

# **Language and Power: The Saudi Tertiary English Language Classroom**

By

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## **Certificate of Original Authorship**

I, Hanan Alotaibi, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of doctor of philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. This research is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program.

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## **Abstract**

Many studies confirm the positive role of the student's first language (L1) in the English language (EL) classroom. However, the English Language at the Future University (a pseudonym) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) adopts an English-only approach in tertiary EL classrooms and this approach has proved to be problematic for teachers and students alike. This research, using a qualitative approach, investigates the role of L1 in EL teaching in a tertiary EL institution. Data were collected from teacher interviews, focus groups with students, and classroom observations. The purpose of the study was to contribute to research in the field of L1 use in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts by: exposing the language ideologies underpinning the informal but effective ban on L1 in L2 classrooms; exploring the roles of L1 in the English classroom; and examining the relation between language choice and power practices in the English classroom.

Analysis of the data showed that the Arabic language existed in the EFL classrooms as a visible or invisible resource and played a variety of cognitive, pedagogic, and affective roles. The participants' perceptions towards the use of Arabic in Saudi EFL classrooms indicated that certain language ideologies included or excluded Arabic. The findings also revealed the exercise of power in the verbal and nonverbal practices of both teachers and students in these classrooms. Teachers disciplined students either through surveillance (Foucault 1977) or through their choice of language. Power is exercised differently in different contexts; in the Saudi classroom, the teacher's role is shaped by particular cultural understandings of knowledge and authority. This study argues that the English-only approach enhances the teacher's powerful status and marginalises students.

Since "there are no relations of power without resistance" (Foucault 1980, p. 142), participating students responded to the power exercised by teachers through language choice and by resisting certain practices and classroom regimes. It was also found that the judicious utilisation of the Arabic language contributed to a more equal distribution of power in the Saudi English classroom. The students used Arabic to negotiate power with their teachers and, when they were not allowed to use Arabic, they were less engaged in and more resistant to the learning of English. Therefore, this research argues that the inclusion of the Arabic language in the Saudi EL classroom allows students to negotiate power with the teacher.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### 1.1 Background

Use of the learner's first language (L1) in the foreign language classroom is one of the most controversial issues in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). While some claim that L1 should be avoided in the L2 classroom in order to maximise exposure to L2, others believe that L1 plays a role in learning L2, at least in the brains of learners (Cook 2001), and argue that L1 should be treated as a source of knowledge that can be utilised to facilitate L2 learning.

From my experience in teaching English to different educational levels in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), I know that the Arabic language is actively discouraged in the English classroom and the use of Arabic can generate many questions around the linguistic competence of the teacher. Educators and supervisors of English believe that the use of Arabic reduces the target language input and consequently influences the students' proficiency in English. Al-Seghayer (2011), for instance, attributes Saudi students' weakness in the four English skills to the extensive use of Arabic by teachers during English language teaching. The purpose of the present study was to explore the roles, both positive and negative, that Arabic plays in the Saudi English language classroom.

Although the use of L1 in L2 classes has attracted the interest of many theorists and researchers in recent years, the issue has largely been investigated from a pedagogical perspective. While such investigation is crucial, this research explores the issue from a different angle. It is my belief that the prohibition of L1 in L2 classroom reflects the power dynamics that are deeply rooted in the educational environment in general and in the English classroom in particular. When English teachers are forced to avoid L1, regardless of what they believe, and they then prevent learners from using their mother tongue regardless of their English proficiency level, this implies more than mere pedagogic motivations. A central concern of this research was to reveal the power dynamics involved in the prohibition of L1 and to explore the role of L1 in empowering learners to share authority with the teacher.

Moreover, in the Saudi educational context, the teacher occupies a powerful cultural status that enables her/him to control the classroom. If we add the language

dimension to such a classroom, the typical English classroom in the Saudi context emerges as a site in which the teacher enjoys both managerial and linguistic authority while students lack such power resources. I argue that the ban on Arabic in the Saudi English classroom contributes to this powerful-powerless relation and that the judicious utilisation of Arabic contributes to the distribution of such authority and freedom of expression within the classroom.

The monolingual approach has been adopted in the Saudi context despite recent research demonstrating the benefits of the judicious use of L1 in L2 classes. This suggests that language policies and practices are not informed by pedagogical considerations alone, and that there is a need to explore the ideologies that underpin the continuation of the English-only policy. Yet, little research attention has been directed towards this issue. Lin (2013), for instance, urges researchers to look to critical paradigms in this context “as classroom code-switching involves not only cognitive processing but also identity/ideology reproduction (or transformation)” (p. 209).

In the present study, a qualitative methodological approach was adopted to address this gap. Data were collected through interviews with English teachers and focus groups with students. Classroom observations were also used to examine actual teaching practices, with particular focus on how the Arabic language was employed and how power was negotiated through language use in the classroom.

This chapter presents a brief discussion of my motivations for this study, articulates the research problem, states the research questions, explains the aims and significance of the study, and outlines the organisation of the thesis.

## **1.2 The Researcher’s Position**

As a Saudi English teacher, I used to avoid drawing upon the Arabic language in my English classes as a result of the instructions I had received during my teaching training. I had been taught that a good English teacher should use English only and that the use of Arabic would negatively affect the students’ performance. To explain new vocabulary, for example, I had been trained to use various teaching aids such as objects, pictures, body language, examples or synonyms; using Arabic to translate the meaning was seen as an inferior teaching practice. At that time, I had come to see the use of L1 as a crime that should not be committed in the L2 classroom, and I did not question this belief for a long

time. One day, one of my colleagues, whose first language was not Arabic, told me that she had to jump in front of her students to explain the meaning of the verb ‘jump’, and even then I did not ask myself about the efficiency of using Arabic in such situation. My colleague’s behaviour is not unusual; according to Cole (1998), “one can end up being a contortionist trying to explain the meaning of a language item where a simple translation would save time and anguish” (p. 12).

I cannot deny that the English-only approach gave me considerable power both inside and outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, I was able to control students and minimise their noise by simply telling them to use English only; outside the classroom, that approach was seen as a positive attribute and a sign of a well-qualified and obedient English teacher. The instructions I received during my training were so powerful that I did not question or ignore them.

Despite the feelings of satisfaction that came with my perception that I was doing the right thing, I also experienced feelings of guilt when I insisted on using English only because the majority of my students were relatively powerless and incapable of expressing themselves or asking questions about the lesson due to their low proficiency in English, fear of the target language, or hesitation to begin. My thinking began to take a turn when I was teaching students of medicine, who could be described as advanced learners of English. They asked me on different occasions to translate new words into Arabic, not because they were unable to understand in English, but because Arabic provided them with feelings of comfort and certainty. These personal and professional experiences led me to reflect on these issues from an insider’s point of view.

I conducted this study in my place of work, the English Language Centre at the Future University (a pseudonym) in the KSA. I worked as a language instructor and a coordinator, so I had a good relationship with the staff. This familiarity with the research site had many advantages, as well as some challenges, which I discuss in Chapter 4.

### **1.3 The Research Problem**

Research on the roles of L1 conducted in KSA and in other EFL contexts (see Chapter 3) indicates a contradiction between informal Saudi English language policy, which implicitly prohibits the use of L1 in the English classroom, and actual practice, which involves the judicious use or over-use of L1 by both teachers and students.

Further, the description of the English language classroom in the KSA (see Chapter 2) suggests that there are clearly unequal power relations between teacher and students. This situation is sustained by the English-only approach and the highly authoritative position of the teacher. These two factors contribute to the relatively powerless status of learners. This study sought to explore the relationship between these factors and expose the associated problems and contradictions.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Research**

The main aims of this investigation were to: re-examine the assumptions that underpin the English-only policy and practices in KSA, which contradict contemporary research evidence; explore language choice as a power practice in the Saudi English classroom; identify any tensions, contradictions or resistance practices that occur in this context; draw the attention of decision-makers in the KSA to the positive functions of L1 in the EFL classroom; and make recommendations to improve the teaching of EFL in the contemporary Saudi context based on the latest research.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The primary research questions were:

1. What language ideologies underpin the perceptions of teachers and university students regarding the use of Arabic in the Saudi tertiary EL classroom?
2. How is power exercised through language choice in the Saudi tertiary EL classrooms?
3. What role/s does Arabic play in the Saudi tertiary EL classrooms?

### **1.6 Significance of the Research**

The findings will make a number of valuable contributions. First, only limited research has been conducted on the use of L1 in the Middle East in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular, so the findings will make an important empirical contribution. Second, power relationships dominate the education sector in Saudi Arabia as well as many other education contexts. To date, however, research on the prohibition of L1 in L2 classrooms in the Saudi context has been conducted from pedagogical or pragmatic perspectives; remarkably little attention has been paid to the role of L1 in distributing power in the classroom. This study will help to fill this important knowledge gap. Third, by addressing

the contradiction between Saudi education policy, which implicitly opposes L1 in the English classroom, and the actual practices of teachers who are native and non-native speakers of English, the findings are expected to inspire English teachers, researchers, educators, and decision makers to improve current English teaching strategies in Saudi Arabia.

In addition, the study was not informed by a single theory. My understanding of this issue was shaped by various theoretical perspectives. In particular, the work of Foucault (1977, 1980, 1982), Fairclough (1989) and Auerbach (1993) provided the theoretical tools that guided this investigation of the ways in which language, power and ideologies interacted in the English classroom. Forman's (2016) framework and Cook's research on L1 use (e.g. Cook 2001; Cook 1992) facilitated the exploration of the practical use of L1 and L2 in the English classroom. This novel combination of theoretical and practical frameworks generated new insights on the topic.

The research has also made an original methodological contribution. Most previous studies employed single research methods of data collection. Here, various methods were triangulated to develop a comprehensive, holistic analysis. Multiple sources of data were used, namely, interviews with teachers, focus groups with students and classroom observations. Unlike most previous studies, which focused on either teachers or students, this inquiry was therefore able to capture the perspectives of both. In addition, tertiary level students have previously been under-researched in the context of L1 in general, and female students have been neglected in most research conducted in Saudi Arabia. Hence the findings from the present investigation make a two-fold empirical contribution to the field and have the potential to empower female students and teachers by giving voice to their opinions and their concerns.

Finally, most previous studies have been conducted by researchers who are not involved in the language teaching process, so they lack an insider perspective. In contrast, as a result of my deep involvement in the research setting, I shared the participating teachers' understandings of the teaching context and the language policy.

## **1.7 Thesis Structure**

This chapter has introduced the research topic, its background and motivations, and outlined the research problem, aims, questions, and significance of the study.

Chapter 2 elaborates the research context. It explains how English teaching was promoted in the KSA, explains the socio-economic context of the introduction of English language teaching (ELT), and describes the characteristics of ELT in the Saudi educational system in general and in the tertiary education sector in particular. It discusses critiques of the Saudi language policy in higher education, describes the English classroom in KSA and how the Saudi Ministry of Education managed resistance to the introduction of ELT. The chapter also briefly examines power relations in the Saudi educational context.

Chapter 3 presents the conceptual framework that informed the researcher's understanding of the issues and the analysis of the data. The theories of Foucault (1977, 1980) and Fairclough (1989) were central in developing an understanding of the ways in which language, power and ideology are intertwined in the English classroom. The chapter also discusses the debate around monolingual and bilingual teaching and the importance of approaching L1 use from a critical perspective. Literature around classroom practices and teachers' and students' attitudes to the use of L1 is reviewed.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed account of the research methodology. It begins by re-stating the research questions and explains how each question was addressed. Then I discuss my role as an insider researcher and its methodological implications. The choice of a qualitative case study design is explained and justified. The research site and participants are described. Each of the data collection methods (interviews, focus groups and observations) is discussed in detail, and the process of data analysis is documented. The chapter concludes by considering issues associated with language, limitations of the study, and ethical implications.

The findings and discussion are presented in Chapters 5 - 8. Each chapter addresses one of the research questions. In Chapter 5, participants' perceptions of the use of Arabic in Saudi EFL classes are examined to reveal the language ideologies that influence beliefs and values about the roles of English and Arabic in the Saudi EFL context. Language policy and its implications are also discussed.

Chapter 6 examines how power is exerted in the Saudi EFL classroom through language use and various normalised teaching practices. This chapter illustrates the disciplinary strategies adopted by the participant teachers to keep students under control. It also shows how the English-only approach contributes to sustaining teachers' power

and constraining students' participation. Chapter 7 addresses the resistance strategies that accompanied the imposition of the English-only policy. Verbal and nonverbal forms of resistance are discussed. The findings presented in these two chapters provide answers to the second research question. The thematic analysis of the data relevant to this question generated too many themes to present in one chapter.

Chapter 8 explores the cognitive, affective, and pedagogical roles of Arabic (Forman 2016) in Saudi EFL classes and the impact of these roles on power practices. It shows how the use of students' L1 contributes to power sharing by allowing more roles for students.

Chapter 9 summarises the key findings and discusses the research limitations, implications, and contribution. It also presents recommendations for future research and practice in the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia and in EFL in general.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Research Context**

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#### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter 1 introduced the topic of this research, namely, the use of the Arabic language in Saudi tertiary EFL classrooms and its influence on power dynamics, and stated the research problem, questions, aims, and significance of the study. The chapter also explained my relationship to the research topic and how my personal and professional experiences encouraged me to explore this crucial issue.

This background chapter contextualises the study at the macro and micro levels. It begins with a brief overview of the history, geography and demographics of KSA. Second, the economic circumstances that accompanied the promotion of English language teaching in the KSA are explained. Then, the position of English in the Saudi education system in general and in the tertiary education level in particular is discussed. This is followed by an examination of the micro context of this research, the Saudi English classroom. Then, I discuss the resistance that emerged to ELT and how it was managed by Saudi educational policy. Finally, the power relations that dominate the Saudi English classroom are discussed in relation to its traditional origins.

