of building good relationships with them. These lecturers focused on constructing a safe and enjoyable learning environment for their students. These issues were manifested in the informal and friendly way in which these lecturers interacted with the students inside and outside the classroom setting. As a result, the majority of students in this study expressed positive attitudes towards their NES lecturers and the way in which they interacted with them and conducted the

lessons. Such positive attitudes encouraged students to participate and actively engage in classroom discussions and activities.

Within the context of higher education, many studies have examined the positive impact lecturer-student relationships has on students success (Calvo et al, 2010; Zepke and Leach, 2010; Parpala et al., 2009; Wilcox et al, 2005). These studies highlight the crucial role relationships have on students' commitment, satisfaction, motivation, and engagement in higher education. It is therefore argued that teaching is as much about relationships as it is about pedagogy. This suggests that in order for students to successfully progress in the EFL programme, developing positive lecturer-student relationships needs to be an essential part of the overall pedagogy lecturers use in their teaching.

In addition, the findings suggest that NES lecturers were interested in identifying some of the cultural barriers that hinder students' learning in the EFL programme. Such cultural barriers to learning are further discussed in the next theme.

8.2.5. Cultural barriers affecting students' learning experiences

This study identified two interrelated cultural barriers that affect students' learning experiences in the EFL programme. The first type is an educational barrier that is linked to the traditional cultural norms that define the way in which Saudi lecturers interact with students in higher education (Allamnakhrah, 2013). The findings of Chapter 7 show that these lecturers interact with students in a formal and authoritative manner in which the latter take on a passive and submissive role. Students often feel hesitant and, in some cases, threatened about engaging in a two-way dialogue with these lecturers. As a result, student participation and interactions were reduced to the minimum. However, the chapter further acknowledges that this cultural barrier is not unique to the context of higher education, but rather is a reflection of the overall culture.

Thus, the second cultural barrier is related to the rearing of children within the family and the K-12 education system. In the context of Saudi society, children are usually brought up to uncritically defer to authority (Allamnakhrah, 2013). This suggests that the students in the study were never encouraged to develop critical thinking during their past learning experiences. This issue was constantly mentioned by NES lecturers. They described the students as not being able to look at issues from different perspectives and their analysing skills as profoundly literal. The lecturers also identified this issue as a cultural one rooted in the family and the educational system.

However, it is important to note that NES lecturers' critique of the Saudi culture in general and the students' learning skills in particular could be understood differently. One could argue that these lecturers look at the students' local culture from the prism of their own western values and culture. This might suggest that the NES lecturers' approach to providing support and interacting with students is because they see the Saudi culture as backwards and that their role is to uplift the students. Thus, it is argued that they might be operating from a negative and deficit understanding of the Saudi culture.

Overall, section 8.2. has explored some of the main themes that emerged from the findings chapters 5, 6, and 7. The next section discusses the contribution of this study.

8.3. Contribution of the study

This study used a sociological perspective and examined students' learning experiences from a structural and agency perspective. Within the field of teaching and learning in higher education, there do not appear to be many studies that examine students' learning from a sociological perspective, which accommodates both the individual and the context. This study therefore adds to the existing sociological knowledge and literature about students' learning experiences from such a perspective.

Within the context of KSA, the increasing demand for English professionals in various domains, especially in K-12 Education, as well as the generalised effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning in higher education, has led to an increased interest in EFL programmes. While there have been a number of studies in KSA that look at students' learning in such programmes, there is a lack of well-documented studies that have explored how students experience learning in undergraduate EFL programmes beyond the classroom setting. In particular, there is a lack of studies that take into consideration broader social and institutional issues, and so this study seeks to address this gap. Alhawsawi (2013) believes that studies that discuss students' learning located within the social and institutional context are rare in the context of Saudi higher education and that further research is needed in this area. This study therefore contributes to the literature and debate about how students experience learning in undergraduate EFL programmes in Saudi higher education. The findings of this study enhance our understanding of students' learning by providing an in-depth analysis of issues affecting their learning in KSA. Thus, it adds to knowledge about teaching and learning in general as it adds knowledge from a neglected country and region.

Methodologically, this study uses an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative research approach, situating students' learning within the social and institutional context in KSA. Within the context of the Gulf countries, Alriyami (2016) argues that previous studies have been mostly quantitative and experimental ones. This study therefore moves away from previous quantitative cognitive studies, in particular motivational studies (e.g., see Assulaimani, 2014; Albousaif, 2011; Alrabai, 2010; Alfallaj, 1998), which are most dominant within the context of EFL teaching and learning in higher education in KSA. Cohen et al. (2011) argue that the use of qualitative methods of data collection such as interviews and observations are most significant in contexts in which they are not usually used. Thus, this study adds to the limited number of qualitative sociological studies in Saudi higher education.

8.4. Implications of the research

After having discussed the main findings and contributions of this study, it is important to outline the implications that have emerged from this research. These implications are classified into three categories. The first discusses the implications for policy makers. The implication for lecturers and for further research are discussed respectively thereafter.

8.4.1. Implications for policy makers

The implications of this study for policy makers are addressed in relation to several issues, including the university's admissions policy, data on students' backgrounds, supporting disadvantaged students, the EFL programme structure, and assessment.

1) CU's admissions policy. The discussion of the implications of the university's open admissions policy is three-fold. The first area of focus is related to CU's ability, as a public university, to maintain its open admissions policy and its position as a leading university in relation to student access. As mentioned before, the Saudi government is focused on improving its higher education sector. This includes ensuring that its system of funding public universities is financially sustainable and that universities are not overcrowded. Although increasing student access to higher education is viewed positively as a form of social justice, CU's policy-makers need to ensure that such an open admission policy is sustainable.

Secondly, this study highlighted the various structural effects of CU's admissions policy on the EFL programme. University officials need to understand the impact this policy has on teaching and learning in the university generally and the EFL programme in particular. The lowering of entry requirements has enabled many students who lack competence in relation to studying in higher education and with poor English backgrounds to gain admission to the EFL programme. This has had negative effects on the quality of teaching and learning in the programme, and in turn on the students' learning experiences. Policy-makers therefore need to be aware of these effects and either change their admission policy or ensure that

certain mechanisms are put forward to support disadvantaged students (recommendations on how to support disadvantaged students are discussed later in this section).

Third, CU's admissions policy has also increased the number of students per class. The high number of students in EFL classes was one of the important concerns that emerged from this study. It was found that the large class sizes significantly affected teaching and learning in the classroom. Policy-makers should therefore focus on lowering the number of students per class. This can be done by dividing the students into smaller groups. This is especially important during the first two semesters of the programme in which students take basic language skills courses. However, as a consequence, more lecturers might be required. One simple way to address this issue is to ask for the support of lecturers from the ELI (the English Language Institute) at CU. Although these lecturers may not have the same level of qualifications (i.e. PhD degrees) as other lecturers in the EFL programme, they are well qualified to teach basic English courses. This will eventually free the schedule of some lecturers, allowing them to provide teaching support at more advanced levels in the EFL programme.

2) Data on students' backgrounds. This study found that there is a lack of data about the students' socioeconomic backgrounds. The institution has no clear data about student background including; family wealth, occupation, and geographic location. Such information is crucial for policy-makers and lecturers at CU alike. Policy-makers would be able to better understand the students that the university attracts and the colleges and department they attend. It would also contribute to the discussion about student distribution and equitable access within the university, and enhance its ability to create efficient support systems for students. This information would further enable lecturers to have a clear understanding of the students' backgrounds to address their specific learning needs.

3) Supporting disadvantaged students. Since the university has decided to lower the entry requirements for the EFL programme, there needs to be a robust and

effective system of support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. There must be certain mechanisms in place that identify these students' needs and provide them with the necessary support. Such support can take on different forms. For example, providing students with a safe space where they can freely discuss the challenges they face. In addition, extra-curricular English activities and classes should be provided for students in need. These activities and classes can run during the evenings, the weekends or even over the summer vacation. Students should also be encouraged to use existing facilities (e.g., English language club, library, language laboratories) independently in their spare time, which will enrich their experiences at the university and the programme. Moreover, policy-makers need to be aware that some students face financial difficulties. Therefore, these students should take priority in working in part-time jobs within the university. Such support systems would increase the students' likelihood of success in their higher education studies.