#### **2.2 Overview**

Following the expansion of the British Empire after the Second World War, English gained a significant position (Almulhim 2014). As the result of a range of political, economic, scientific and industrial factors, which are discussed below, English spread widely throughout the world, including Middle Eastern countries. In the KAS, the English language currently enjoys considerable status and performs multiple functions. As the only foreign language taught in Saudi schools, it has become the medium of not only international communication but also of technological and scientific development; therefore, Saudi stakeholders have shown a great deal of interest in English language programs (Al-Seghayer 2014a).

The Arabian Peninsula, including Saudi Arabia (see Figure 2.1), witnessed significant changes between 1950 and 1970 (Almulhim 2014). Saudi Arabia was created as a kingdom in the central part of the Arabian Peninsula in 1932 under the rule of King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud; some other Arabic Gulf countries, such as the United Arab

Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain, gained political independence in 1971 (Aldera 2017; Almulhim 2014). Saudi Arabia has a population of 30 million, with Saudi citizens accounting for around 18 million. They share the Arabic language as their mother tongue and Islam as their religion, so Saudi society is largely homogeneous, with few cultural differences between the different areas of the country (Aldera 2017). The rest of the population, 12 million, comprises a mix of Arabic, African, and Asian nationals with a variety of cultural backgrounds.

This suggests a linguistic diversity in KSA; that is, Arabic language is the official language of the country, and in addition to its multiple dialects, there are other languages such as Urdu, Hindi, and English, spoken by a large migrant population living in the KSA as well as by international visitors who visit the country for performing religious rites such as Umra and Hajj. Describing the linguistic landscape of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman), Selvi & Yazan (2017) state

While Arabic is the dominant actor in the cultural and linguistic landscape of the GCC region, it is not the only actor. Other languages such as Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Tagalog, and Swahili, among others, create an additive value to the linguistic repertoire of the people living in the region and contribute to the establishment of a multilingual and multicultural GCC region (p. 72).

With regard to English language in the Gulf, it functions as a lingua franca among different nationalities and between Arabs and expatriates who came from former English colonies such as Pakistan and India where English acts as a second language (Weber 2011). This suggests that a range of varieties and dialects of English are spoken by those users.



Figure 2.1 Map of the Arabian Peninsula.

Source: (Almulhim 2014, p. 4)

The teaching of English in the KSA was introduced by the Saudi government.

Unlike other countries in the region, Saudi Arabia has never been under the control of a European power and, in specific terms, it has never been endured as a residual of colonization or a heritage of missionaries. Rather it was the Saudi government that undertook the initial steps to introduce English to its own people (Al-Seghayer 2011, p. 7).

Initially, ELT was introduced into the KSA to enable Saudi people to communicate with the outside world (Al-Seghayer 2011), but its importance subsequently increased and it gradually became an integral part of Saudi society and its educational system. This is explained in the following section.

### 2.3 The Promotion of ELT in the KSA

English language teaching has been part of the Saudi education system since the establishment of the modern Saudi school. Particular economic circumstances paved the way for its promotion.

### **2.3.1 Economic Factors**

Many scholars claim that the economic value of English was responsible for encouraging the promotion of ELT in the KSA. The use of English was limited to educational institutions as a subject taught in schools and universities until the oil boom era of the 1970s (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996). Its integration into the Saudi economy and society, it has been argued, was the result of the strong relationship between Saudi Arabia and the USA, which had an obvious interest in the kingdom's huge oil resources (Faruk 2013). Almulhim (2014) summarises the economic significance of the geographical location of the Arabian Peninsula:

Throughout history, the Arabian Peninsula has been one of the most important strategic areas for trade, as it is located in a region where business and commerce pass through different continents, especially the three straits: Hormuz, located between Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; Bab el-Mandeb, between the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea; and the Suez Canal, between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. This strategic location acquired greater importance after the discovery of oil. As a result, traditional maritime movements increased, and this part of the world became a target for investment (p. 5).

After the discovery of oil in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia in the 1940s, American and British investors were invited by King Abdul-Aziz to undertake explorations (Almulhim 2014). During that period, the KSA witnessed an influx of foreign labour due to the shortage of a local workforce in various professions (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996; Almulhim 2014). English functioned as a lingua franca among these workers. Thus, the growth in English teaching proceeded in parallel with the growth of an economy that demanded manpower, company employees, and technical experts in different government and industrial sectors (Al-Seghayer 2014a). The development of the oil industry increased the importance of learning English for Saudi citizens in order to communicate with expatriates inside and outside the country (Al-Seghayer 2011). In this context, it is necessary to mention the role of ARAMCO (Arabian-American Oil Company), which dominates the Saudi economy. This company is mainly run by American experts and workers who need to communicate with Saudi citizens, so English language instruction has been promoted locally (Faruk 2013; Mahboob & Elyas 2014).

As a result of the success of the oil industry, the country became financially able to embark on infrastructure development programs, and large projects in electricity, water, education, health, transportation, telecommunications and social welfare were established in the 1970s. This developmental stage necessitated the import of more manpower from all over the world and, since English was the lingua franca, English training became a requirement for Saudis (Al-Seghayer 2011).

The importance of English language teaching (ELT) increased, and English came to play a role in business (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996; Mahboob 2013). Saudi banks and large Saudi companies, such as Samarec, Dallah and Saudi Airlines, emphasised proficiency in English for employment. To improve their employees' level of English, these companies established their own language centres to provide them with English language training (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996). In this atmosphere, "English was widely becoming identified as a powerful tool in facilitating the region's course to modernization" (Karmani 2005b, p. 92). This was accompanied by "the rapid expansion of a western-oriented ELT industry in the education sector, an influx of western technologies, and wide spread infiltration of English in public and private institutions" (Fussell 2011, p. 27). The following section explains how English was introduced into the Saudi education system.

### **2.3.2 ELT in the Saudi Educational System**

These economic factors led Saudi policy makers to recognise the importance of introducing ELT into the educational system. It is difficult to be certain of the exact date, but most researchers agree that English entered the Saudi education system in the 1920s following the establishment of the Directorate of Education (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996; Al-Seghayer 2011; Almulhim 2014). English was gradually integrated into the system thereafter.

The teaching of English began with the establishment of the first Saudi public elementary school in 1924, but it was discontinued at this level because of concerns about its possible impact on students' identities. It was introduced at the intermediate level in 1943 (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996). In 1960, English was extended to the secondary level, with weekly contact hours varying from four to eight (Al-Seghayer 2011; Javid, Farooq & Gulzar 2012). In 2005, English again became a mandatory subject in elementary schools (Al-Seghayer 2011). English is currently the only foreign language

taught at primary, intermediate and secondary schools as a core subject. It is not unusual today to find Saudi private schools that teach English from grade one, something that is a fairly recent innovation (Mullick 2013). As well, most Saudi cities nowadays have private international schools for children of non-Arab nationalities, in which English is the medium of instruction (EMI).

Al-Seghayer (2011) provides a concise answer to the question, ‘Why did English become a part of Saudi society in general and of the educational system in particular?’ (p. 7). He suggests that it serves the following functions:

- empowering Saudis to communicate with the influx of foreign specialists and with the outside world;
- preparing a labour force that can efficiently fill both government positions and those created by ARAMCO;
- enabling Saudis to successfully interact with the large number of non-Arabic-speaking Muslims who visit the country to perform the religious rites of Umrah and Hajj;
- qualifying Saudis to effectively conduct business, commerce and diplomatic affairs with other countries

### **2.3.3 ELT in Saudi Tertiary Education**

Recognition of the importance of English was not limited to the school domain. English also came to be seen as essential in public and private tertiary education. In 1945, English was introduced in the Scholarship Preparation School, which was established in 1936 to prepare Saudi citizens going abroad, primarily to the USA and Britain (Al-Seghayer 2011; Mahboob & Elyas 2014). A year later, English became a required subject in the first higher education institution, which had been established in 1925 to prepare elementary school graduates to become teachers in a five-year program (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996). In 1949, the first college, Islamic Law College, was established and English was taught as a required subject throughout the four year course.

Today ELT is an essential component of the higher education sector. All Saudi universities have English language departments that prepare qualified Saudi citizens to work as English teachers, translators and religious proselytisers. The first Saudi English department was established in 1957 in King Saud University (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi

1996). Most universities have established their own English language centres and translation institutions. As well, university students majoring in subjects other than English are required to study two compulsory EFL courses. English is also the medium of instruction (EMI) in some newly established private universities and in medical, scientific, engineering and technological departments in most public universities (Al-Seghayer 2011), while humanities majors learn in Arabic. Two leading Saudi universities use EMI exclusively: King Fahad Petroleum and Mineral University (KFPMU) and King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996; Al-Seghayer 2011).

More recently, most Saudi universities have established a mandatory preparatory year program (PYP) for freshman students that “aims to empower students with the language and life skills in order for them to excel in their chosen discipline” (Mullick 2013, p. 38). These programs provide intensive English courses (between 12 and 15 hours a week) for all freshman students, even those who intend to specialise in religious or Arabic studies. During this program, the informal policy is to use English only and prohibit the use of Arabic, which is the mother tongue of Saudi students, regardless of students’ English proficiency level. Thus, the English-only approach is implicitly encouraged by the language policy despite a substantial body of recent research which demonstrates that L1 is used and preferred by both English teachers and students (e.g. Atkinson 1987; Auerbach 1993; Butzkamm 2003; Nation 2003). This indicates a contradiction between English language policies and the actual practice in English classrooms.

This research was conducted in the Future University, a newly created university in the western region of the KSA. Like other Saudi universities, it provides a PYP and uses EMI in its medical, scientific and technological colleges. It has established its own English language Centre, which serves the whole university by providing English courses and staff. This Centre adopts the EOA and imposes its use on teachers and students.

### **2.3.4 Critiques of Language Policy**

This informal Saudi language policy has been criticised by many researchers and professionals. Jenkins (2010), for instance, criticises monolingualism in homogeneous EFL contexts such as the KSA, describing it as “an uncongenial policy”. He argues against the banning of L1 in EFL classrooms, particularly with low-proficiency learners,

suggesting that preventing them from using their mother tongue during English classes is like asking them to leave their identities and cultures outside the classroom. According to Khresheh (2012) and Machaal (2012), the EOA could be useful in ESL contexts but not in EFL contexts. Machaal (2012) disagrees with Saudi policy makers who encourage the English-only policy at college level on the grounds that it does not work with low-proficiency learners. He believes that the current language policies in KSA should be re-examined and the grammar-translation method, which includes some useful ideas, should be reconsidered. He also notes that the ban on Arabic negatively affects communication and interaction in classrooms. Both Khresheh (2012) and Machaal (2012) claim that using L1 depends on the teaching context, which should be considered when deciding whether to include or exclude L1. Mullick (2013) argues that:

In this context, English . . . is not the medium of instruction at most, if not at all, universities. . . so the compulsion of a year of English is or can be, oppressive for some students' (p. 38).

The use of Arabic with preparatory year students would seem necessary since, in EFL contexts, students generally have vastly different levels of English proficiency (Jenkins 2010; Machaal 2012).

In the broader Arabic context, Hamdallah (1999) asserts that most learners of English in Arab countries are incapable of using L2 only and, if English classes are conducted in L2 only, this might demotivate language learning since both teachers and learners would produce child-like talk. He therefore suggests a judicious use of L1 to enhance students' motivation to learn English. Elmetwally (2012) highlights the importance of carefully selecting the appropriate teaching method for each context. According to Hamdallah (1999), the avoidance of L1 in EFL contexts is unrealistic. He is critical of the avoidance of the Arabic language in English classes in Arabic countries, arguing that a judicious amount of Arabic is necessary on psychological and motivational grounds. "A fundamental cause of the failure of English-only methods", Weschler (1997) proposes, "is their misapplication in learning situations where they do not belong" (p. 93). Althobaiti (2017) reviewed the literature on L1 use in L2 classrooms and concluded that EOA could be useful in ESL contexts where students speak different first languages, but in EFL contexts where all students, and sometimes teachers, share the same first language, using L1 could support and facilitate the learning of L2.

Al-Mahrooqi & Denman (2015) argue that the dominance of EMI in private and public universities in Arab countries presents cultural challenges for students, teachers and policy makers due to the incompatibility between Arabic religious culture and western culture. Hopkyns (2015) explored the increasing centrality of EMI in the higher education sector of the Arabian Gulf countries and found that students in these countries experience the shift from Arabic-medium secondary schools to English-medium universities as a challenge for learning English, especially when this language has no use in their everyday life.

The following section provides a detailed description of the contemporary Saudi classroom.

### **2.3.5 The English Classroom in the KAS**

Some general characteristics of English classrooms in the KSA are important for understanding the micro-level context of this research. First, the Saudi English classroom is mostly teacher-centred - the teacher dominates class activities and controls students' participation (Ahmad 2014; Al-Seghayer 2011, 2014b; Elyas & Picard 2010). Fareh (2010) found that teacher-centred teaching dominates Arabic EFL classrooms. Teachers reduce students' speaking opportunities by doing most of the talking during class time; this practice helps teachers to maintain discipline because students are not allowed to talk or interact with one another. He adds that this method of teaching is not effective because it marginalises both weak and advanced learners and does not meet their different needs. Similarly, Al-Seghayer (2011) indicates that this Saudi teaching style, which relies mainly on the teacher, neglects the students' role in English classes.

Al-Seghayer's (2011) comprehensive description of the English classroom in Saudi Arabia indicates that it is mainly a traditional teacher-centred classroom in which the teacher acts as "knowledge-provider", "material-presenter", and "content demonstrator", and the students' role is described as giving "parrot-like repetitions" (p. 57). Students receive and assimilate the knowledge that the teacher provides and limit themselves to the textbook. In such an environment, the focus is on the transmission of knowledge by the teacher rather on the creation of communicative situations in which students can apply the content they have been taught. Therefore, the interaction between teacher and students in English classrooms is very limited (Al-Seghayer 2014b).

Elyas & Picard (2010) provide a similar description of the Saudi English classroom, but they go further by linking the current English teaching practices with those in traditional religious education. They describe Saudi English teaching as “ceremonial-like” since the teacher acts like a preacher and students play a “statue-like” secondary role as listeners and receivers of knowledge (p. 137). According to Al-Hazmi (2006), ‘language teaching in the Arab world is dominated by a traditional, top-down, textbook-oriented, teacher-led methodology’ (p. 38).

Second, the Saudi EFL classroom is characterised by its adherence to other traditional language-teaching methods (Ahmad 2014). The audio-lingual method is the main teaching method used, though not all components of this method are applied, especially in regard to the use of language laboratories. The grammar translation method is also used but to a lesser extent (Al-Seghayer 2011, 2014b). These methodological choices neglect oral fluency and rely on the memorisation of grammatical rules (Al-Seghayer 2011).

Moreover, according to Al-Seghayer (2014b), English classrooms in the KSA are large, lack adequate teaching resources and authentic materials, and the time allocated for teaching English is limited (four 45-minute periods weekly). He reports that Saudi teachers rely mainly on the textbook and blackboard. Some teachers try to design their own teaching aids, which requires time and effort, and some others read the listening texts to their students. Because they are expected to cover the whole textbook within a particular time, their ultimate goal is to finish the book material at the expense of effective language teaching (*ibid*).

These discouraging features might contribute to students’ relatively low motivation towards English learning. Fareh (2010) found that Arabic learners in general are not sufficiently motivated and tend to behave passively due to the traditional teacher-centred environment of English classes. They mostly consider English as a useless compulsory subject, which is studied only to pass examinations (Al-Seghayer 2014b). Khan (2011) reports that some Saudi students feel incompetent and incapable of learning English. A study by Al-Zahrani (2008) also showed that many Saudi students at secondary level feel fearful about learning English and find it difficult, indicating that if it were their choice, they would not study English.

## 2.4 Resistance to ELT in KSA

As reported earlier, English was introduced into the Saudi educational system more than 80 years ago to accelerate the country's integration into the capitalist world system and enhance the political and economic growth of the state. However, language is never neutral, and "English is deeply embedded in a set of social, cultural, political and economic relations" (Pennycook 2001, p. 158). Therefore, the promotion of English in the KSA was not straightforward; rather, there was resistance to the position occupied by English in Saudi society and its education system, and English was associated with imperialistic purposes. When ELT was first introduced by the government, it was resisted by parts of Saudi society (Elyas & Picard 2010; Faruk 2014a; Faruk 2014b; Mullick 2013) due to concerns about its possible cultural and social impacts. Elyas & Picard (2010) argue that "throughout the early history of education in Saudi Arabia, there was a general reluctance to teach English or any other foreign languages" (p. 139).

Saudi society is heavily influenced by religious scholars who not only influence ordinary citizens but also play a powerful role in the state, to the extent that they can shape and direct its policy (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996). Saudi religious ideology fears that "more English" would lead to "less Islam" (Elyas & Picard 2010, p. 141) and views English as an evil language of infidels (Albrashi 2003, cited in Elyas & Picard 2010). Therefore, it fights the use of English and warns people against learning it (Elyas 2008).

There is an antithetical body at the other end of the podium that would like English minimized and some who would like it totally abolished. They are sceptical about . . . teaching English, believing it may surpass the national language, Arabic (Mullick 2013, p. 38).

Resistance to ELT in the region still persists, and concerns continue to be raised about the cultural and linguistic consequences of the growing global role of English. Some Muslim scholars and Saudi English teachers are sceptical about recent teaching methods, such as the communicative language approach, which includes the teaching of authentic English texts. They believe that these texts have harmful effects on Muslim identity (Elyas & Picard 2010).

English has also achieved a presence in Saudi media. The Saudi English Channel started in 1982, and a number of Saudi English newspapers are published, including the

Saudi Gazette and Riyadh Daily (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996). English plays a role in the daily life and entertainment of Saudi youth as it is the language of satellite TV, radio, video games and hip hop. Further, it has contributed to the modernisation process that the KSA has experienced (Elyas 2008). Zughoul (2003) identified the status of English in Saudi society as a factor in the imposition of the American cultural model on Arab youth. Hopkyns (2015) argues:

At this point in time, there is no region where attention to the growing disparity between English as a global language and cultural identity is more pressing than in the Arabian Gulf ... This is especially true given the dramatic spread of English in the sphere of education and everyday life in recent years (p. 8).

The prominence of English in Saudi society has led Mullick (2013) to argue that English in the KAS occupies the status of a second language rather than a foreign language due to its pervasiveness in the national mass media and its communicative use among millions of expatriates working in the country. Al-Seghayer (2011), however, argues that this is something of an exaggeration. Having written extensively about the status of English in KSA, he believes that its current status is that of a foreign language despite the growing interest in it among stakeholders:

[T]he country's political stance , if it could be termed so, does not recognize English as the second official language in Saudi Arabia due to the fact that it does not fulfil certain functions that are necessary for international communication and does not have any special administrative status in the country's society (p. 10).

Therefore, the claim that English occupies second language status in Saudi society is arguable. The presence of 12 million foreigners who use English as a lingua franca does not mean that English is the second language of the other 18 million in the population. However, the promotion of English over Arabic in higher education, as indicated earlier, is seen as a genuine threat to the future of Arabic in this sector. Ahmed (2011) argues:

The imported education and rampant spread of, and emphasis on, English, accompanied by a relatively American pop culture, is beginning to sideline Arabic resulting in the linguistic and cultural loss of those who identify with it (p. 120).

Said (2011) goes even further:

Some quarters are claiming that the Arabic language is at the beginning of its death and will soon have no speakers, if English continues to be promoted over Arabic, in the media, through domestic South Asian maids and nannies, and in the education system (p. 179).

#### **2.4.1 Official Response to the Ideology of Resistance**

As a reaction to these concerns, the Saudi Ministry of Education has attempted to address the ideological opposition to learning and teaching English. English educators and curriculum designers have been careful to formulate the objectives of teaching English and to design Saudi English textbooks to make them compatible with the general religious attitude of the society. In this context, the Saudi Ministry of Education attaches considerable significance to English, and the objectives of the ELT curriculum incorporate practical, spiritual and political elements (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996). Faruk (2014b) divides these objectives into ‘national’ and ‘transnational’. The national objectives focus on the local economic, religious and social aims of learning English. Transnational objectives address global demands such as enabling interaction between the KSA and English-speaking countries. From 1982 to 2012, Saudi English textbooks were designed to meet the national objectives, which sought to achieve Saudi citizens’ acceptance of teaching English. Therefore, they contained only national cultural elements. In contrast, given the Saudis’ changing attitudes towards English, textbooks published after 2012 include western cultural elements in order to meet the transnational objectives (Faruk 2014b, 2015).

Faruk (2013, 2014c) argues that the Saudi English Language Education Policy (SELEP) was specifically developed to gain acceptance of the use of English and to persuade Saudi citizens of the neutrality and practicality of English. The SELEP, he suggests, was designed to perform three functions: to push the KSA towards the centre of the world system at the state level; to provide jobs and education at the individual level; and to spread Islam around the world at the religious level. By adding a religious value to English, he argues, the SELEP could persuade opponents of English to accept it. For instance, one of the objectives of teaching English is “to enable the pupil to . . . defend Islam against adverse criticism and to participate in the dissemination of Islamic culture” (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi 1996, p. 461).

Elyas & Picard (2010) note that SELEP encouraged religious acceptance of English by employing the Hadith (saying of Prophet Mohammed), “He whoever learns other people’s language will be secured from their cunning” (Elyas & Picard 2010, p. 141). This religious deployment of English shifts the position of the language from a threat to a responsibility. This was demonstrated in a study by Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi (1996) which found that religious people believe that learning English is a religious duty since it is a tool to spread Islam and communicate with non-Arab Muslims. Seargeant (2008) attributes the motivation for learning a language to how the language is conceptualised by the learner and to the learner’s expectations. He also points out that ideologies are subject to change and are never fixed. Blommaert (1999) indicates that once a certain language ideology is embraced, it generally results in normalisation, a “hegemonic pattern in which the ideological claims are perceived as ‘normal’ ways of thinking and acting” (pp. 10-1). Blommaert’s notion of ideological hegemony can be used to analyse the process through which English has been constructed as a “purely pragmatic” tool to accomplish economic, educational, and religious goals (Faruk 2013, p. 79). The case of English in Saudi Arabia illustrates Bourdieu’s (1991) notion of an ideology becoming a non-ideology through normalisation and its hegemonic construction as essential and unavoidable (Faruk 2014c).

The Saudi Ministry of Education has also gone to great lengths to Saudi-ise or Islamise Saudi English textbooks by isolating English from its western cultural context and presenting Islamic or national topics, such as Ramadan and Hajj, instead. According to Faruk (2014b, 2015), Saudi English textbooks from 1982 to 2012 were designed to meet national objectives while responding to local resistance to English. These textbooks, therefore, included only Saudi or Islamic elements and excluded any reference to western culture.

Consequently, a positive attitude towards English language use has developed in Saudi society. In the study by Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi (1996), although the participants were religiously-committed individuals, they showed a very positive attitude towards English, regarding it as an instrument that had religious functions, such as spreading Islam, and non-religious functions, such as pursuing higher education abroad. The participants did not indicate that they viewed English as linguistically or culturally superior to Arabic or that it threatened the status of Arabic in the KSA. The findings encouraged the authors to suggest the religious dimension be employed to enhance

students' motivations and positive attitudes towards English. Several surveys among university students (Al-Jarf 2008; Elyas 2008; Hagler 2014) and secondary school students (Al-Zahrani 2008) reported increasingly positive attitudes towards English.

In an important study, Faruk (2014c) reviewed the findings of relevant research from the 1990s and 2000s. He found that the majority of studies conducted in the 1990s revealed low levels of motivation to learn English and high preference for Arabic as the medium of instruction. Studies conducted in the 2000s, in contrast, showed increasingly positive attitudes towards learning English. The author attributes this change in the attitudes of Saudi students to two main factors: the growing Saudi economy and the SELEP, which achieved considerable success in convincing Saudi citizens to view learning English as a national and religious responsibility. Although he acknowledges that Saudi students do not represent the whole society, he interprets their positive attitudes as reflecting a broader trend in Saudi society that will continue to prevail under these economic and policy influences. Faruk (2014b) links these changes in the national attitude to the fact that Saudi English textbooks designed after 2012 have replaced local religious topics with authentic western cultural elements.

## **2.5 Power Relations in the Saudi Educational Context**

“The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia . . . is a monarchy with a political system rooted in Islamic Shari’a Law” (Basalamah & Elyas 2014, p. 2). Authority is deeply embedded in Saudi society due to the Islamic emphasis on obedience to God, the Prophet and officials.

Power relationships play a pivotal role in Saudi Arabian society and are heavily influenced by the Islamic milieu that governs the country. Obedience to authority is emphasized and this can be seen in the Quran where it is stated, ‘Obey Allah and his prophet and those in authority’. (Mullick 2013, p. 39)

According to Basalamah & Elyas (2014), “despite Saudi Arabia’s recent affluence, the influence of Bedouin traditional practices and Islamic religious attitudes continue to be a guiding force in most contemporary Saudi lives” (p. 2). Thus, hierarchical power relations permeate Saudi society, and these relations impact on the educational sector.

Prokop (2003) argues that the whole education system in KSA, including its development processes, structural apparatus and teaching content, is constrained by

concern to preserve the religious principles of the country. The learning process, institutional structures and teacher-student relationships are governed by Islamic principles (Basalamah & Elyas 2014). At all levels of education in Saudi Arabia, “obedience to authority is emphasized in Saudi textbooks as an important duty of the citizen: ‘Obey Allah and his Prophet and those with authority’” (Prokop 2003, p. 79). As a result, the teacher occupies a high status in the classroom and exerts full authority over students’ conduct and beliefs.

The respect for the teacher results from his/ her role as a source and a conduit of ‘knowledge’. In the Islamic roots of Saudi education, the teacher's identity and status are based on Qur'anic concepts in which the description of ulama' (scholars, literally 'the knowledgeable') and ahl al'ilm (literally 'those who have knowledge) highlights their divinity and allots them a hierarchal position above the rest of the believers. 'Knowledge', from this perspective, is almost always associated with the scholar or teacher rather than being a neutral entity to be pursued by the student (Basalamah & Elyas 2014, p. 4).

Muslims usually perceive teachers as an embodiment of Prophet Mohammed, the teacher of morals and values (Elyas & Picard 2010). Because Prophet Mohammed is the second religious authority after God, they believe that the teacher is legitimately the absolute authority in the classroom due to her/his knowledge: “not only is the teacher the source of knowledge, but he is above all the imposing figure of moral authority and discipline” (Elyas & Basalamah 2012, p. 1535).

Knowledge has a sacred position in Islamic belief in that the acquisition of knowledge is one of the religious duties of a Muslim. This association between knowledge and religion is part and parcel of the history of Saudi education and has a considerable impact on power relations in the classroom setting (Basalamah & Elyas 2014). In their discussion of English education in the KSA, Elyas & Picard (2010) argue that “the teacher or lecturer, the conveyer of knowledge is imbued with both ideological and spiritual power” since all students have been taught the Arabic proverb, “He who taught me a letter became my master” (p. 138). This proverb is not only commonly written on the walls of Saudi schools, but is also usually quoted by parents to their children to emphasise the significant role of teachers (*ibid*). The authors suggest that this proverb implies rules of conduct for the classroom, namely, that the teacher conveys knowledge,

and students obey and quietly listen to such knowledge. Thus, the teacher has absolute authority in the class and interaction with students is limited, especially in traditional classrooms where teachers play the dominant role, as indicated above.