4) The programme structure. This study noted that the Saudi K-12 education system is one of the leading employers for many EFL graduates. However, one of the issues that this study identified is the lack of pre-service teacher training courses within the programme structure. This is particularly significant since teacher training colleges no longer exist in KSA and teaching has become a university degree profession. It is therefore recommended that an educational component (e.g. education psychology, sociology, curriculum studies) be added to the programme structure in order to better prepare the students for their potential future employment as EFL teachers.

5) Assessment. This study found that the assessment criteria in the EFL programme is divided into 80 marks for written exams and the remaining 20 marks are determined by lecturers to use as they see fit. This suggests that forms of summative assessment dominate the approach to assessing students' learning. However, such an approach should be changed. It is therefore recommended that the assessment approach should be changed so that 50 of the grades is for written exams and that 50 is allocated for work that use different forms of formative assessment (e.g. class project and group work based assessments). This will allow

lecturers to better monitor students' learning and provide continuous feedback that they can use to improve their teaching. It will also stimulate group work and critical thinking which accords with the student-centred approach.

8.4.2. Implications for lecturers

The findings of this study show the significant role that lecturers play in shaping the students' learning experiences in the EFL programme. It is therefore important for lecturers to understand the effects they have on the students' learning. This section discusses the implications of this research for lecturers. These implications cover several issues, which are responding to students' backgrounds, attitudes towards the students, teaching practices, and assessment.

1) Responding to students' backgrounds. Despite the lack of university data of students' backgrounds, lecturers need to be aware that many of their students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have poor English language skills. It is therefore important for lecturers to devote more attention to these students and provide extra support for their learning. In particular, lecturers should understand that some students may feel embarrassed to ask for help in front of their classmates and therefore they should be encouraged to visit the lecturers during their office hours. This will assist in identifying those students most in need for support. Lecturers should ask these students to create portfolios about their learning in order to closely monitor their progress. However, this is contingent on lecturers showing positive attitudes and building good relationships with the students.

2) Attitudes towards disadvantaged students. The findings of this study show that many Saudi lectures hold negative attitudes towards disadvantaged students, specifically those with poor English backgrounds. Lecturers need to understand that the students' poor English skills are a result of their families' educational backgrounds and their pre-university learning experiences, and does not mean that these students are not serious about their learning. On the contrary, many disadvantaged students are motivated to develop their knowledge and skills in order to compete in the job market and improve their socioeconomic conditions. In

addition, acting in a formal manner can cause students to become demotivated about their learning; whereas having respect and empathy towards the students can positively impact their participation levels and overall learning experiences in the EFL classroom. Therefore, lecturers must show respect for their students and build positive relationships with them.

3) Implications for teaching practices. The findings of this study demonstrated that there are two teaching approaches commonly implemented by EFL lecturers: teacher-centred or student-centred. Since there is no clear policy on the teaching practices required in the EFL programme, I propose that lecturers use structured pedagogy in their teaching. In this case, lecturers can use a combination of practices from both approaches (i.e. student-centred and teacher-centred) that is most suitable for the students and takes into consideration the constraints of time and class size. For example, it is understandable that lecturers who teach more advanced courses (e.g. phonetics, semantics, syntax) and have high numbers of students might need to use some form of lecturing in their teaching in order to cover the wide range of topics in the curriculum. Yet, this does not mean that students should be passive learners during these lessons. Lecturers need to understand that regardless of the type of course being taught, language learning is an immersive and interactive experience. They should therefore ensure that plenty of interactive activities such as classroom discussions, questions, debates, presentations and group work are always implemented in their teaching.

4) Teacher education support through seminars and workshops. To improve the quality of teaching and learning in the EFL programme, lecturers should enhance their pedagogy by organising weekly/monthly seminars and workshops that focus on discussing their teaching approaches and the students' needs. This would enable lecturers to share their experiences within the department and improve their overall teaching skills. In other words, lecturers would be able to identify what actually works in relation to EFL teaching and learning. It would also allow them to further address the students' needs. Furthermore, the university

needs to provide its lecturers with appraisal forms that can identify their needs and provide them with the necessary training.

5) Assessment. An important part of the students' learning experiences is assessment. The analysis of the data showed that assessment practices in the EFL programme focused on measuring the students' knowledge. Such practices encourage students to memorise and recall the content of the textbook in order to pass their courses and gain high grades. However, in order to improve the students' learning experiences lecturers also need to use forms of formative assessment, which will enable them to closely monitor the students' progress and needs (e.g. quizzes and learning portfolios). It is also recommended that lecturers devote plenty of time to providing students with continuous verbal and written feedback about their assessment whilst learning.

8.4.3. Implications for further research

This study aimed to explore students' learning experiences in an undergraduate EFL programme at a Saudi university. However, like all research, this study has its limitations. The following section therefore presents the suggestions for further research.

1) Different case studies. As this research project uses a snapshot case study design, the first suggestion for further research is linked to the limitations associated with this form of case study (see section 4.10). Although the use of a snapshot case study in this report generated an in-depth analysis of the students' experiences, it was restricted to a specific context and country in a certain period of time. It is therefore suggested that further research be conducted by using different forms of case studies. For example, longitudinal or comparative case study designs could be used to explore students' experiences over a longer period of time or to compare results from different universities. Such studies could highlight issues about the students' learning experiences that were not reflected in this study.

In addition, this case study only focused on students' learning experiences in one undergraduate EFL programme. It therefore suggested that further case studies focus on other subjects such as Islamic studies, sociology or history and other EFL programmes. These studies would add to the existing knowledge and literature about students' learning experience in Saudi higher education in general and EFL programmes in particular.

2) Data collection methods. This study used data collection methods commonly used in qualitative case study research. Interviews were used as the main source of data, and observations and documents as secondary sources. While these methods provided rich data about the students' experiences, other methods such as focus groups and life histories could generate interesting data. For example, the use of life histories would have allowed students to document their learning experiences in more detail and in their own words.

3) Female students. The final suggestion for further research is related to a common limitation in many studies conducted in the Saudi context. Due to cultural sensitivity and gender segregation, this study was only able to explore male students' learning experiences in higher education. It is therefore recommended that further studies be conducted with a focus on female students.

8.5. Reflections on the research journey

Over the course of my research journey, I experienced many challenges in conducting this project. Many of them were related to the preconceived assumptions I had about learning, how it can be researched, and the role of the researcher. During the early stages of my doctoral degree, I assumed that learning is an individual process rooted in the mind of the learner and should only be examined through quantitative research, and that the researcher should always remain detached from the study. Looking back, I believe that these assumptions were primarily influenced by my past learning experiences in the Saudi education system, where learning is mainly viewed from a psychological perspective and is researched through the use of statistical measurements. These views were further

established during my years as an undergraduate EFL student in Saudi higher education. During that time, the majority of researchers I encountered would ask students to complete a questionnaire in order to examine their learning strategies and motivational factors. This made me assume that surveys were the only way to research learning.

However, as I went through the different stages of my doctoral degree these views began to change dramatically. This was influenced by the literature and discussions with my supervisors and academic peers at the School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sussex. I still remember the first couple of supervisory meetings in which my supervisor kept on confronting some of my assumptions and challenging the arguments I made about teaching and learning and the way it should be examined. He would often ask me to revisit the literature and rethink the research questions and design. As a result, I started to gradually question my previous assumptions and reflect on my role as a researcher.

Ultimately, I realised that my understanding of learning only explained part of the picture and that learning is strongly connected to the social context. This led to the conceptualisation of learning as a social phenomenon that involves an individual and social perspective. I further became aware of other issues, such as the value of qualitative methods in capturing such a complex phenomenon, as well as my position as a researcher and how it impacts the study.

In retrospect, I can see the impact my research journey had on my academic progress. I was able to develop my skills as a researcher and build my knowledge and expertise in relation to EFL teaching and learning in higher education. However, as my previous undergraduate as well as postgraduate experiences were in an English medium education, I find that my knowledge and skills fall short of being fully developed when it comes to the Arabic language. My next big challenge therefore will be to bridge such a knowledge gap between the two languages.