Power relations in the Saudi classroom, however, do not stem entirely from the traditional sacred position of the teacher, but also from the traditional learning setting. In the past, teaching in Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries was based on the *halagah*. “The *halagah*, a word which in Arabic originally means ring, is a place, usually at the mosque, where students sit in a semicircular shape around their *imam* or instructor” (Basalamah & Elyas 2014, p. 5). In this setting, there is very limited interaction between the imam and the learners. The students are expected to listen attentively and receive the knowledge transmitted by the teacher. The physical structure of the *halagah* made it easy for the teacher to have all students under continuous observation. He was able to practise surveillance and maintain direct eye contact with students, who were not allowed to interrupt or ask questions while the teacher was speaking. “[The *halagah*] demonstrates how the disciplinary power technologies in the Foucauldian sense had been part and parcel of education in this part of the world even before the adoption of the western classroom setting as a model” (Basalamah & Elyas 2014, p. 5).

Elyas & Picard (2010) argue that current teaching practices are influenced by these early Saudi religious educational practices. Prokop (2003) states that the Saudi teaching philosophy, especially in religious subjects, sustains power relations in the classroom because it relies on rote learning, repetition of lessons, and the use of complex language which is hard for students to comprehend: “This philosophy of teaching inculcates passivity, dependence, and a prior respect for authority and an unquestioning attitude” (p. 80). Consequently, students lack critical thinking, interaction between teacher and students is limited, and discussion does not exist since the religious sources of knowledge cannot be questioned (*ibid*). This description of the Saudi classroom is reminiscent of Paulo Freire’s (1970) notion of the banking concept of education:

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat (p. 72).

Freire (1970) indicates how knowledge plays a central role in the practice of power:

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students . . . accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence (p. 72).

The adoption of this banking concept of education in the Saudi English classroom is clearly evidenced in the teacher-centred approach to teaching and the powerful position of the teacher, which is culturally rooted in the teacher's and students' belief system. Therefore, it is unlikely that teachers would be willing to relinquish their absolute authority in the classroom in favour of a student-centred pedagogy (Elyas & Picard 2010).

Moreover, it seems that English teachers themselves are subject to a higher power. According to Elyas & Picard (2010), English teachers, like other teachers in the Saudi education system, are subject to a strict hierarchy in which the educational system, language practices and pedagogy are framed by a national identity. The authors exemplify this hierarchy by describing the system in a Saudi university where English instructors work. The dean occupies the top of the hierarchy. He passes communications to the head of the department, then to the English committee, and the information finally reaches the instructor, who transmits it to the students in accordance with departmental policy. This hierarchical structure is based on the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education (see Figure 2.2).

## National identity

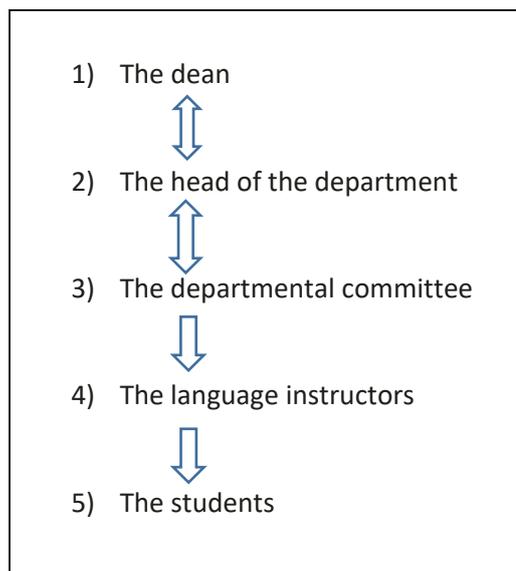


Figure 2.2. The institutional pedagogies practised at universities in KSA (Elyas & Picard 2010, p. 140).

Therefore, it can be concluded that English teachers, whether in the higher education or general education sector, are not involved in language policy creation. This top-down policy is imposed on teachers and students alike.

The present study investigates these complex issues with a focus on the power dynamics in the Saudi EFL context, whereby the teacher is armed with professional power as a teacher and linguistic power as an English speaker. It considers how students in such an environment atmosphere respond to this overwhelming authority, especially when they are not allowed to use their mother tongue. This research explores these power relationships and practices through an examination of the use of L1 or L2 in the tertiary EFL classroom.

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the background for this research. It contextualised the study location through an account of the economic and social circumstances that legitimised the prestigious position of English in the Saudi education system. It described how English was promoted in both the general and higher education sectors, how it was initially resisted on ideological grounds, and how the Ministry of Education addressed this resistance to facilitate the inclusion of ELT in the Saudi educational system. The chapter

also shed light on the influence of early teaching practices on ELT in contemporary Saudi classrooms. These practices reinforce the teacher's powerful position and sustain and legitimise power relations and practices in the Saudi EFL classroom.

The next chapter discusses the main bodies of theory and research that informed the conceptual framework of the study.

## Chapter 3

### Conceptual Framework

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#### 3.1 Introduction

A conceptual framework functions as scaffolding for the researcher to understand the phenomenon under investigation and develop meanings from the research findings (Smyth 2004). The development of the theoretical foundation of the present study has gone through several stages. Initially, I was concerned with exploring the positive roles of L1 in L2 classrooms, so I reviewed a considerable number of studies in this field and found that most research over recent decades confirmed the positive role of L1 in teaching the English language. After reading widely in this area, I identified a number of questions: Why is the English-only Approach (EOA) still privileged in EFL contexts despite all this evidence that the use of L1 facilitates L2 learning? Why is the use of L1 discouraged and sometimes prohibited completely in EFL contexts? Why do English language educators and decision-makers ignore the results of these studies and act as if the EOA is the only method of English teaching?

I concluded that this situation was not driven by pedagogical considerations but was underpinned by ideological factors and hierarchical power relations. These critical issues were alluded to in some studies but most were concerned with presenting the positive role of L1 and the positive attitudes of teachers and students towards it. Although these studies have contributed to research in the field and demonstrated the value of the judicious use of L1, the persistence of the EOA in different contexts indicates the existence of a gap in the literature. I came to believe that the issue of L1 prohibition needed to be explored at a deeper level.

This chapter introduces the analytical frameworks that informed my analysis of the data and helped me to understand how power was exercised in the Saudi EFL classroom, as well as to identify the underlying ideologies that influence L1 prohibition. It also discusses a wide range of research studies that have been conducted on the use of L1 and L2 in different contexts. While these studies demonstrated that L1 is a legitimate area of study in ELT, they offered a broader understanding of what happens in authentic language classroom settings and helped me to identify the gap in knowledge that became the focus of this study, namely, the pedagogical aspects of including/excluding L1 from

L2 classrooms and the role of the underlying ideologies that drive attitudes and actual teaching practices.

### **3.2 Analytical Frameworks**

My stance when conducting this qualitative research was informed by several theoretical perspectives and one practical framework. First, my understanding of power relations in the Saudi English classroom has been influenced by Foucault's (1977, 1980) analysis of power, which helped me to understand the data at a deep level. In addressing the issue of L1 and L2 in the Saudi English classroom, I drew on Foucault's understanding of how power is exercised through disciplinary pedagogical practices, such as the way the classroom is organised and the way teachers move in the classroom. Other useful notions from Foucault's analysis of power included how power can be productive, and how power and knowledge are relevant. To understand how students negotiate power with a teacher, I used Foucault's analysis of resistance as a reaction to power practices. Hence, I view power as relational, negotiable, productive and not always coercive (Foucault 1977, 1980).

Second, in order to explain how power was negotiated through language in the Saudi English classroom and to explore participants' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in the EFL classroom from an ideological perspective, I drew on Fairclough (1989). This thesis rests on the belief that the use of the EOA involves the exercise of power over students and is driven by ideological assumptions. Therefore, Fairclough's notions of power in discourse and behind discourse were highly relevant. This framework helped me to understand the ongoing debate around monolingual and bilingual teaching.

A number of scholars have explored the inclusion of L1 in L2 classrooms from a variety of pedagogical perspectives. For example, Cook's (2001) work on bilingual learners and their multi competence disproved the pedagogical assumptions adopted by monolingual approach advocates. On the other hand, Auerbach (1993) and other scholars investigated this issue from a critical perspective and encouraged researchers and English teachers to examine the ideological motivations behind the continuity of the EOA. These pedagogical and critical stances expanded my understanding of the prohibition of the Arabic language in the Saudi EFL classroom. While these main bodies of literature informed me at a highly theoretical level, Forman's (2016) framework helped me to

examine how L1 and L2 are used in classrooms by providing a practical framework to categorise the different roles of L1 in the classroom.

Thus, the conduct of this research and the analysis of the data were influenced by a combination of sources that enabled me to develop a holistic understanding of the prohibition of Arabic in the Saudi EFL classroom and which directed the research in the direction of power and ideology rather than a narrow focus on the pedagogical aspects alone.

### **3.2.1 Power Relations**

The mainstream understanding of power defines it simply in terms of coercive physical actions performed by powerful agents or groups against less powerful individuals. Foucault's analysis of power, however, draws attention to the invisible exercise of authority and resistance. Foucault's (1977) conceptualisation of power includes its various disciplinary strategies, such as spatial arrangements, examinations and punishments, which have been adopted by modern social institutions such as schools, hospitals and factories. He argues that these strategies have resulted in more regularity and order for modern societies; however, they represent the invisible exercise of power because they involve exposing individuals to constant observation. Foucault also emphasises how knowledge accompanies the exercise of power, a notion that was relevant to understanding how some teachers in this research relied on the use of the English language to oppress students. He also indicates that power is not owned by certain groups or individuals, but can be exercised by powerless people when they resist the power exerted over them. These Foucauldian notions guided my analysis of most aspects of power practices in the Saudi English classroom, such as the way classrooms are organised and the teachers' procedures of observing, examining and punishing students.

#### *3.2.1.1 Disciplinary power*

Foucault (1977) makes clear the distinction between traditional and modern power in terms of visibility and invisibility:

Traditionally, power was what was seen, what was shown and what was manifested and, paradoxically, found the principle of its force in the movement by which it deployed that force. Those on whom it was exercised could remain in the shade; they received light only from that portion of power that was conceded

to them, or from the reflection of it that for a moment they carried (Foucault 1977, p. 187).

While traditional power is practised overtly and its effects are more easily observed, the objects of this power are kept ‘in the shade’; they cannot be seen unless some light is shed on them by the powerful individual. In contrast, disciplinary power in our modern age

is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection (Foucault 1977, p. 187).

The potency of disciplinary power lies in its invisibility, which is achieved in a paradoxical manner by exposing its subjects to a great deal of visibility. Foucault’s (1977, 1980) analysis of the panopticon indicates how power is exercised invisibly through the use of spatial arrangements. A panopticon refers to a prison designed in the form of a ring with a watchtower in the middle from which the prison guard can observe all prisoners in their cells without being seen by them. Each prisoner’s cell is separated from those of other prisoners and, while all cells are visible to the guard to allow continuous surveillance, individuals cannot tell when they are being observed, so they consciously observe themselves and their behaviour, which must accord with the prison rules (Foucault 1977, 1980). Foucault perceives the spatial disposition of individuals as a strategy of disciplinary power that aims to expose them to maximum visibility. Foucault (1980) indicates how economically efficient the panoptic surveillance is:

The system of surveillance ... involves very little expense. There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself ... it is indeed the case that the gaze has had great importance among the techniques of power developed in the modern era, but, as I have said, it is far from being the only or even the principal system employed (p. 155).

This disciplinary gaze has replaced the coercive aspects of traditional power, and the modern practice of power relies on the observing gaze that not only controls the subjects, but also makes them practise self-surveillance.

When the concept of panoptic surveillance is applied to educational institutions such as schools and universities, it can be argued that classroom settings function in a similar way to panopticons, since students are assigned to particular places facing the teacher's desk and they are exposed to the full surveillance and gaze of the teacher. From her/his position, the teacher can observe the behaviour of all students. For Foucault (1977), "a relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching" (p. 176) and "it is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection" (p. 187). Oral (2013) found that surveillance was accomplished by the teacher's behaviour and by the organisation of classroom space. In other words, students were observed by the teacher, who was either walking around or standing at the back, while they were not permitted to move from their spaces or communicate with each other.

Foucault's notion of disciplinary power provides a strong analytical framework for this research to clarify how power is sometimes practised nonverbally by teachers through a variety of pedagogical practices in EFL classrooms.

### *3.2.1.2 Productive power*

Power is not a straightforward concept; as mentioned earlier it can be exercised in different ways and for a variety of purposes. The above-mentioned strategies of disciplinary power, such as the gaze and spatial arrangements, have influenced social institutions in a positive way by creating self-regulation and order. For Foucault, power is not always exercised to oppress; he argues that, after the development of modern societies, it became in most cases productive because it positively influenced and shaped people's values and behaviours (Bălan 2010; Ford 2003; Mills 2003; Schirato, Danaher & Webb 2012). In this regard, Foucault claims:

We must overcome the idea that power is oppression, because – even in their most radical form – oppressive measures are not just repression and censorship, but they are also productive, causing new behaviours to emerge (Bălan 2010, p. 56).

Foucault challenges the “repressive hypothesis” that conceptualises power as “curtailing freedom and constraining individuals”, and wonders, if power were merely oppressive, would anyone obey it? (Mills 2003, p. 36). Foucault (1977) examines the disciplinary practices of modern institutions that have resulted in the self-regulation of individuals:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (p. 194).

Foucault challenges the traditional concept of power that links its exercise to negative actions such as exclusion, repression and concealment, and proposes that power in modern societies has positive effects, such as creating new identities for individuals and producing new forms of knowledge.

In this research, the productivity aspect of power is obvious. The disciplinary pedagogical practices of some teachers, however, kept students in their powerless position and legitimised teachers’ exercise of power over them.

### *3.2.1.3 Power and knowledge*

Foucault (1980) discusses the link between the exercise of power and forms of knowledge, arguing that power can only be made sense of through its connection to forms of knowledge and discursive practices (Schirato, Danaher & Webb 2012). As he explains:

The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power ... Knowledge and power are integrated with one another ... It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power (Foucault 1980, p. 52).

This link between power and knowledge was also addressed by Freire (1970). In his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he explains how teacher’s knowledge acts as the main component of power relationships in the classroom. He argues that the teacher-student relationship involves a contradiction as the teacher acts as a knower who

possesses the knowledge lacked by the ignorant students. The teacher owns both knowledge and professional authority. Therefore, the teacher, as the subject of the learning process, has the ability to discipline, decide and choose for students, the objects of the process. Freire also claims that teaching is a narrative process in which the teacher narrates the content that is mechanically memorised by the students, who are thereby rendered as 'containers' to be filled with such content. He describes education as a 'banking' process in which the teacher deposits the knowledge in students' minds. This process prevents students from being creative or critical thinkers; he therefore proposes liberating education and solving the contradiction involved in the teacher-student relationship by enabling students to exchange power with the teacher by engaging them in critical consciousness and problem-solving. Freire's philosophy and methodology have been influential in the literature that addresses power and authority in education.

The strong relationship between power and knowledge addressed by Foucault and Freire is apparent in this research because the insistence on the use of the EOA gives more power to teachers. That is, English language constitutes a form of knowledge that teachers possess but most students lack. Therefore, I argue that the EOA sustains traditional power relations in the EFL classroom.

#### *3.2.1.4 Power and resistance*

Foucault's analysis not only challenges the traditional understanding of power but also perceives individuals as active subjects in the process of exercising power. He criticises the conventional conceptualisations of power as: a) the ability of the powerful to achieve their will over the wills of less powerful people; b) the capacity of people in power to force the powerless to behave in accordance with their desires; and c) a possession contested by both powerful and powerless individuals (Mills 2003). He seeks to move thinking about power beyond this limited understanding. For Foucault (1980), power is a relation rather than a possession:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of

simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power ... In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application (p. 98).

This implies two characteristics of power: first, power is realised as “a system of relations spread throughout the society rather than simply as a set of relations between the oppressed and the oppressor”; and second, individuals should not be perceived as merely objects of power, but as the place where power is performed and resisted (Mills 2003, p. 35). As Schirato, Danaher & Webb (2012), drawing on Foucault, have observed:

Such relations of power are not set in stone. Power can flow very quickly from one point or area to another, depending on changing alliances and circumstances; power is mobile and contingent (p. 50).

In order to clarify this feature of power, Schirato, Danaher & Webb (2012) cite Foucault’s description of what happens in factories. Factory managers can exercise disciplinary power to shape the conduct of workers in order to increase their production by means of surveillance and spatial distribution. Since power is “mobile and contingent” and because “the power itself exists beyond their possession or control” (p. 50), the managers themselves might be subjected to similar disciplinary practices exercised by their organisation.

In Foucault’s understanding, individuals play an essential role in power circulation even when they are oppressed by power. According to Mills (2003), Foucault’s conceptualisation of power encourages us to rethink not only the notion of power itself, but also the roles of individuals in those power relations, which can be either passive (recipient of oppression) or active (playing a role in the strategy of power). Therefore, power relations should not be reduced to simplified dualisms of powerful–powerless or oppressor–oppressed but should be perceived as productive, since any practice of power is associated with resistance (Bălan 2010). Thus, Foucault is less interested in the oppressive function of power and more concerned with how power relations are resisted (Mills 2003). For Foucault, resistance is central to power relations, and any relation of power can be resisted (Schirato, Danaher & Webb 2012). Foucault (1980) perceives human individuals as active subjects, not as simple objects of power:

There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power

are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies (p. 142).

The literature on power relations in the classroom suggests that it is not only the teacher who practises power; students also have their own ways of exercising power. Oral (2013) adopted a Foucauldian analysis of power to investigate how power is negotiated and resisted in the EFL context using critical discourse analysis as a tool of interpretation. The findings confirm the pervasiveness of power in the foreign language classroom, where the teacher, in a contradiction of learner-centred principles, exercised a great deal of power in order to control, restrict and impose certain behavioural practices on students. However, the students negotiated power by challenging the classroom's regime and constraints and by doing what suited their needs. As well be seen, in the present context, students expressed their resistance by using their mother tongue as a way of exercising power over the teacher who did not speak the same language. In another study, Perumal (2008) found that students verbally expressed their resistance to the content and strategies of collaborative work and sometimes employed silence as a nonverbal way of expressing their resistance. In response to such resistance, their teachers reclaimed their authority. Perumal (2008) argues that teachers should therefore use their authority consciously instead of trying to liberate their classrooms from power.

Foucault's understanding of resistance enabled me to understand the different forms of student resistance in Saudi English classrooms as negotiations of power with their teachers. It allowed me to derive positive interpretations of students' silence, challenges, ignorance and rejections or teachers' authoritative practices.

### **3.2.2 Language, Power and Ideologies**

While Foucault's framework gave me a broad understanding of how power can be exercised in classrooms through different pedagogical practices, Fairclough, the leading theorist in language and power, provided some important supplementary tools. Fairclough's (1989) analytical framework guided me to examine how power can be practised through language and how particular beliefs around language influence teaching practices. Fairclough (1989) perceives language as "a form of social practice" which he calls discourse. Language in this sense is a "part of society, a social process" that is

determined by “other non-linguistic parts of society” (p. 22). Every discursive interaction is conditioned by the participants’ social constraints, such as their attitudes, perceptions of the world, everyday experiences, and expectations about their positions in society. Fairclough’s (1989) work is essential to my study as it provided the analytical tools for understanding the relationship between language and power. Although I adopt a critical approach in examining how languages are used, I do not apply Fairclough’s well-known critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework. Rather, I am concerned with how language ideologies influence the issue of including/excluding L1 from EFL classrooms. Therefore, Fairclough’s notion of *power behind discourse* and *power in discourse* are most relevant.

Fairclough (1989) makes a distinction between power “in” discourse and power “behind” discourse. In relation to the former, he defines discourse as ‘a place where relations of power are actually exercised and enacted’ (p. 43). For example, power in discourse can be manifested in “face-to-face spoken discourse” in which “powerful participants control [...] and constrain [...] the contributions of non-powerful participants” (p. 46). Fairclough distinguishes between three types of constraints: constraints on the discourse content; constraints on the social relations between the participants involved in the discourse; and constraints on the subject positions occupied by participants during the discourse. In illustration, he uses a discursive interaction between a doctor and a medical student, where the more powerful participant, the doctor, might constrain the student’s contribution by drawing on the conventions of a discourse type that gives the doctor the right to interrupt, give orders and ask questions, while the student’s position only allows him to answer questions and obey orders, acting in a “subordinate relation of student to doctor” (p. 46).

To explain *power behind discourse*, Fairclough (1989) refers to the indirect influence of power on “the whole social order of discourse” (p. 55). In this context, constraints are exercised by powerful participants through selection of the types of discourse and discourse conventions that will apply not only to the powerless participants but also to the powerful ones. The power behind discourse conventions is exercised at various levels. These conventions are imposed by institutional power-holders on all the participants. That is, powerless participants are forced to comply with “the policing of conventions” by powerful participants, who are in turn forced to abide by these

conventions by “those higher in the institutional hierarchy through procedures for disciplining people” (Fairclough 1989, p. 61).

For Fairclough (1989), there is an indirect and hidden relationship between discourse type and social structure. That is, discourse type is determined by social relations, and at the same time it reproduces these relations in society. In any social institution, discourse plays a mediating role to reproduce social class. For example, the teacher–student relationship and the social positions of teachers and students are overtly reproduced in an educational discourse type which covertly reproduces social class relations; this is what he calls the “hidden agendas” of education (p. 40). This relationship between discourse and power relations is so indirect and hidden that the participants in everyday life discourses legitimise or delegitimise certain power relations without being aware of what they are doing. Fairclough indicates that people in their daily conventional routines naturalise hierarchical power relations by occupying particular subject positions, which could be powerful or powerless positions, and they mostly do so unconsciously. The discourse types of any classroom determine the social roles for teachers and students. The teacher becomes a teacher by occupying the subject position of a teacher; that is, by doing particular actions that are in accordance with the conventional discourse type of the classroom. Similarly, by being a student, certain things are allowed to be done, and other things are not allowed, depending on the discourse type.

So this is a case where social structure, in the particular form of discourse conventions, determines discourse. But it is also the case that in occupying particular subject positions, teachers and pupils reproduce them; it is only through being occupied that these positions continue to be a part of social structure. So discourse in turn determines and reproduces social structure (Fairclough 1989, p. 38).

Thus, for Fairclough, power relations are reproduced in educational contexts through a conventional discourse that sustains the power relationship between teacher and students. Such a discourse allows teachers to maintain their powerful position and to determine students as less powerful. Fairclough’s method of discourse analysis is relevant to this research as the Saudi EFL teachers I observed perceived their own roles and their students’ roles in ways that maintained power relationships in their classrooms.

There are strong arguments for examining the exclusion of L1 from L2 classrooms from an ideological perspective rather than a pedagogical one (Auerbach 1993). Therefore, Fairclough's analysis of how power relations can be sustained by certain language ideologies is useful for analysing teachers' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in the Saudi EFL classroom. Fairclough (1989) argues that "conventions routinely drawn upon in discourse embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere 'common sense', and which contribute to sustaining existing power relations" (p. 77). For Fairclough (1989), power is manifested in the language use of powerful individuals in society such as doctors, teachers and interviewers. In different situational interactions, certain lexicons, patterns and orders of discourse are imposed by those powerful individuals on the powerless (patients, students and interviewees). These imposed aspects are naturalised to become 'common sense', thus sustaining the ideology of the powerful in society.

Invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background assumptions which on the one hand lead the text producer to 'textualize' the world in a particular way, and on the other hand lead the interpreter to interpret the text in a particular way (Fairclough 1989, p. 85)

In other words, certain ideological assumptions are linguistically presented as 'natural' or 'common sense', invisibly encouraging the listener or the reader to interpret the text in a way that aligns with the ideology of the text producer. Consequently, relationships of power are reproduced.

A dominant discourse is subject to a process of naturalization, in which it appears to lose its connection with particular ideologies and interests and become the common-sense practice of the institution (Fairclough 1989, p. 107).

Fairclough (1989) also states that "naturalization is a matter of degree, and the extent to which a discourse type is naturalized may change, in accordance with the shifting 'balance of forces' in social struggle" (pp. 91-2). He emphasises the relationship between naturalisation and ideological common sense, and asks:

So where do these diverse ideologies come from? Are they for instance generated at random by individuals? They come rather from differences in position, experience and interests between social groupings, which enter into relationship (... ideological conflict) with each other in terms of power (p. 88).

He also indicates that ideological struggle is a form of social struggle that usually takes place not only in language but also over language. In other words, an ideological struggle might be present in a language text, or the language itself could be the object of this ideological struggle. This concept is highly relevant to this research into how the exclusion of the Arabic language is driven by different ideological perspectives adopted by decision makers, teachers and students. The next section explores this notion of struggle over language.

#### *3.2.2.1 The monolingual ideology*

The language ideology literature is also useful in the present context. It provides a critical perspective by unveiling the underlying ideologies that legitimise monolingual teaching, which relies exclusively on the use of the target language and purposefully avoids the use of the learners' first language. Monolingualism refers to "the ability to use only one language" (Wardhaugh 2006, p. 96) and, until recently, the common assumption by many ELT scholars has been that the most effective way to teach a new language is to adopt the monolingual teaching approach and avoid use of learners' first language (Auerbach 1993; Forman 2016; Hall & Cook 2012). It is important to trace the history of this approach in order to identify the circumstances that contributed to its legitimisation and domination in the field of ELT.

The monolingual approach emerged as a replacement for the grammar translation method, which involved the extensive use of L1 to teach the target language. This method dominated language teaching from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Forman 2016). The shortcomings of this approach paved the way for various reform methods to emerge in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Direct Approach (Forman 2016; Mahboob & Lin 2016). The monolingual approach has been perceived in the West as "the unique contribution" of 20<sup>th</sup> century language teaching (Howatt 1984, cited in (Forman 2016, p. 27). Auerbach (1993) links the prevalence of these monolingual approaches to major political events during that

period, in particular the massive immigration waves to the US after World War I, which led to the Americanisation Movement as a reaction to increased immigration.

Mahboob & Lin (2016) argue that the negative attitude towards the use of L1 came as a result of the context in which ELT theories were developed. They trace the historical development of ELT that led to the deliberate omission of L1 in teaching L2. These alternative EOA methods, they indicate, were developed in inner-circle countries such as the US and UK, where the teachers and teacher trainers were native speakers of English, and where educators not only developed teaching methods, but also published textbooks for trainee teachers from all over the world. The role of L1 was completely ignored in these approaches and textbooks. Over time, the negative attitude towards the use of L1 increased, and teachers who applied L1 in their teaching were perceived as “traditional and backwards” for not adopting “progressive and modern” teaching approaches (Mahboob & Lin 2016, p. 28).

Although the methods and textbooks of the monolingual approach were originally designed for the particular contexts of these inner-circle countries, they later spread to outer and expanding circle countries where teachers and learners may share the same L1 (Mahboob & Lin 2016). For example, Weschler (1997) tracked the history of the EOA in Japan and found that it came to replace the grammar-translation method because Japanese university freshmen were not able to speak English adequately even after studying English for six years at school. Since those students were taught using the grammar-translation method, it was erroneously concluded that such a method did not work. Translation or any use of a mother tongue was consequently avoided, and the EOA was perceived as the solution. According to Weschler (1997), “a misdiagnosis of the initial problem has led to a prescription of untested medicine” (p. 88).

An examination of the monolingual approach’s underlying assumptions helps to explain its persistence.

### *Underlying assumptions*

The monolingual approach has been criticised by a number of scholars who argue for a re-examination of the marginalisation of L1. The underlying assumptions of this approach have been examined from socio-political perspectives (e.g. Auerbach 1993, 1995; Canagarajah 1999; Forman 2016; Phillipson 1992; Weschler 1997) and pedagogical

perspectives (Butzkamm 2003; Cook 2001; Cook 1992; Hall & Cook 2012; Kerr 2015; Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins 2011). Each perspective has contributed to understanding why the issue of excluding L1 from L2 classroom is still debated.