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Appendix 2: PYP structure (translated English version)

The PYP programme for the arts and humanities (translated English version)

First Semester: -

م	المقرر	code/ no.	نظري	عملي	تدريب	ساعات معتمدة	المتطلب السابق
1	English	ELC 101	10	-	-	3	
2	Computer	CS 100	10	-	-	3	
3	Communication skills	COMM 101	3	-	-	3	
4	Language skills	ARAB 101	3	-	-	3	
5	Islamic studies	ISLS 101	2	-	-	2	
						14	
						Total hours	

Second Semester: -

م	المقرر	code/ no.	نظري	عملي	تدريب	ساعات معتمدة	المتطلب السابق
1	English	ELC 102	10			3	
2	Research	IS 102	10			3	
3	Statistics	SOC 102	2		2	3	
4	Writing	ARAB 201	3			3	
5	Islamic studies	ISLS 201	2			2	
						14	
						Total hours	

Appendix 3: Structure of the undergraduate EFL programme

Length of programme six academic semesters
Each semester is approximately 14 weeks

First semester: -

م	المقرر	code/ no.	نظري	عملي	تدريب	ساعات معتمدة	المتطلب السابق
1	Listening & Speaking I	LANE 211	2	2		3	
2	Reading I	LANE 212	3			3	
3	Writing I	LANE 213	3			3	
4	مادة حرة (1)		3			3	
5	الثقافة الإسلامية (3)	ISLS 301	2			2	ISLS 201
6	Lecture et Comprehension I	LANF 221	3			3	
	Total hours					17	

Second Semester: -

م	المقرر	code/ no.	نظري	عملي	تدريب	ساعات معتمدة	المتطلب السابق
1	Listening and Speaking II	LANE 214	2	2		3	LANE 211
2	Reading II	LANE 215	3			3	LANE 212
3	Writing II	LANE 216	3			3	LANE 213
4	مادة حرة (2)		3			3	
5	الثقافة الإسلامية (4)	ISLS 401	2			2	ISLS 301
6	Grammaire Appliquée I	LANF 241	3			3	
	Total hours					17	

Third Semester:-

م	المقرر	code/ no.	نظري	عملي	تدريب	ساعات معتمدة	المتطلب السابق
1	Introduction to Linguistics	LANE 321	3			3	LANE 214
2	Introduction to Literature	LANE 341	3			3	LANE 215
3	Introduction to Translation	LANE 350	3			3	LANE 216
4	Research Methods	LANE 331	3			3	LANE 216
5	مادة حرة (3)		3			3	
6	مبادئ الإدارة العامة	PAD 101	3			3	----
	Total hours					18	

Fourth Semester :-

المتطلب السابق	ساعات معتمدة	تدريب	عملي	نظري	code/ no.	المقرر	م
LANE 321	3		2	2	LANE 332	Phonetics	1
LANE 321	3			3	LANE 333	Morphology	2
LANE 321	3		2	2	LANE 335	Phonology	3
LANE 321	3			3	LANE 334	Syntax	4
LANE 341	3			3	LANE 342	Fiction	5
LANE 341	3			3	LANE 343	Drama	6
	18					Total hours	

Fifth Semester:-

المتطلب السابق	ساعات معتمدة	تدريب	عملي	نظري	code/ no.	المقرر	م
LANE 341	3			3	LANE 446	Literary Criticism	1
LANE 321	3			3	LANE 423	Applied Linguistics	2
LANE 341	3			3	LANE 447	Poetry	3
LANE 321	3			3	LANE 422	Sociolinguistics	4
LANE 321	3			3	LANE 438	Semantics	5
	15					Total hours	

Sixth Semester: -

المتطلب السابق	ساعات معتمدة	تدريب	عملي	نظري	code/ no.	المقرر	م
LANE 343	3			3	LANE 448	Shakespeare	1
LANE 321	3			3	LANE 424	Seminar in linguistics	2
LANE 341	3			3	LANE 449	Modern literature	3
LANE (321 – 350)	6	12			LANE 461	Practicum	4
	15					Total hours	

Appendix 4: Description of the undergraduate EFL programme curriculum

Academic Plan of the Department of European Languages and Literature English Section

Second part: Description of English Programme

Distribution of Major Groups of Courses

code/ no.	اسم المقرر داخل التخصص	اسم التخصص	رقم التخصص
LANE 211	Listening and Speaking I	Languages Skills	1
LANE 212	Reading I		
LANE 213	Writing I		
LANE 214	Listening and Speaking II		
LANE 215	Reading II		
LANE 216	Writing II		

LANE 321	Introduction to Linguistics	Linguistics Section	2
LANE 422	Sociolinguistics		
LANE 423	Applied Linguistics		
LANE 424	Seminar in Linguistics		

LANE 331	Research Methods	Linguistics plane	3
LANE 332	Phonetics		
LANE 333	Morphology		
LANE 334	Syntax		
LANE 335	Phonology		
LANE 438	Semantics		

LANE 341	Introduction to Literature	Literature	4
LANE 342	Fiction		
LANE 343	Drama		
LANE 446	Literary Criticism		
LANE 447	Poetry		
LANE 448	Shakespeare		
LANE 449	Modern Literature		

LANE 350	Introduction to Translation	Translation	5
----------	-----------------------------	-------------	---

LANE 461	Practicum in Language	Training	6
----------	-----------------------	----------	---

Description of Courses in the English Programme:

Number of Units				code / no.	course
Credit hours	Training	Practical	Theoretical		
3			3	LANE 213	Writing I

Course objectives:

Students on this course are first introduced to reading selections, which are intellectually stimulating, but not beyond students' lexical, grammatical or syntactic competence. Students will be dealing with carefully selected grammatical structures suitable for beginners and advanced levels to write sentences, paragraphs and short compositions. New lexical items (that can be deduced from the context) through reading materials are recycled over and over to enable students to grasp them properly.

Course content:

The course content will start with:

A. Reading exercises such as:

- skimming
- scanning
- deducing meaning from context
- recognizing the structure and organization of reading texts
- comprehending the themes and content of the reading

B. Writing exercises such as:

- spelling
- punctuation
- word order
- connectors
- style
- sentence and text writing

Attainable Skills:

After completing the reading selections and exercises, students are expected to have built a repertoire of vocabulary, grammar and ideas that will enable them to practise their writing skills.

Methods of assessment:

Besides frequent quizzes and assignments, students will be given a mid-term and a final exam

Text book: Mosaic I, Writing (4th edition).

Number of Units	code / no.	course
-----------------	------------	--------

Credit hours	Training	Practical	Theoretical		
3		2	2	LANE 214	Listening and Speaking II
LANE 211					Prerequisite

Course objectives:

This course aims at teaching the natural use of the language in various social contexts, including dialogues, interviews, lectures and announcements. It also aims at developing listening strategies including summarising main ideas, making inferences, construal of stressed syllables and words, reductions and intonations.

Course content:

The course presents a variety of speaking activities complementary to the listening component. Students will listen to a variety of topics including:

- lectures on education
- recordings on student life
- dialogues on city life
- reports on business and money
- analyses on jobs and professions
- presentations on lifestyles and universal issues

Attainable Skills:

Students will be able to fully understand and comprehend oral communication from different sources and to comment and present their ideas orally.

Methods of assessment:

Besides frequent quizzes and assignments, students will be given a mid-term and a final exam

Text book: Mosaic II, Listening and Speaking (4th edition).

Number of Units				code / no.	course
Credit hours	Training	Practical	Theoretical		
3			3	LANE 215	Reading II
LANE 212					Prerequisite

Course objectives:

The reading selections in this course aim at presenting advanced college-level reading material, grammar and vocabulary to enhance the students' level of comprehension. They also aim at guiding students toward acquiring the skills of good readers: skills that make reading both easy and enjoyable. It is also intended,

through many vocabulary-building exercises, to emphasise more Reading II strategies such as skimming, scanning, guessing meaning from context, understanding the structure and organisation of a selection increasing reading speed, and interpreting the author's point of view.

Course content:

The course will make available for students reading materials containing:

- lexical items
- vocabulary building exercises
- grammar items
- typological and thematic text content
- literary text of different genres and themes

Attainable Skills:

Students will be able to recognise more advanced text structure, understand basic and sophisticated vocabulary terminology, and comprehend advanced themes and genres carried by the texts.