### *Socio-political perspectives*

The socio-political circumstances surrounding the exclusion of L1 from English language classrooms have been examined in recent decades by a number of linguists, who have questioned the language ideologies that reinforce the persistence of monolingual teaching around the world. Auerbach (1995), for example, argues that although the issue of including or excluding L1 has been discussed in pedagogical terms, it is in fact an ideological issue. Auerbach (1993) invites English teachers and researchers to re-examine their daily teaching practices and explore the hidden ideological roots of such practices. Drawing on Fairclough's notion of power through consent, or covert ideological power, Auerbach (1993) argues that the EOA "is rooted in a particular ideological perspective, rests on unexamined assumptions, and serves to reinforce inequities in the broader social order" (p. 9). She believes that the EOA, which has been naturalised as a common-sense practice in the ELT mainstream, represents what Fairclough calls ideological power: "There seems to be an all-or-nothing view" that the grammar translation method should be replaced by "the complete exclusion of the L1" (p. 15).

Reflecting on her 1993 article, Auerbach (2016) argues that the "ideology behind English only is even more deeply entrenched" (p. 936). She draws on Derald Wing Sue's (2010) concept of microaggressions to suggest:

The power of microaggressions lies in their invisibility to the perpetrator, who is unaware that he or she has engaged in a behaviour that threatens and demeans the recipient of such a communication. (Sue 2010, p. xvi, cited in Auerbach 2016, p. 937)

Auerbach (2016) then extends her own argument:

Enforcing English in ESL classrooms is an example of [Sue's] dynamic in that it devalues the linguistic resources and hence the identities of some language minority learners under the guise of "helping" them to learn English. (p. 937)

She cites a statement from a teacher on a teachers' blog:

The most apparent [benefits to having only English spoken in your ESL classroom] ... is the level of noise and chatter drops dramatically. All of a sudden, when students are required to use English, that hot topic they wanted to talk about doesn't seem so important. (Eric 2005, cited in Auerbach 2016, p. 938)

Auerbach (2016) describes this behaviour as micro aggressive. Similarly, Canagarajah (1999) criticises the EOA and describes it as "oppressive" (p. 125). In his influential book *Linguistic Imperialism*, Phillipson (1992) discusses "the monolingual fallacy" (p. 185), arguing that the imposition of monolingual teaching represents an authoritarian, linguistic and cultural superiority since it "legitimizes the ignoring of local languages and the cultural universe that these language mediate" (p. 254). Auerbach (1993, 1995) refers to the tension that might be created in the classroom by the use or non-use of L1. That is, while high-level learners may ask for more English-only use, low-level learners would request more L1 use. When a teacher, instead of traditionally deciding everything for students, poses such issues for discussion and decision among students, this constitutes a demonstration of power sharing in the classroom.

From the perspective of teaching English as a foreign language, Rivers (2011) problematizes the unquestioned institutional linguistic policies, asserting that institutional language policies in EFL contexts are driven by political motivations rather than pedagogical ones. He therefore encourages English language professionals to challenge the prescribed policies imposed by these powerful institutional systems by exploring the ideologies that inform those policies. Rivers (2011) draws on Fairclough's (1989) argument:

Institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations. Practices can often be shown to originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc, and to have become naturalized (p. 33).

It has also been argued that the EOA serves the interest of native English speaker teachers. According to Forman (2016), "we must consider whether 20<sup>th</sup> century monolingualism was just a truth of convenience to native speakers of English" (p. 27). Similarly, Butzkamm (2003) cites West's (1962) argument that the avoidance of learners'

mother tongue in language classrooms could be because the teacher does not know it:

The international dominance of English native speakers, who find absolution in the dogma of monolingualism when they cannot understand the language of their pupils, together with the cheaper mass production of strictly English-speaking textbooks in the Anglo-American mother country, constitutes one of the reasons behind the sanctification of, and the demand for, monolingualism in the classroom (Butzkamm 2003, p. 30).

Similarly, Ford (2009) and Weschler (1997) argue that the EOA was imposed because native speaker teachers could not speak the learners' first language. Ford (2009) cites a number of articles (e.g. Barker 2003; Cole 1998; Glick 2002) that discuss the value of English teachers developing their knowledge of the students' L1 in monolingual contexts. Weschler (1997) questions the imposition of the EOA:

Is it based on any cohesive theory or substantiated research? Or more likely, is it the result of blind acceptance of certain dogma, which conveniently serves the best interests of native-speaker teachers? (p. 87)

The adoption of the EOA in EFL contexts has been widely criticised. According to Auerbach (1995):

Adult ESL students need to learn English as quickly as possible for survival reasons; the more they are exposed to English, the more quickly they will learn; as they hear and use English, they will internalize it and begin to think in English; the only way they will learn it is if they are forced to use it (p. 25).

If this is the rationale for enforcing English-only in ESL context, what is the rationale for enforcing the EOA in EFL contexts? A number of linguists and researchers have indicated the inappropriateness of such an approach. Weschler (1997), for example, argues that "the assumption that the English-only, direct method can be applied equally well to any size and type of class and any level or content of language is simply false" (p. 92). In other words, the proponents of EOA have failed to recognise that learning English in an EFL context is not the same as learning it in an ESL context (Elmetwally 2012).

Forman (2016) argues that the monolingual approach, as a Western methodology, is not appropriate for EFL contexts because it is based on three invalid assumptions. First is the assumption that the teacher is a native speaker of English who has all the necessary linguistic abilities, which is not the case in EFL classrooms where the teacher is a non-native English speaker (NNES) with fewer linguistic abilities. Second, it assumes that the EFL learner's goal is to learn the language for encounters with native speakers; rather, some learners use the language as a lingua franca for national and international purposes. He adds that the monolingual approach ignores the facts that, in the EFL context, the teacher is bilingual and shares the same L1 with learners, and some communicative practices necessary for this approach may encounter obstacles in EFL classrooms, such as large classes, variations in curriculum, and local culture.

The literature identifies some important distinctions between learning English in EFL and ESL contexts. First, EFL learners are less exposed to English than ESL learners, whether inside or outside the classroom. Forman (2016) states that for ESL learners, English is the medium of instruction for all subjects, but for EFL learners it is just a school or university subject; the former group is exposed to a greater amount of English inside the classroom and has more opportunities to practise the language outside the classroom than the latter group. Learning English in countries like the US, UK, Australia or Canada, where “the language is necessary for everyday life” and where “English plays an important role in education, business, and government” (Richards & Schmidt 2002, p. 180), means that ESL learners would be abundantly exposed to the target language outside the classroom. EFL learners, in contrast, are less exposed to the target language, which is only learned formally in the classroom (Elmetwally 2012). Forman (2016) argues that ESL learners have “opportunities for rich exposure to linguistic and cultural experiences beyond the classroom”, but EFL learners have fewer opportunities; they may encounter English outside the classroom through the Internet or popular culture such as movies or music, but only advanced learners, he argues, can understand the English in these sources.

EFL contexts cannot usually provide anything like the range of possibilities for L2 use which are available in an English-speaking country – and this of course has been one of the traditional challenges in the teaching/learning of any foreign language (Forman 2016, p. 176).

Another distinction is that learners in ESL contexts come from all over the world and speak different mother tongues, so English would necessarily be the language of teaching and communication in the classroom (Elmetwally 2012). As Forman (2016) puts it, “In English-speaking countries, ideologies, methodologies, and the fact of mostly multilingual classes has led to an expectation that teaching will be monolingual in practice” (p. 176). EFL contexts, in contrast, imply “the use of English in a community where it is not the usual means of communication” (Abbott 2001, p. 476).

In addition, EFL learners are in general less motivated to learn English than ESL learners, since English is the language of the society for ESL learners, while for EFL learners it is just a compulsory subject (Ford 2009). Accordingly, Weschler (1997) argues that “the English-only ideology [which] is blindly hoisted” is not appropriate for EFL classrooms where large numbers of learners with low motivation and various levels of proficiency are toiling (p. 92). Forman (2016) states that while ESL learners perceive English as “a tool for survival in the new country”, EFL learners perceive “less value and relevance” in learning English, and this serves to “reduce students’ motivation to engage and succeed in their studies” (p. 174). He also argues that, although EFL learners are “disadvantaged compared to most ESL learners”, the use of learners’ L1 by the teacher “[offers] clear advantages to EFL learners over ESL learners” (p. 180).

### *Pedagogical perspectives*

The theoretical literature around the issue of L1 in L2 classrooms suggests that the adoption of monolingual teaching is based on a number of dubious premises. First, the proponents of this approach assume that the learning of L2 is identical to L1 acquisition (Cook 2001). In other words, the acquisition of L1 takes place without any other language means, so L2 learning should happen in the same way, that is, without relying on L1. Cook (2001) questions this comparison since L2 learners have more developed intellectual and social abilities than L1 learners. For Butzkamm (2003), conducting foreign language classes monolingually ignores the fact that learners’ existing world knowledge and linguistic skills can support them to learn any other language. He therefore advises language teachers to assist their students in their “self-scaffolding” by utilising their L1 instead of banishing L1 from the classroom. Weschler (1997) distinguishes the acquisition of L1 by children from the learning of L2 by adults. Children are more

accepting of making mistakes when learning L1 because they do not recognise them as mistakes, whereas adults are unwilling to risk making mistakes while learning L2 because they do not want to lose face.

The second assumption of the monolingual approach is that the bilingual mind has two distinct language systems rather than one compound system of two languages, so the acquisition of L2 should take place in isolation from L1 (Cook 2001). This assumption was reflected in 20<sup>th</sup> century vocabulary teaching methods, which relied on techniques such as giving definitions, miming and using pictures without any reference to L1. For (Cook 2001), this assumption is not valid:

Learning an L2 is not just the adding of rooms to your house by building an extension at the back: it is the rebuilding of all internal walls. Trying to put languages in separate compartments in the mind is doomed to failure since the compartments are connected in many ways (p. 407).

Another reason for adopting this separation strategy is fear of interference; that is, features of L1 may interfere with L2 learning (Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins 2011). For Butzkamm (2003), interference is an unavoidable phenomenon when learning a foreign language, but language teachers can reduce its impact. He argues that “interference is nothing other than knowledge or skills that we do not yet possess”, and asks, “What can the learner do other than use what he already knows to make up for what he does not know?” (p. 36). As a solution to the problem of interference, he suggests using L1 effectively instead of avoiding it by, for example, contrasting lexical or grammatical elements of L2 with the corresponding elements in L1. According to Kerr (2015), “Own language use encourages the false belief that there is a word-for-word equivalence between languages, and therefore leads to language interference problems” (p. 3). Therefore, he argues that contrastive analysis is a useful strategy for teachers to employ for teaching vocabulary or grammar.

The interference assumption has been analysed by Weschler (1997), who asserts that the proponents of the EOA have based their argument on the assumption that, in order to learn a language, learners need to directly think in that language and, if translation occurs, the direct thinking process will be interrupted. The assumption is that, just because children learn their first language directly, adults are supposed to do the same to learn a second language. Weschler (1997) refutes this assumption by looking at what happens in

reality. That is, in any language classroom, a learner uses, if not oral, then mental translation to process the new information; “suppressing this natural tendency only adds to the counterproductive tension already in the class and raises the affective filter of the student that much higher” (p. 91). He therefore suggests considering the unavoidable influence of L1 more positively as a facilitating tool and asks, “[O]nce having learned to think in one language, is it even possible to not think in that language?” (p. 89). Further, “[U]nless you can rephrase a statement in your own first language such that the essence of the meaning is maintained, you really don’t understand it” (p. 93).

The monolingual approach is also criticised for ignoring the fact that L1 is always there in L2 learners’ minds (Weschler 1997). Cook (2001) argues that “keeping the languages visibly separate in language teaching is contradicted by the invisible processes in students’ minds” (p. 408). According to Kerr (2015), opponents of L1 use argue that “[l]earners need to learn to think in English and own-language use discourages them from using it” (pp. 2-3). He counters this argument by proposing that it is possible to prevent students from speaking L1 in classroom, but it is not possible to prevent them from using it to think. Similarly, Butzkamm (2003) believes that it is impossible to remove L1 from the classroom due to the silent presence of L1 in learners’ minds, despite monolingual teaching. The “L1 is present in the L2 learners’ minds, whether the teacher wants it to be there or not” (p. 584). Similarly Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins (2011) argue that keeping the two languages separate in learners’ minds is unlikely to happen since “the bilingual brain does not store the two languages in separate boxes which are completely isolated from each other” (p. 4). Cook (1991) introduces the term multicompetence to refer to “the compound state of a mind with two grammars” (p.112). For a thorough discussion of this concept see Cook (1992).

Another assumption underpinning the monolingual approach is that L2 learners should be exposed to a maximum amount of L2 in order to achieve a higher proficiency level, so L1 use should be minimised (Cook 2001; Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins 2011). Cook (2001) does not deny the importance of providing as much L2 as possible for learners; nevertheless, achieving this goal does not necessarily mean avoiding the use of L1 since the systematic and judicious employment of L1 can support the learning and teaching processes. Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins (2011) argue that this assumption has been disproven by numerous studies that have demonstrated the positive effects of L1 in

scaffolding L2 learning. The authors also emphasise that contemporary students have access to a variety of internet resources for learning English, such as YouTube and blogs. Overall, Kerr (2015) asserts that he is “unaware of any research or published work of the last fifteen years that supports an English-only approach to English language learning or teaching” (p. 3) and argues that it is time to ask how or how often L1 is used rather than whether it is good or bad to use it. He points to a growing body of recent research showing that the English-only policy is not embraced by most teachers, who instead adopt a more practical approach towards the use of L1 that takes account of their teaching contexts and students’ needs. As a result of such practical understanding, they have replaced the English-only approach with an English-mainly approach.