Methods of assessment:

Besides frequent quizzes and assignments, students will be given a mid-term and a final exam

Text book: Mosaic II, Reading (4th edition).

Appendix 5: Approval for fieldwork (Arabic)

11/5/2014

LD/SchO.nsf/IDSCover/091135F98823E3D543257CD8003AECEC?Opendocument

الرقم :		التاريخ :		ادارة البعثات
قرار إداري رحلة علمية				
الاسم :		رقم البطاقة :		
الجهة المبعثة :	جامعة ساسيكس	رقم السجل :		
اليها :		المدني :		
الدولة :	بريطانيا	رقم ومسمى الوظيفة :		
المرحلة الدراسية :	الدكتوراه	جهة العمل :		
التخصص العام :		القسم :		
التخصص الدقيق :		جهة الرحلة :	السعودية	
تاريخ بداية الرحلة :		مدة الرحلة :	ثلاثة أشهر	

إن وكيل الجامعة للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي

* بناء على الصلاحيات الممنوحة له.

* وبناء على توصية اللجنة الدائمة للابتهات والتدريب رقم (13) المتخذة في الاجتماع الثاني المنعقد بتاريخ 13/8/1425هـ المتضمن

تفويض سعادة وكيل الجامعة للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي رئيس اللجنة صلاحيات البت في مواضيع الرحلات العلمية المقدمة من

المبتعثين ليتمكنوا من القيام بها في الوقت المحدد والمعتمد بخطاب معالي مدير الجامعة رقم 6735/س/25 وتاريخ 27/8/1425هـ.

* وبناء على موافقة معالي مدير الجامعة على القيام بالرحلة العلمية نيابة عن مجلس الجامعة بتاريخ 13/8/1435 هـ.

* واستنادا إلى المادة (15) من لائحة الابتهات والتدريب لمنسوبي الجامعات.

تقرر ما يلي

اولا : يسمح للمبتعث / [] القيام برحلة علمية وفقا للبيانات الموضحة أعلاه .

ثانيا : يكلف أحد أعضاء هيئة التدريس بالقسم التابع له المبتعث بالإشراف الداخلي عليه أثناء قيامه بالرحلة العلمية ومن ثم يرفع تقرير

عما تم إنجازه خلال هذه الرحلة.

ثالثا : يصرف له مخصص إضافي عن كل شهر يقضيه بالمملكة أثناء قيامه بالرحلة العلمية على ألا يزيد ما يصرف له عن مخصص

ثلاثة أشهر وذلك بعد تقديم تقرير عن سير الرحلة العلمية معتمد من عميد الكلية.

رابعا : على الجهات المعنية تنفيذ هذا القرار كلا فيما يخصه.

وكيل الجامعة
للداسات العليا والبحث العلمي

[]

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1/2

Appendix 6: Approval for fieldwork (English translation)

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ministry of Higher Education
Scholarship Administration

Administrative decision**Approval for fieldwork**

Name: Haitham Althubaiti

University of study: University of Sussex

Country: United Kingdom

Degree: PhD

General specialisation: Education

Minor specialisation: English language teaching and learning

Position at CU university: lecturer

Place of work: School of Education

Start of field work: September 2014

Length of fieldwork: three months

Mr Althubaiti is granted access to the university according to the information above.

Vice-chancellor of Higher Education and Research

Appendix 7: Interview guide for students

Motivation and Learning Strategies

- 1) Why did you choose the English language department at CU?
 - *PROMPT*: Can you give some reasons?
- 2) How do you think the EFL programme will impact your future?
 - *PROMPT*: What type of job are you hoping to get?
 - *PROMPT*: How does this motivate you?
 - *PROMPT*: How does this influence the way you learn in the EFL programme?
- 3) What level are you at in the programme?
- 4) How many courses do you have this semester?
- 5) How does the EFL programme influence your learning practices?
 - *PROMPT*: How do you prepare for your classes, exams, and assignments?
 - *PROMPT*: Do you focus more on memorising the material or understanding them?
 - *PROMT*: How do you react to interesting or controversial issues that might come up during your classes?
- 6) What do you think of the methods your lecturers use in their teaching?
 - *PROMPT*: Do they focus on teaching for assessment or on providing clear explanations of the concepts of the course?
 - *PROMPT*: Do they provide any extra explanations or do they focus on what is in the textbook?
- 5) How would you describe the ideal teaching method?
- 6) Do you think there is a difference in the way native and non-native lecturers teach?
 - *PROMPT*: If yes, tell me more about it?
- 7) Do you think there is a difference in the way native and non-native lecturers interact with students?
 - *PROMPT*: If yes, how so, give an example?
- 8) Do you ever feel reluctant to participate in a class?
 - *PROMPT*: If yes, why, give an example?

- 9) How do you think these teaching practices (e.g. lecturing, group and pair work, classroom discussions, debates...) in the EFL programme influence your learning experience?

Family educational background

- 10) Can you tell me about your family background?
- *PROMPT*: What level of education do your parents have?
 - *PROMPT*: What kind of job do your parents have?
 - *PROMPT*: Do they speak English?
 - *PROMPT*: Does anyone in your family have a university degree?
- 11) How does your family educational background influence your learning in EFL in programme?
- *PROMPT*: Do they help with your learning, e.g. with course assignment, preparing for exams...?

Institutional influence

- 12) Why did you choose City University?
- 13) What is your image of this university?
- *PROMPT*: How does this influence your learning?
- 14) Why did you choose the College of Arts and Humanities?
- *PROMPT*: Did you apply for any other college at the university or was this your first choice?
- 15) What was your perception of the EFL programme when you first joined?
- 16) How many EFL courses did you study in your preparatory year?
- 17) How useful were these EFL courses in improving your basic English language skills?
- *PROMT*: Do you feel they prepared you for the English department?
- 18) How do you think your pre-university learning influences your learning experience in the EFL programme?

Appendix 8: Interview guide for lecturers

Lecturers' opinions about teaching, their roles and students' learning experiences in the EFL programme

- 1) What courses do you teach?
- 2) How would you describe your teaching?
- 3) In your opinion, what is the purpose of teaching?
- 4) How would you describe your role as a lecturer?
- 5) What kind of teaching approach do you use in your lessons?
- 6) Does your teaching approach influence the way in which students' learn? If yes, how?
- 7) Describe how you typically deliver your lessons?
- 8) How do you prepare for your lessons?
- 9) What role does the textbook have in your preparation and teaching?
- 10) What modes of assessment do you use? give examples.

- 11) Why do students seek a degree in English language?
- 12) How would you describe the students at the programme?
 - *PROMPT*: How would you describe your students roles in the classroom? e.g. passive, active.
 - *PROMPT*: How would describe their social and economic backgrounds?
 - *PROMPT*: How would describe their English language backgrounds?
- 13) Do you think that students from different social and economic backgrounds have different learning experience in EFL programme?
 - *PROMPT*: If yes, how?
- 14) How do you think the family educational background of your students influences the way they learn?
- 15) What are the major challenges faced by students when they first join the programme?
- 16) What are the students' attitude towards the program?

17) What impact does the EFL program have on students?

18) What do you think of the admission requirements for the EFL programme?

19) How do you define the size of your class?

- *PROMPT*: Does it help or impede your teaching? How?
- *PROMPT*: What effects does class size have on students learning practices?

Appendix 9: Confirmation and consent



CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Students' Experiences of Learning English as a Foreign Language; A Case Study of an undergraduate EFL programme at a Saudi University

Project Approval Reference: _____

This form is to confirm that you agree to take part in my study of students' learning experiences. Your personal details will never be made public.

Please read carefully and sign to confirm:

- 1) I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for record. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:
 - Be interviewed by the researcher either at the researcher's university office or any public place you feel comfortable at (e.g. a coffee shop).
 - Allow the interview to be audio taped.
 - Make myself available for a further interview should that be required.
- 2) I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.
- 3) I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw from the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.
- 4) I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Students' Experiences of Learning English as a Foreign Language; A Case Study of an undergraduate EFL programme at a Saudi University, v.1 15/4/2014



CONSENT FORM FOR LECTURER PARTICIPANTS

Students' Experiences of Learning English as a Foreign Language; A Case Study of an undergraduate EFL programme at a Saudi University

Project Approval Reference: _____

This form is to confirm that you agree to take part in my study of students' learning experiences. Your personal details will never be made public.