### *3.2.2.2 The bilingual ideology*

These ideological and pedagogical critiques of the adoption of monolingual teaching led to the emergence of support for bilingual teaching. The use of L1 in the second/foreign language classroom has attracted the interest of many theorists in recent decades (e.g. Forman 2016; Hall & Cook 2012) and calls have been made to open the “door that has been firmly shut in language teaching for over 100 years, namely the systematic use of the first language (L1) in the classroom” (Cook 2001, p. 402). Auerbach (1993) argues that “when the native language is used, practitioners, researchers, and learners consistently report positive results” (p. 18). Some linguists (e.g. Butzkamm 2003; Cook 2001; Weschler 1997) have argued for the deliberate and systematic utilisation of L1.

Various cognitive and pedagogical functions of L1 in the L2 classroom have been acknowledged in the literature on ELT. For Butzkamm (2003), L1 is an excellent cognitive and pedagogical resource; he describes it as “the master key to foreign languages, the tool which gives us the fastest, surest, most precise, and most complete means of accessing a foreign language” (p. 31). Similarly, Cook (2001) proposes that “the first language can be a useful element in creating authentic L2 users rather than something to be shunned at all costs” (p. 402). Utilising L1 as a learning resource benefits not only teachers, who can apply it to teach vocabulary and grammar, but also students who can use it for individual and collaborative learning. Using L1 to maintain discipline in the classroom, he claims, gives students a sense of “serious threat rather than practice of imperative and conditional constructions” (p. 415). For Harbord (1992), L1 can be used

to demonstrate the natural interaction between L1 and L2. He argues that L1 should not be used to save teachers' time or to facilitate their job, but to enhance discussion and interaction in classroom. Althobaiti (2017) specifically recommends the use of Arabic in English classes in Saudi Arabia to teach vocabulary and grammar, especially with low-level learners. It is not logical, he argues, to separate the two languages in the classroom since learners are not expected to separate them in their minds.

The usefulness of L1 in teaching L2 new vocabulary has been emphasised in the ELT literature. Cook (2001) refers to the role of L1 in conveying the meanings of words or sentences, a role that is based on the link between L1 and L2 in learners' minds. He notes, however, that not all meanings can be conveyed by translation. Butzkamm (2003) believes that trying to convey meanings in monolingual teaching using different visual aids is sometimes counterproductive and can lead to misunderstanding:

‘Look at the sky, it's going to rain’ was a textbook sentence accompanied by a picture. Half the class understood ‘sky’ as the foreign language word for the dark cloud in the picture. This is how a misconception nests itself in the mind, especially as ‘cloud’ would also fit perfectly, if not better, in the original sentence. But as soon as the pupils want to make up their own sentences and use ‘sky when they mean ‘cloud’, all is lost. (p. 31)

Therefore, he argues that “for many phrases, only a clarification in the mother tongue can bring pupils to trust in a foreign language expression” (p. 13). Similarly, Nation (2003) believes that L1 translation is more effective in conveying the meaning of new vocabulary than definitions or pictures because L1 is more familiar and understood, so L1 should be treated as a teaching aid that is equally as useful as other methods. Questioning the suitability of the EOA for adult learners, Weschler (1997) points out that they need to be able to express abstract ideas; using pictures, gestures or commands to explain these concepts is not effective, translation provides access to these concepts. Kerr (2015) challenges the idea that translation “is less important than the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, and, in any case, is not a useful skill for most learners to acquire” (p. 2). Rather, he insists:

Formal translation of a traditional literary kind may well be of little benefit to most learners of English, but if translation is more loosely defined as mediation between two languages, its importance can hardly be overestimated (p. 3)

The use of L1 is also advantageous to save class time (Forman 2016). The opponents of its use in the classroom claim that it wastes the limited time that L2 classes have to spend on learning the target language (Kerr 2015; Weschler 1997). Weschler (1997) refutes this claim.

The most efficient use of that very limited time is to exploit those tools she will have most readily available, especially the mother tongue. One could even argue that the time and energy expended by teachers on trying to keep their students from speaking the L1 is time taken from these more worthwhile pursuits (p. 90).

Inclusivity is another benefit of using L1. This refers to its role in ensuring that all students are able to participate (Forman 2016, p. 95). Integrating L1 into ESL programs designed for beginners could re-engage students who were unable to participate in monolingual classes and dropped out because they felt overwhelmed (Auerbach (1993). Hamdallah (1999) asks, “[A]re beginners capable of learning L2 through L2 only?” (p. 289).

L1 can also be beneficial in monolingual classes (Atkinson 1987; Cole 1998). Cole (1998) believes that monolingual classes should be taught by fluent L1 speaking teachers. He acknowledges, however, the capabilities of non-fluent L1 speaking teachers in teaching high-level learners and advises these teachers to develop their knowledge in L1 and to use their students’ linguistic knowledge to enhance their L2 learning.

L1 also has the potential to increase knowledge required for higher level tasks, so teachers are advised to employ a small amount of L1 whenever they feel that a certain task is beyond their students’ abilities (Nation 2003). This view is supported by Auerbach (1993), who opposes the view that using L1 impedes the progress of L2. She cites a number of studies conducted in the ESL context which found that use of L1 at the beginning of a task facilitated L2 development by gradually transitioning students from L1 use to L2 use. Kerr (2015) argues that the use of L1 by students in monolingual classes can enhance the production of the target language by learners. He therefore encourages teachers to show some tolerance towards its use:

Preparation for speaking activities . . . is often more productive when own-language use is permitted. One way of managing this is to allow for . . . short bursts of own-language speaking designed to facilitate more extended production of English subsequently. ‘Own-language moments’ can also be introduced at any point in any class when students are tired, frustrated or stuck (Kerr 2015, p. 5)

Butzkamm (2003) argues that imposing the monolingual approach may have paradoxical effects on teachers and learners alike. Teachers with less proficiency in L2 might “succumb to the ease of conducting the class in the MT” due to the difficulty of conducting a class entirely in L2 (Butzkamm 2003, p. 36). For students, “pent-up frustration explodes” when their teacher uses the foreign language only (Butzkamm 2003, p. 36). According to Weschler (1997), supporters of the English-only approach view the L1 as a crutch that learners must discard as quickly as possible. He believes that such a view portrays learners as disabled, and suggests instead:

A better metaphor for the learning of a second language would be the construction of a glorious new edifice in the mind of the student, wherein the mother tongue acts as the necessary scaffolding to be gradually removed over time (p. 89).

In summary, English teaching methodology is criticised for neglecting the utilisation of L1 as a resource in the classroom. Such neglect is seen to be responsible for the discomfort experienced by teachers whenever they use L1 (Atkinson 1987; Cole 1998; Cook 2001; Kerr 2015) . Whenever L1 is mentioned, it is viewed as a problem or something that should be shunned or at least minimised. Hence the domination of the monolingual approach is responsible for pejorative terms such as ‘avoid’, ‘ban’ and ‘confess’ that have become associated with L1 use (Cook 2001).

### *3.2.2.3 English language ideologies and the position of Arabic in the KSA*

Researchers are encouraged to study languages from an ideological perspective, which extends the traditional applied linguistic research focus on language forms and functions to include the investigation of power relationships (Blommaert 1999). According to McGroarty (2010), all languages, human interactions, and language learning and teaching

situations, whether formal or informal, are subject to investigation and analysis from an ideological perspective.

Competing ideologies around English and Arabic languages exert an influence on the Saudi EFL classroom. The first ideology reflects Phillipson's (1992) notion of linguistic imperialism. Faruk (2014a), for example, points out that, although Arabic is explicitly identified as the official language of instruction at all educational levels in the language policy of the KSA, English is used as a medium of instruction in almost all scientific colleges in Saudi universities. This has increased concern about the status of Arabic among some scholars. A study of university students' attitudes regarding the status of Arabic and English Al-Jarf (2008) found that 96% of the participants believed English was superior to Arabic, citing educational, technological and social factors. They believed that Arabic should be used to teach religion, history and Arabic literature. Al-Jarf concluded that Arabic is facing a serious threat at the tertiary educational level. Discussing the status of English in the Arabian Gulf countries after the era of oil exploration, Randall & Samimi (2010) report that within a period of only 40 years, English has displaced Arabic as the lingua franca in various sectors of society.

Language ideologies are shaped by world events and become entrenched over time. After the events of 11 September 2001 in the USA, English has been allocated a new role: to fight terrorism. The educational systems in the Islamic world were accused of fostering hatred and intolerance towards the West, and considerable pressure was put on Muslim countries to reform their curricula (Prokop 2003). As a result, English was introduced at earlier stages of education, and more English classes were added at the tertiary level. Some Muslim linguists, such as Zughoul (2003), described this pressure as representing "a return of the imperialist neo-colonialist English medium education" (p. 123) and argued that the imperialistic and hegemonic nature of English threatened mother tongue languages. He called for the teaching of local languages to be strengthened to counter such threats. He also suggested links between the "sharp regression" in the status of the Arabic language, particularly in the higher education sector, and political events such as the Second Gulf War, September 11 and the American occupation of Iraq, the "true representative of Arabism and the use of Arabic" (p. 124). Likewise, Karmani (2005a) proposed that these educational consequences represent a form of linguistic imperialism, cultural alienation and de-Islamisation. In his article, 'English, Terror, and Islam', he refers to Glasser's (2003) observation that students in Qatar are "learning less

Islam and more English” as a result of American calls for reform of its educational system.

Other scholars challenge the notion of the hegemonic and imperialistic function of the English language and doubt its threat to the sacred spiritual position of the Arabic language in Arab countries. Elyas (2008), for instance, describes Karmani’s (2005a) argument as unscientific and questionable, as it has no empirical foundation. He does not deny that learners of a language are exposed to some cultural differences, but he claims that such exposure can be positively employed to stimulate mental activities, and he encourages students to look outside the box and express tolerance of different values and ideologies. He believes that language is flexible and can be shaped according to the user’s needs and circumstances. He does not think that English threatens Saudi identity; rather, he sees it is a tool for modernisation that is crucial for the future of the KSA.

Similarly, Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi (1996) argue that the spread of English in the KSA does not involve any political or economic dominance; rather, English is merely a neutral foreign language that is taught at schools and has instrumental functions. Their findings show that Arabic and English function in a complementary rather than competitive fashion. Onsmann (2012) points out that English as a lingua franca in higher education performs a specific function in a particular context and this is completely different from its previous function in the colonial era. He does not believe that the practical use of English today threatens local languages.

The existence of these contrasting views about the position of Arabic and English in the Saudi educational system highlights the importance of examining the issue from an ideological perspective in order to uncover the hidden assumptions that influence them. These competing ideologies are echoed in Saudi society and affect the use of English and Arabic in KSA classrooms. The adoption of EMI at tertiary level and the preference for EOA in Saudi language policy (see Chapter 2) suggest that the Arabic language has been marginalised and accorded lower status than English. As McGroarty (2010) argues, language practices are influenced by language ideologies, and such influences may not be immediately apparent but can be inferred from social actions and decisions. Thus, rules and regulations regarding Arabic and English contained in Saudi language policy are influenced by particular language ideologies that shape the beliefs and expectations around these languages.

### 3.3 Classroom Practices

The present study uses Forman’s (2016) framework to analyse L1 roles in EFL classrooms. Forman (2016) identifies various principles for the use of L1 in the EFL classroom. These principles are grouped into these categories: cognitive, affective, and pedagogic. Table 3.1 presents an overview of the framework.

Table 3.1 Analytical Framework of L1 Roles

Category	Principles	Use
Cognitive	L2 knowledge	Explain L2 vocabulary, grammar, usage, culture.
Affective	Solidarity Collaboration	Facilitate easy, ‘natural’ interaction in class. Develop team-work ability.
Pedagogic	Time-effectiveness Comprehensibility Inclusivity Contingency Class management	Make good use of limited classroom time. Ensure that meaning is conveyed successfully. Ensure that all students can participate. Respond to immediate teaching/learning needs. Maintain discipline.

Source: (Forman 2016, p. 99).

This framework was used to identify particular classroom practices in this research. As the analysis will show, however, not all these principles were represented in the results, and some others appeared to be interrelated.

Theoretical debate around monolingual and bilingual teaching led to the conduct of a number of research studies investigating the use of L1 in the English classroom over the past 25 years. These studies have been conducted in different contexts, including Thailand (e.g. Forman 2007; Thongwicht 2013), Korea (e.g. Macaro & Lee 2013), Sri Lanka (e.g. Canagarajah 1995), Japan (e.g. Ford 2009; McMillan & Rivers 2011), Iran (e.g. Bozorgian & Fallahpour 2015; Karimian & Mohammadi 2015; Sa’d & Qadermazi 2015; Tajgozari 2017; Yaqubi & Pouromid 2013), Mexico (e.g. Brooks-Lewis 2009), Greek (e.g. Neokleous 2017), Finland (e.g. Nikula 2007), Jordan (e.g. Halasa & Manaseer 2012), and Saudi Arabia (e.g. Al-balawi 2016; Al-nofaie 2010; Gulzar & Al Asmari 2014; Khresheh 2012; Machaal 2012). The studies have explored various functions of L1 and the attitudes of teachers and students towards its use, as discussed in the following sections.

### **3.3.1 Studies on the Use of Arabic in EFL Classrooms**

A few studies have been conducted in Arabic contexts to examine the different functions of Arabic in EFL classrooms. For instance, Halasa & Manaseer (2012) conducted an empirical study in a Jordanian university and concluded that the deliberate and systematic use of Arabic can enhance English language learning. They encouraged English teachers not to feel guilty or ashamed about using L1, which has been effectively linked with L2 in several teaching methods.