Please read carefully and sign to confirm:

- 1) I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for record. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:
 - Be interviewed by the researcher at your personal university office.
 - Allow the interview to be audio taped.
 - Allow the researcher to observe you during your lectures.
 - Make myself available for a further interview should that be required.
- 2) I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.
- 3) I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw from the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.
- 4) I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Students' Experiences of Learning English as a Foreign Language; A Case Study of an undergraduate EFL programme at a Saudi University, v.1 15/4/2014

Appendix 10: Approval of fieldwork (University of Sussex)



Certificate of Approval	
Reference Number:	ER/HA265/1
Title Of Project:	Identity and English language learning: A case study of EFL learners in an English language programme in Saudi Arabia
Principal Investigator (PI):	Haitham Ali Hamed Althubaiti
Student:	Haitham Ali Hamed Althubaiti
Collaborators:	Dr YM Sayed
Duration Of Approval:	n/a
Expected Start Date:	01-Aug-2014
Date Of Approval:	29-May-2014
Approval Expiry Date:	01-Aug-2015
Approved By:	Jayne Paulin
Name of Authorised Signatory:	Stephen Shute
Date:	29-May-2014

*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.

Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:

Amendments to protocol

- * Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation.

Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects

- * Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC.

Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events

- * Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.

Appendix 11: EFL course syllabus for the preparatory year



ELI 101

Course Syllabus

Course Title: English Language Level One

Course Code: ELI 101

Course Prerequisite: Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT) score corresponding to beginner proficiency level and below.

Credits: There are NO credits for this course. Successful completion of ELI 101 is the prerequisite for taking ELI 102. Successful completion of ELI 102, ELI 103, and ELI 104 gives students the necessary credits to meet the Foundation Year English requirement.

Course Description: ELI 101 is a beginner course intended to provide students with a foundation from which they can advance from A1 Breakthrough to A2 Waystage on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is a seven-week module course with 18 hours of instruction each week.

Course Goal: The course aims at helping learners to achieve an overall English language proficiency of beginner Basic User defined as A1 level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), developing “generative language use” to interact in a simple way and ask and answer simple questions.

Course Objectives: The course is intended to accomplish its goal in one full academic module of 7 weeks through developing students’ language skills to:

1. Read and understand basic expressions and short, simple texts.
2. Engage in simple oral communications in order to provide and obtain essential information, using appropriate pronunciation and vocabulary*.
3. Write basic, simple sentences leading to a paragraph using appropriate vocabulary*.
4. Demonstrate limited control of basic vocabulary* and essential grammatical structures.

* vocabulary from the word lists for units 1-9 and 11

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): See the detailed 101 SLOs document in the ELI Curriculum Guide 2012/2013.



ELI 102

Course Syllabus

Course Title: English Language Level Two

Course Code: ELI 102

Course Prerequisite: Successful completion of ELI 101 or an Oxford Online Placement Test score corresponding to high beginner proficiency level.

Credits: There are two credits for this course. Successful completion of ELI 102 is the prerequisite for taking ELI 103. Successful completion of ELI 103 and ELI 104 gives students the necessary credits to meet the Foundation Year English requirement.

Course Description: ELI 102 is an elementary level course aiming to build and further develop language proficiency at A2 Waystage level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), moving towards a higher level of proficiency at this stage. It is a seven-week module course with 18 hours of instruction each week.

Course Goal: The course aims at helping learners to achieve an overall English language proficiency of high Basic User defined as A2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), developing social language functions such as greeting people, asking about work and free time, and making invitations.

Course Objectives: The course is intended to accomplish its goal in one full academic module of 7 weeks through developing students' language skills to:

1. Read and understand simple texts and a range of high frequency vocabulary* in context.
2. Understand simple, spoken texts on familiar topics and talk about aspects of personal and everyday life, using appropriate vocabulary* and stress, intonation and rhythm.
3. Write simple cohesive paragraphs on familiar topics using appropriate vocabulary*.
4. Demonstrate some control of everyday high frequency* vocabulary and essential grammatical structures allowing for occasional inconsistencies.

* vocabulary from the word lists for units 2-4 and 7-13

Appendix 12: Sample of students' interview transcript (Arabic version)

التاريخ	١٧ سبتمبر ٢٠١٤	الاسم	الطالب ١
الوقت	١١:٠٠ – ١١:٣١	رقم الجوال	محذوف
المدة	٣١ دقيقة	ايميل	غير متوفر
المكان	نادي اللغة الإنجليزية	السنة	الثانية

الباحث: في البداية ، أود أن أشكرك على قبولك دعوتي للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة. يهدف البحث لدراسة تجارب الطلاب التعليمية في برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة سيتي. وهذه التجارب تحلل من وجهات نظر مختلفة ، احداها التأثيرات المؤسسية على تعلم الطلاب، والخلفية التعليمية للأسرة ، وطرق التدريس المستخدمة في الفصل. إذا كان عندك أي سؤال خلال أو بعد المناقشة لا تتردد في طرحه. أيضًا ، كما قلت من قبل ، إذا كنت لا تريد الإجابة عن أي سؤال ، فيرجى إبلاغي بذلك حتى ننتقل إلى السؤال التالي

أود البدء باثنين من الأسئلة الأساسية ، ما هو مستواك في برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية؟

الطالب: هذا الفصل الدراسي الثاني لي في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية.

الباحث: كم عدد المواد التي تدرسها في هذا الفصل الدراسي؟

الطالب: عندي ست مواد هذا الفصل الدراسي ، ثلاث مواد لغة. مثل الاستماع / التحدث والكتابة والقراءة والثلاثة المواد الأخرى تدرس بالعربي.

الباحث: لماذا قدمت على جامعة سيتي لدراسة درجة البكالوريوس؟

الطالب: أولاً وقبل كل شيء ، الجامعة قريبة من البيت ، بيتنا في جنوب جدة ، تقريبا الجامعة تبعد 10 دقائق عن البيت. أخي أيضا يدرس في نفس الجامعة وعادة نجي مع بعض. و الجامعة تتمتع بسمعة جيدة في السعودية.

الباحث: ممتاز ، ولكن لماذا اخترت برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية؟

الطالب: حسناً ، عندما كنت في المدرسة الثانوية ، كنت مهتماً باللغة الإنجليزية فقررت الانضمام إلى قسم اللغة الإنجليزية. تعلم اللغة أمر جدا مهم للحصول على وظيفة هذه الأيام.

الباحث: هل الحصول على وظيفة هو السبب الوحيد ، أم هناك أسباب أخرى وراء انضمامك للبرنامج؟

الطالب: أعتقد أن الحصول على وظيفة كان أحد اهم الأسباب للانضمامي للقسم. ومع ذلك ، فإني اعلم أن حالة اللغة الإنجليزية لم تعد كما كانت عليه من قبل. من قبل ، كان الذي يعرف إنجليزي أمر نادر، لكن الان كل خريجي الجامعة بغض النظر عن تخصصاتهم لازم يعرفوا اللغة وهذا ما يجعل تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية أقل أهمية. لكن تحدث الإنجليزية يعرفك على ثقافات وأشخاص جدد. وعندما تتبادل آرائك معهم وتفهم تجاربهم. أعني أن هذا يمكن أن يغير طريقة تفكير الشخص. أيضا ، العديد من الموارد على شبكة الإنترنت باللغة الإنجليزية. لذا فإن إتقان اللغة يمكن أن يكون له فوائد عديدة.

الباحث: هل هذه الأسباب تحفزك على التعلم؟

الطالب: بالطبع يحفزني اني ادرس ، أعني إتقاني للغة الإنجليزية يزيد من فرصتي في العثور على وظيفة. امتلاك مهارات لغوية جيدة يمكن أن يساعدني بالتأكد في المستقبل ، إن شاء الله.

الباحث: نعم ، ولكن كيف يؤثر على الطريقة التي تتدرس بها؟ ممكن تعطيني أمثلة.

الطالب: مثلا يحفزني على الحضور مبكرا للفصل والجلوس في المقدمة لأن بعض الداكره يركزون فقط على الطلاب الذين يجلسون في المقدمة. يحفزني أيضا على تدوين الملاحظات وطرح

الأسئلة إذا لم كان شيئاً ماهو واضح. يعني أحاول أبذل قصارى جهدي حتى أحصل على أقصى فائدة من وقتي هنا في القسم.

الباحث: لقد ذكرت أنك تركز على فهم الدرس ، فهل هذا يعني أنك تعتمد أكثر على الفهم بدلاً من الحفظ عند الدراسة؟

الطالب: أحب استخدام كلتا الطريقتين عند الدراسة ، على سبيل المثال عندما أتعلم مفردات جديدة ، أكرر الكلمة الجديدة عدة مرات عشان احفظها اعرف نطقها الصحيح. وأركز أيضاً على فهم معنى الكلمة وطريقة استخدامها. كذا بحفظ الكلمة واستخدامها. لكن المشكلة هي إذا كنت ما تستخدم الذي تعلمته لفترة غالباً ما أنسبها ، ولكن هذه قصة أخرى.

الباحث: ماذا تعني؟

الطالب: أعني أنه هنا في المملكة لا نتاح لنا الفرصة لاستخدام اللغة الإنجليزية. الناس خارج القسم دائماً تستخدم اللغة العربية في محادثاتها. يعني المكان الوحيد لاستخدام اللغة هنا في القسم ، وفي الخارج مجرد درشات صغيرة دائماً مثل Hi! كيف حالك؟ عارف ، يوم تتحدث مع الأجانب في السوق أو في الشارع.

الباحث:شكراً، لنتحدث أكثر عن طريقتك في الدراسة ، كيف تستعد للحصص والامتحانات؟

الطالب: أحضر للحصص من خلال قراءة الموضوع الجديد قبل الدرس. لا ما هو دائماً ، ولكن في معظم المواد، وبالنسبة للاختبارات ، عادةً ما أبدأ في الدراسة قبل أسبوعين من الاختبارات. هذا يعطيني الوقت الكافي للإستعداد بشكل صحيح.

الباحث: كم مرة تستخدم الكتاب المقرر عند الدراسة؟

الطالب: عادةً ما أستخدم الكتاب. أنا أعتد على ملاحظاتي وأستخدم الإنترنت عند الحاجة. في بعض الأحيان ، أقوم بالبحث عن مقاطع فيديو على موقع يوتيوب للحصول على معلومات حول اللغة ، مثل قاعدة في النحو أو النطق للكلمة. هذا أسهل بكثير من محاولة العثور على معلومة من الكتاب. حتى في الفصل ، أفضل البحث عن المعلومة باستخدام الجوال. أسرع اسهل.

الباحث: ولكن ، لماذا لا تسأل المحاضر أثناء الدرس؟

الطالب: أنا أسألهم ، لكن الأمر يعتمد أيضاً على الدكتور. بعضهم يعطون الطلاب الوقت لطرح الأسئلة أثناء الدرس. وبعضهم ما يبغى احد يقاطعه أثناء الدرس لطرح الأسئلة ، لذلك أستخدم الايفون .وتلاقي شروح مختلفة للنقطة الي تيغاها ، ويمكن افضل مما قد يعطيك الدكتور.

الباحث: تحدثت عن المحاضرين ، كيف تصف الطرق التي يستخدمها أساتذتك في تدريسهم؟

الطالب: من الصعب وصفها ككل لأن كل دكتور عنده قوته وضعفه وأسلوبه في التدريس الخاص به. مثلاً بعض الدكاتره يشرح طوال الدرس والبعض يطلب من الطلاب المشاركة بأفكارهم من خلال مناقشتهم أثناء الدرس.

الباحث: دعني أطرح سؤالاً مختلفاً ، هل ترى أي فرق في طريقة التدريس اوالمعاملة بين السعوديون والأجانب في القسم.

الطالب: نعم بلا شك ، الاجانب أكثر ودية معنا ويسمحون للطلاب بالتحدث وطرح الأسئلة. أيضاً يستخدمون وسائل تعليمية في الفصل. لكن السعوديين أكثر رسمية في طريقة تدريسهم وتفاعلهم معنا. على سبيل المثال ، السيد {...} يجعلنا دائماً نقرأ الكتاب المقرر في الفصل وهو ممل ، حتى وإن لم نكن مهتمين لازم نقرأ منه. أعتقد أنه يجب السماح للطلاب بقراءة ما يحبون. عندما أصبح مدرساً بإذن الله ، سأعتمد أكثر على مصادر خارجية مشوقة للطلاب.

الباحث: شكراً. ننتقل إلى سؤال آخر ، ما رأيك في مستوى اللغة لزملائك في القسم ، أو كيف تصف مهاراتهم اللغوية؟

الطالب: فاهم قصدك. لسوء الحظ ، العديد من الطلاب لديهم مهارات لغوية ضعيفة ، وخاصة مهارات التحدث والاستماع. البعض منهم لا يفهم تماماً ملاحظات الدكتور. على سبيل المثال ، حصل أحد اصحابي على 16من100 في اختبار الكتابة ، وكان الدكتور يقول له "اخذت 16 بسبب هذا ، وهذا وذاك". وعندما خرجنا ، أخبرني ، "تعال إلى هنا." قلت ، "ماذا؟" قال ، "ماذا قال لي؟" بمعنى أنه ليس لديه حتى الأساسيات.

الباحث: لكن لغتك الإنجليزية متقدمة كثيراً مقارنة بأصدقائك ، كيف تعلمت الإنجليزية؟

الطالب: معظمها مجهود شخصي ... لكن ما يولد أحد عبقرياً أو عالمٌ. أتذكر أنني كنت كره اللغة كثيراً. ولكن بعد ذلك ، أعتقد أنها كانت في بداية المدرسة الثانوية التي اهتممت بها. يرجع السبب الرئيسي في ذلك إلى كتب والدي المصورة التي كنا نقرأها معاً في بعض الأحيان.

الباحث: هل يمكن الحديث أكثر عن كيف أثر والدك وكتبه في تعلمك اللغة الإنجليزية؟

الطالب: حسناً ، لقد أصبحت هاوياً حقيقياً للكتب المصورة خلال سنتي الأولى في المدرسة الثانوية بسبب كتب والدي. كان متحمساً جداً لجمعها. أتذكر عندما حاولت قراءتها وشعرت بالإحباط عندما لم أستطع ذلك. أنا أيضاً مغرمٌ بالعباب الفيديو وكنت أشعر بالإحباط الشديد في لعبة فيديو عندما لم أتمكن من تجاوز مستوى معين ، لأن الأهداف غير واضحة بالنسبة لي. أو ربما لغز. لقد كونت أيضاً صداقات مع العديد من المتحدثين الأجانب أثناء اللعب على الإنترنت.

الباحث: أود أن أسألك عن عائلتك ، ما نوع العمل الذي يقوم به والدك وأمك؟ وهل يتكلم أي منهم اللغة الإنجليزية؟

الطالب: أبي معلم رياضيات في مدرسة ثانوية ، ووالدتي معها درجة البكالوريوس وتعمل في احد الحضانات في جدة وكلهم يتحدثون الإنجليزية بشكل ممتاز. لدي أيضاً شقيق واحد يدرس هنا في الجامعة ، يدرس الهندسة.

الباحث: هل احد منهم يساعدك عندما تدرس؟

الطالب: صراحة ، لست بحاجة إلى أي مساعدة. أعني أن المواد التي ادرسها أقل من مستواي اللغوي. لذلك أنا لا أطلب أي مساعدة. ولكن إذا احتجت إلى أي مساعدة أو نصيحة فسوف أسألهم.

الباحث: شكراً على وقتك ومشاركتك.

الطالب: مرحب بك.

الباحث: هل لديك أي أسئلة بالنسبة لي؟

الطالب: لا شكراً.

Appendix 13: Sample of students' interview transcript (English version)

Name:	Student 1	Date:	17 th of Sep 2014
WhatsApp Number:	Deleted	Time:	11:00 – 11:31
Email:	Not provided	Duration:	31 minutes
Year:	2 nd	Location:	The English language club

Interviewer: At the start, I would like to thank you for accepting my invitation to participate in this research. The study aims to investigate the students' learning at the undergraduate EFL programme at CU. It analyses these experiences from three perspectives, the institutional influences, the family's educational background and the teaching approaches adopted in the classroom. If you have any question during or after the discussion feel free to ask. Also, as I have said before, if you don't want to answer a question please let me know so we move on to the next question.

I would like to start with a couple of basic questions, what level are you at in the English programme?

Student: This is my second semester at the English department.

Interviewer: How many courses are you studying this semester?

Student: I have six courses this semester, three are basic language courses. You know listening/speaking, writing and reading and the other three are Arabic courses.

Interviewer: Why did you City University to complete your Bachelor's degree?

Student: First of all, it's the closest university to where I live, I live in the south part of Jeddah so the university is only 10 minutes away from home. My brother is also studying here so usually come together. The university also has a good reputation in KSA.

Interviewee: Ok, but why did you choose the English language programme?

Student: Well, when I was in high school I was interested in English so I decided to join the English department. English is crucial for getting a job these days.

Interviewer: Is finding a job your only reason, or are there other reasons why you joined the programme?

Student: I think that finding a job was one of the main reasons I joined the department. However, we do know that the status of English as major is no longer how it used to be. Before, knowing English was something unique but all student graduates regardless of their majors should know English and that makes our English degree less important. But speaking English can also introduce you to new cultures and people. And when you exchange your opinions with their opinions and understand different experiences. I mean this can change the way a person thinks. Also, many resources on the internet are in English. So mastering the language can have many benefits.

Interviewer: Do these reasons motivate you to learn?

Student: Of course it motivates me to learn, I mean to increase my chances in finding a job I must be very good in English. Having good language skills can definitely help me in the future, Inshallah.

Interviewer: Yes, but how does it influence the way you learn in the programme? Can give me examples.

Student: Well, , it motivates me to attend my classes and sit in the front of the classroom because some lecturers only focus on students that are sitting in the front. I also take notes with lecturers and ask questions if I don't understand something

or it isn't clear. I try to do my best and get the most out of my time here at the department.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you focus on understanding the lesson, does that mean you rely more on understanding rather than memorising when you study?

Student: I like to use both techniques when studying, for example when I'm learning new vocab, I'll usually repeat the new word several time to memorise it and know its correct pronunciation. But I will also focus on understanding the words meaning and the way it's different tenses. This allows me to memorise the word and the correct way it's used. However, The problem is if I don't use the word for a while I usually forget it, but that another story.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Student: I mean that here in Saudi we don't have the opportunity to use English. People outside the department always use Arabic in their conversations. So the only real place to use the language is here in the department, but outside its almost always small chats, like Hi! How are you? You know, when you talk to foreigners in the mall or on the streets.

Interviewer: Going back to speak a little more about your learning strategies, how do you prepare for your classes and exams?

Student: Well for classes, I prepare by quickly reading the new topic before the class and any related material. I don't always do that but for most of my courses and for exams, I usually start studying two weeks before the exams start. This gives me enough time to properly prepare and cover all the material.

Interviewer: How often do you use the assigned textbook when you study?

Student: I usually don't use the book. I completely rely on my notes and use the Internet for further explanation. Sometimes I just look up videos on YouTube for language information, like a grammar rule or the different pronunciations of a word. That's much easier than trying to find a piece of information from a textbook. Even in the classroom, I prefer to search for something using my smartphone. That's much quicker and

accessible.

Interviewer: But, why don't you ask the lecturer during the lesson?

Student: I do ask them, but it also depends on the lecturer. Some lecturers give students time to ask questions while they are teaching. Others don't like to be interrupted during the lesson for questions question, so I use my iPhone. You can also find different and, to be honest, better explanations on the internet than the lecturer may give you.

Interviewer: Speaking about lecturers, how would you describe the methods your lecturers use in their teaching?

Student: It's difficult to describe them as a whole because each lecturer has his strengths and weakness and own style of teaching. Some lecturers speak throughout the lesson and others ask students to share their thoughts through classroom discussions during the lesson.

Interviewer: Ok, let me ask a different question, do you see any difference Saudi lecturers teach and interact with students and Native English lecturers.

Student: Yes with no doubt, Native lecturers are more friendly with us and allow students talk and ask questions when they teach. Many of them also use different resources in the classroom. But Saudi are more formal especially in the way they interact with us and their teaching is somewhat different. For example, Mr... [NNES lecturer] always makes us read the textbook in the classroom and it is boring and he takes control of what we read, even if we are not interested. I think students should be allowed to read what they like and enjoy. But I also think it depends on the lecturer: if he's good he won't completely rely on the textbook...when I become a teacher I will rely more on exciting outside sources in my class and allow the students to have the right to choose their material. That is my opinion.

Interviewer: Thank you. Moving on to another question, what do you think of the language level of your classmates, or how would you describe their language skills?

Student: I understand what you mean. Unfortunately, many of my classmates have weak language skills, especially their speaking and listening skills. Some of them don't fully understand the lecturer's feedback. For example, one of my classmates got 16/100 in the writing test, and the lecturer was telling him "You got a 16 because of this, and this and this". And when we went outside, he told me, "Come here." I said, "What?" He said, "What did he tell me?" Meaning he didn't even have the basics.

Interviewer: But your English is much advanced in comparison to your friends, how did you learn English?

Student: Most of it [English] was self-taught...but nobody was born a genius or a scientist. I remember that I hated it so much. But then, I think it was in the beginning of high school that I took interest in it. Mainly because of my father's comic books that we sometimes read together.

Interviewer: Can further talk about how your father and his book collection influenced you to learn English?

Student: Well, I became a true comic fan during my first year in high school because of my father's books. He was very passionate about collecting them. I remember when I tried to read the dialogue and felt frustrated when I couldn't. I am also fond of video games and I used to be so frustrated at a video game when I couldn't get past a certain level, because the objectives aren't clear to me. Or I don't know it at all, maybe a puzzle...I also made friends with many native speakers during playing online and that's how I got to learn, step by step.

Interviewer: I would like to ask you about your family, what type of work does your father and mother do? And do any of them speak English?

Student: My father is a high school maths teacher and my mother has a Bachelor's degree and works at a nursery and both of them speak very good English. I also have one sibling that is studying here at CU, he's studying engineering.

Interviewer: Do any of them help you when you study?

Student: To be honest, I don't really need any help. I mean the courses we study are a bit below my language level. So I don't ask for any help. But if I need any help or advice I will ask them.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and participation.

Student: You are welcome.

Interviewer: Do you have any questions for me?

Student: No thanks.

Appendix 14: Data Analysis/ Qualitative Thematic Analysis: Nvivo Interview Coding Sample

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▼ Challenges facing students

Class size

Teaching styles

Weak English background

▼ Family support (cultural capital)

▼ Active involvement in student's learning

Choice of degree

Reading behaviours

Parents' educational level

▼ Passive involvement

Role model

▼ Perception of lecturers

Attitudes toward lecturers

NESL

NNESL

▼ Reasons to join CU and the programme

Access to information

Culture

Easy access to the programme

English as a safety net

Socioeconomic

▼ Teaching and learning

Learning strategies

Assignments

Lesson preparation

Tests and exams

▼ Teaching approaches

Student-centred

Teacher-centred

Student 11

Student 12

Student 12

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Interviewer: But, why don't you ask the lecturer during the lesson?

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Internals

Student 12

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▼ Challenges facing students

● Class size

● teaching styles

● Weak English background

▼ Family support (cultural capital)

▼ Active involvement in student's learning

● Choice of degree

● Reading behaviours

● Parents' educational level

▼ Passive involvement

● Role model

▼ Perception of lecturers

● Attitudes toward lecturers

● NESL

● NNESTL

▼ Reasons to join CU and the programme

● Access to information

● Culture

● Easy access to the programme

● English as a safety net

● Socioeconomic

▼ Teaching and learning

▼ Learning strategies

● Assignments

● Lesson preparation

● Tests and exams

▼ Teaching approaches

● Student-centred

● Teacher-centred

Student 1.2

Student 11

Student 1.2

Student 12

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MAPS

Name

Referen...

▼ Challenges facing students

● Class size

● teaching styles

● Weak English background

▼ Family support (cultural capital)

▼ Active involvement in student's learning

● Choice of degree

● Reading behaviours

● Parents' educational level

▼ Passive involvement

● Role model

▼ Perception of lecturers

● Attitudes toward lecturers

● NESL

● NNESL

▼ Reasons to join CU and the programme

● Access to information

● Culture

● Easy access to the programme

● English as a safety net

● Socioeconomic

▼ Teaching and learning

▼ Learning strategies

● Assignments

● Lesson preparation

● Tests and exams

▼ Teaching approaches

● Student-centred

● Teacher-centred

Student 1.2

Student 1.2

Student 11

Student 1.2

tell me? Meaning he didn't even have the basics.

Interviewer: But your English is much advanced in comparison to your friends, how did you learn English?

Student: Most of it [English] was self-taught...but nobody was born a genius or a scientist. I remember that I hated it so much. But then, I think it was in the beginning of high school that I took interest in it. Mainly because of my father's comic books that we sometimes read together.

Interviewer: Can further talk about how your father and his book collection influenced you to learn English?

Student: Well, I became a true comic fan during my first year in high school because of my father's books. He was very passionate about collecting them. I remember when I tried to read the dialogue and felt frustrated when I couldn't. I am also fond of video games and I used to be so frustrated at a video game when I couldn't get past a certain level, because the objectives aren't clear to me. Or I don't know it at all, maybe a puzzle...I also made friends with many native speakers during playing online and that's how I got to learn, step by step.

Interviewer: I would like to ask you about your family, what type of work does your father and mother do? And do any of them speak English?

Student: My father is a high school maths teacher and my mother has a Bachelor's degree and works at a nursery and both of them speak very good English. I also have one sibling that is studying here at CU, he's studying engineering.

Interviewer: Do any of them help you when you study?

Student: To be honest, I don't really need any help. I mean the courses we study are a bit below my language level. So I don't ask for any help. But if I need any help or advice I will ask them.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and participation.

Student: You are welcome.

SOURCES > Internals > Student 1.2

Appendix 15: Summary of themes, categories and subcategories

Chapter 5: Institutional influences on teaching and learning in the EFL programme

RQ1: How do institutional influences affect teaching and learning in the EFL programme?

Theme	Category	Subcategory
Examining the field of higher education in Saudi Arabia	Understanding the field of higher education in KSA (i.e. The Ministry of Education – Higher Education division)	1- Responsible for supervising, planning, and coordinating the Kingdom's higher education.
		2- Increased the capacity of many Saudi universities, which increased access to higher education.
		3- Introduced several initiatives intended to raise the quality of education in Saudi universities (e.g. NCAAA and NCAHE)
		4- Not all public universities follow the ministry's recommendations to the full extent (e.g. KFUPM)

English language programmes in higher education	The importance of English language teaching and learning in higher education	1- A priority for many Saudi universities
		2- The language of instruction in most technical education and medicine colleges
		3- All universities teach EFL courses to enhance the students' language skills
		4- Most multi-disciplinary universities have English language institutes (ELI) and specialised English as a Foreign Language programmes
	The quality of EFL teaching and learning at the PYP in CU	1- Offers fewer hours of EFL teaching per week in comparison to other leading universities (e.g. KFUPM)
		2- The goal of the EFL programme is to help students' achieve an intermediate level of language proficiency
		3- Such goals are not always achieved
		4- Many students' at the undergraduate English programme still struggle with basic language skills even after completing the EFL course in the PYP

CU's position in the field of higher education	CU's Capital	1- One of the leading multi-disciplinary universities in KSA (ranked 3 rd)
		2- The largest public university in the western region of KSA
		3- Promotes a model of 'accessible higher education'
		4- Accounts for one of the highest number of student enrolment in KSA
The Position of the CAH in CU	Student access to the CAH	1- Has one of the highest enrollment rates in CU
	The Undergraduate English language programme at the CAH	1- Many students join the undergraduate programme for its vocational qualifications
		2- Students view the programme as a gateway to a better future and a way to improve their socioeconomic status in society
		3- The second best choice after STEM majors (e.g. engineering)
Institutional influences of CU on the EFL programme	Entry requirements for the EFL programme	1- Written test to assess the students language skills
		2- The department's administration lowers its entry requirements to attain the number of students assigned by the college and university.

		3- Increased access of students with poor English language skills
	Large class size	1- The university's open admission policy led to large number of students per class (average of 40)
	EFL lecturers' perceptions of students	1- Disagree with department's administration policy in relation to the language level of students being accepted in the EFL programme
		2- Negative attitudes toward the students
		3- Unworthy of being in the programme
	The use of English as the medium of instruction	1- Some lecturers use Arabic in their teaching because of the students' poor language skills
	Assessment	1- Average assessment standards ensure that students from weak educational backgrounds can still have a chance to gain a degree
		2- Heavily reliant on summative assessment (i.e. multiple choice questions)
		3- Students need to be pushed or helped to pass a given course
		4- A few students rely on plagiarism to pass their exams

Chapter 6: Class and family educational background in the EFL programme

RQ2: How does the educational background of the family influence students' learning experiences in the EFL programme?

Theme	Category	Subcategory
The influence of family's educational background on students learning experiences in the EFL programme	The influence of the family's active transmission of cultural capital on students' learning experiences	1- Developing the students' basic English language skills (e.g. developing students reading skills)
		2- Encouraging students to pursue a higher education degree and influencing their choice of major by discussing its value
		3- Sharing their first-hand experiences and skills of being an EFL undergraduate student
		4- Mobilizing different educational resources to support the students' English language skills
		5- These students were identified by lecturers as being the best in the department in relation to their language and academic skills.
	The influence of the family's passive transmission of cultural capital on students' learning experiences	1- Acting as role models that students could follow
		2- Projecting positive reading behaviours to the students
	The family's lack of cultural capital and students' learning experiences	1- An important contributing factor to students' poor English language competencies

		2- The wide spread assumption among disadvantaged students that teaching in EFL programme would start from a beginner's level of English
		3- The absence of family support in relation to course assignments
		4- Students struggling to cope with the linguistic and academic demands of the programme.
		5- Some students change their majors to an Arabic-based discipline or drop out of university
		6- Unacceptable behaviour such as plagiarism
		7- The lack of higher education experience of these families and their economic situation suggest that they did not understand the value of educational resources in developing the students' language skills or could not afford to support them

Chapter 7: Lecturers' teaching approaches and students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom

RQ3: How do the teaching approaches adopted by lecturers affect students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom?

Theme	Category	Subcategory
The teaching approaches used in the EFL programme at CU	Student-centred vs Teacher-centred approach	1- NES lecturers use a student-centred approach
		2- NNES lecturers use a teacher-centred approach
The teaching approaches adopted by NNES lecturers and students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom	NNES lecturers' views about teaching, their roles and students	1- View their roles as knowledge transmitters
		2- Authoritative role
		3- Reliant of the textbook and syllabus
		4- Students have no role in determining the materials being taught
	NNES lecturers' teaching practices in the EFL classroom	1- Teaching affected by issues such as, lecturers negative views toward the students and large class size
		2- Lecture-based teaching
		3- Students are given strict instructions to follow

	Students' learning experiences of the teacher-centred approach	The majority of students expressed negative attitudes to the teaching strategies adopted by NNES lecturers
		Limited interaction and participation in the class
		Aware of the power relations between them and the lecturer
	Assessment	Mostly Summative assessment (e.g. multiple-choice questions)
The teaching approaches adopted by NES lecturers and students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom	NES lecturers' views about teaching, their roles and students	1- View their roles as facilitators
		2- Helping students' transition into the programme
		3- Developing students' communicative skills
		4- Building a friendly and safe learning environment
		5- Students are active participants in the process of learning
	NES lecturers' teaching practices in the EFL classroom	1- Group and pair work, discussions, debates and presentations
		2- Highly depended on student feedback
		3- Critical thinking exercises (e.g. compare and analyze)

	Students' learning experiences of the student-centred approach	1- Positive attitudes
		2- Motivated to develop their basic skills
	Assessment	1- Summative and formative assessment