Several recent studies have investigated the use of Arabic in Saudi EFL classrooms. These have examined the positive roles played by Arabic and explored the attitudes of Saudi teachers and students towards its use in English classrooms. For example, Al-nofaie (2010) investigated the attitudes of Saudi teachers and students at a female intermediate school towards the role of Arabic as a facilitating tool in the English classroom. The findings showed positive attitudes from teachers and students towards the use of Arabic in certain situations and for specific purposes. There were some restrictions on its use in teaching, but these were contradicted by the over-use of Arabic by students during pair and group activities. The teachers were reluctant to accept students asking questions in Arabic, a finding that the researcher attributed to the fact that most Saudi teachers lack clear guidance on how Arabic should be effectively and systematically used in the English classroom. Al-nofaie (2010) also referred to the fact that Arabic was ignored in both the course books and the teachers' guidebooks.

Khresheh (2012) investigated the use of Arabic in the EFL classroom in the KSA using class observations and interviews with students and teachers. He found that Arabic was used as an eclectic technique in certain situations. For instance, teachers used Arabic to avoid making mistakes when they had to speak in English for a long time. This, he proposed, reflected the Arabic cultural norm that it is not acceptable for a teacher to make mistakes in front of students. Students resorted to Arabic whenever they failed to convey meaning in English due to their low proficiency level in the language. The study also showed that advanced level students used Arabic intentionally to express some cultural and religious concepts since they felt that English did not adequately express the concepts.

Al-balawi (2016) investigated the views of Saudi female secondary school teachers about the use of Arabic in EFL classrooms using a questionnaire and classroom observations. The results showed that the teachers held positive attitudes because they

used Arabic as a facilitating and pedagogical tool. The majority indicated that they used Arabic to teach grammar, to show the similarities and differences between the two languages, to explain new concepts, to teach new vocabulary, to control the class, and to give instructions. The findings also showed that using L1 could reduce students' stress. Gulzar & Al Asmari (2014) surveyed Saudi teachers' and students' perceptions towards code-switching in a university EFL classroom context. Both groups of participants expressed positive attitudes towards code-switching, identifying various functions such as clarification, giving instructions, emphasis, checking comprehension, repetition and translation. The researchers argued that code-switching is unavoidable and inevitable and recommended the use of code switching in TEFL in Saudi Arabia.

Storch & Aldosari (2010) studied the use of Arabic during pair work in a college EFL classroom. They found that the task type affected the amount of L1, that is, L1 was used more during text-editing tasks. In general, the amount of L1 was somewhat limited, and mostly occurred in low-low pairs. Thus, the study showed a relationship between English proficiency level and L1 use by learners. The modest use of L1 was interpreted by the researchers as a result of students' recognition that pair-work was a good opportunity to practise the target language. In this study, L1 served pedagogical, cognitive and social purposes since learners used Arabic for task management, vocabulary negotiation and private speech.

Another study by Machaal (2012) employed a mixed methods approach involving questionnaires, interviews and class observations. The findings suggested that Arabic played a mediating role in the English classroom, especially with beginning-level students. Observations showed that in English classrooms where Arabic was excluded, the teacher was the centre of the teaching process and students did not participate adequately. Despite such findings, the monolingual language policy is still encouraged in the KSA.

It should be noted that these studies explored the issue from a pedagogical perspective. To the best of my knowledge, the political dimensions of Arabic and English usage in the Saudi EFL classroom have not yet been investigated. Thus there is a gap in our understanding of how ideologies affect teaching practices. As well, these studies mainly focused on the advantages of using L1 with low-level learners. It is possible that

that L1 has different advantages for high-level learners. The present study addresses these gaps, among others.

The Saudi literature further suggests that there is a contradiction between policy and practice in the KSA. Most Saudi educators, course designers, and English language policy makers believe that the English language should be taught using English only, as the use of Arabic would reduce the target language input and the learner's exposure to English. The research studies reviewed above, however, indicate that Arabic is used in the English classroom and is viewed positively by both teachers and students. Therefore, there is a need to rethink the relationship between the two languages. Can it be collaborative rather than competitive? How can English and Arabic, as two languages representing two contrasting cultures, co-exist peacefully in the English classroom and can Arabic be positively employed to teach English? Can the learning of English affect the position of Arabic, which is deeply rooted in Arabian life and history? Can there be a shift in the language ideologies that underpin the relationship between English and Arabic?

My experience suggests that the prohibition of Arabic in the Saudi English classroom reflects implicit power dynamics. In other words, Saudi English teachers are forced by official English educators to avoid Arabic while teaching English regardless of what these teachers believe or what they find more useful. This power relationship is replicated in the English classroom where English only is used. In such a classroom, the teacher dominates the learning environment by using the power of the English language, but the majority of learners fail to participate appropriately and are sometimes marginalised by their inability to use their mother tongue. A substantial body of literature indicates that such an environment is not beneficial for most learners. Therefore, the present study aimed to better understand how the Arabic language can be effectively deployed to enhance English language learning in KSA English classrooms.

The following section reviews research on the use of L1 in other EFL and ESL contexts and discusses their implications for research in the ELT field.

### **3.3.2 Studies on other Languages**

A considerable number of studies have explored the pedagogical, cognitive and affective roles of different mother tongues in the English classroom (Forman 2016). Lameta-Tufuga (1994) found that students' discussion of a writing task in their L1 (Samoan)

enhanced their involvement in the task and increased their understanding of the ideas. Students' discussion also involved the use of some L2 vocabulary, which they could use in a later stage of the task. Adopting a sociocultural framework, Storch & Wigglesworth (2003) found that ESL students were reluctant to use their shared L1; however, the minimal use of L1 by students functioned as a mediating tool that served four cognitive functions: task management, task clarification, explanation of vocabulary, and discussion of grammatical items. Therefore, the researchers suggested that teachers should allow some L1 in pair and group work to enhance interaction between learners and help them to move to a higher cognitive level.

Canagarajah (1995) found that switching to L1 served many class management functions. Teachers used L1 at the beginning of class to ease the transition from other subjects and prepare students for the English lesson; they also used it for disciplinary purposes. When teachers gave commands in L1, this resulted in immediate compliance and attracted the attention of distracted students. Both teachers and students switched to L1 to negotiate instructions that preceded activities, which helped the teacher to avoid repetition. Canagarajah (1995) also reported that L1 served a number of pedagogical or content transmission functions. When teachers reviewed the previous lesson using L1, this improved students' attention and comprehension and saved class time because there was no need for repetition. If the teacher failed to convey the meaning of new vocabulary using English, the use of an L1 equivalent produced immediate recognition from students. Students used L1 among themselves to negotiate content and explain tasks to each other. Teachers and students used L1 to add a cultural dimension or to negotiate cultural issues relevant to the lesson; at times the use of L1 was essential because the cultural concept did not have an English equivalent.

Bozorgian & Fallahpour (2015) used videorecording to investigate the amount and purposes of L1 use by teachers and students in pre-intermediate EFL classes at language institutes in Iran. They found that a small amount of L1 (3.14%) was used; however, there was no reluctance on the part of teachers and students to use L1 whenever it was required. Despite its minimal deployment, L1 served a number of purposes, including facilitating learning and maintaining discipline. Due to the limits of its methodology (class observation only), the study was unable to identify the reasons behind the limited usage of L1 and the language policy of the institutes. The researchers suggested that they might include the teachers' fear of losing their authority in the

classroom, students becoming over-reliant on L1, or loss of reputation, as well as teachers' lack of pedagogical knowledge about the potential roles of L1 and the optimal use of L1 in L2 classrooms. In a study by Karimian & Mohammadi (2015), teachers reported that L1 facilitated learning and was useful for teaching grammar, saved time when teaching beginners, and gave the exact meaning of words when L2 synonyms were not available. They stressed that the use of L1 should be judicious to avoid students becoming over-reliant on it.

Another study by Sa'd & Qadermazi (2015) reported that students' use of L1 can reflect cultural norms. The participant learners emphasised the pedagogical benefits of L1, such as facilitating learning vocabulary, grammar, instructions and comprehension, but they were not interested in its disciplinary or emotional dimensions in the English classroom. Forman (2007) examined the positive roles of L1 in the Thai context; as previously mentioned, he encourages bilingual pedagogy, arguing that the learning of a second language cannot be achieved in isolation from the first language which automatically interacts with L2 in the learner's mind. Thongwichit (2013) found that Thai university students perceived L1 as a communicative tool that facilitated interaction and discussion in the classroom. In an interview study by Carless (2007), teachers reported that they allowed students to use their L1 to maintain their attention, interest and engagement. They also said that L1 enabled students to exchange meanings, express identities and add humour. In the teachers' view, L1 supported learning because students' discussion of tasks in their L1 helped them to produce ideas in the target language in oral and written form. The use of L1 also enhanced students' understanding of the grammar of the target language and its theoretical underpinnings.

Other scholars have focused on the affective functions of L1. According to Forman (2016), the use of L1 by the teacher can reduce foreign language anxiety and performance anxiety associated with L2 learning and enhance the rapport between English teacher and students. The use of L1 during personal interaction between teacher and students adds a natural dimension, since "the teacher is treating the students as their real selves rather than dealing with assumed L2 personas" (Cook 2001, p. 24). For Butzkamm (2003), a "foreign language friendly atmosphere is best achieved through selective use of the mother tongue" (p. 32). In this way, the teacher can conduct the whole class in L2 and use L1 judiciously to enhance students' confidence in using the target language. Littlewood & Yu (2011) identify the affective aspects of using L1 as feelings

of reassurance, security and support, in contrast to the feelings of alienation that some learners might experience when their L1 is excluded from classroom (p. 72).

According to Auerbach (1993), the inclusion of L1 in the classroom has the potential to “reduce anxiety and enhance the affective environment for learning”; as such, the use of L1 can reduce affective obstacles associated with English learning and enhance the language learning process (p. 20). She argues that the imposition of an English-only approach reduces beginner learners’ participation and progress; students respond by remaining silent, failing to progress, and dropping out. Teachers reported being frustrated by their inability to achieve progress and reducing the lesson content to a child-like level. Students on the other hand experience low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence and feel powerless when their experiences, knowledge and language resources are excluded. Canagarajah (1999) also observes that the use of learners’ L1 “creates a less threatening atmosphere” (p. 132).

The affective role of L1 has been empirically investigated in several studies. Canagarajah (1995) found that teachers used L1 (Tamil) to encourage less confident students, and this helped them to create a more positive classroom atmosphere. Teachers’ praise was more effective when delivered to students in L1 rather than English. Teachers found it easier to express disappointment or anger in L1, so they used it to advise or admonish students. Teachers and students ‘shift[ed] to Tamil to symbolize their vernacular solidarity’ (p. 191). Teachers used cues in L1 to soften their statement and reduce students’ inhibitions, and this also helped to reduce the teacher’s power over students: “through code switching teachers also manage the power behind their role: they reduce or heighten their power by respectively moving in and out of Tamil’ (p. 191). Students used L1 to seek help from the teacher with academic and personal matters. L1 was used for informal interaction, such as gossip, among students or for personal or social communication between students and the teacher. Canagarajah (1995) argues that switching to L1 can improve students’ motivation and participation in the English classroom.

Nikula (2007) observed Finnish learners in a monolingual content-based class and found that these learners switched to their L1 not because they lacked English proficiency, but because their own language served many affective and interpersonal functions. Butzkamm (2003) cites Thornton’s (1999) study of 1300 year 9 students who expressed

frustration and confusion when their foreign language classes were delivered using the monolingual approach, since they found the lessons far beyond their comprehension abilities. Similarly, Brooks-Lewis (2009) highlighted the stress created among learners by the monolingual approach and how the recognition of L1 in the classroom contributes to the reduction of such feelings. Bozorgian & Fallahpour (2015) found that L1 served interpersonal purposes such as making jokes, reducing stress, and building a positive environment in the classroom.

Aiming to improve her own pedagogy as a language teacher, Edstrom (2006) conducted a self-evaluation study to investigate her use of L1 in the classroom. She found that she relied on L1 to connect with her students through humour and jokes and discussion of some cultural issues. She argues that building rapport with students who might experience negative emotions on entering the classroom and creating a positive affective environment are moral obligations that transcend her belief in maximising L2 exposure.

Motivated by the critical arguments of Phillipson (1992) and Auerbach (2000), Ford (2009) examined the English-only policy imposed at Japanese universities by investigating the language policies and practices of ten native-English-speaker teachers. He found that those policies were driven by practical and personal considerations rather than institutional or critical factors. The teachers were in favour of the English-only approach for pedagogical reasons, such as maximising L2 input and encouraging students to think in L2. Some interviewees, however, reported that they occasionally used L1 for humour, to create a positive atmosphere, and to reduce students' anxiety about making mistakes. In an earlier study, Polio & Duff (1994) found that university teachers used L1 to add humour and to build empathy and solidarity with students. Karimian & Mohammadi (2015) found that teachers believed that L1 could reduce students' anxiety and increase their self-confidence.

Tajgozari (2017) asked 11 institute teachers if using L1 could help build rapport with students. Four responded positively and another four did not believe that L1 affected the teacher-student relationship. The remaining teachers indicated that the use of L1 depended on other factors such as students' participation and proficiency levels. One teacher commented: "Sometimes, using L1 in the class indicates that the teacher doesn't have the power or the knowledge to control or manage the class" (p. 71). Hamdallah

(1999) bases his argument for L1 use in the EFL classroom on the perceived psychological benefits for teachers and learners. For teachers, it is more natural to give advice to students in their L1, and L1 can help when she/he is unable to convey something in English. For students, L1 provides a break from using English all the time, and can reduce anxiety in situations such as encountering the new language for the first time and during exams.

Although these studies have made an important contribution to research on the affective dimensions of L1, they have rarely addressed power relations. The impact of L1 in empowering students and giving them a voice in the classroom has been neglected. As previously noted, the present study seeks to fill this knowledge gap.

### **3.3.3 Teachers and Students' Attitudes towards L1 Use in the English Classroom**

A number of research studies have been conducted in different contexts to examine teachers' and students' attitudes towards the use of L1 in the EFL classroom. Some studies have focused on teachers, others on students, and some have investigated both.

McMillan & Rivers (2011) investigated the attitudes of 29 native-English speaker teachers at a Japanese university where English-only was the official policy. The results indicated that L1 use, whether by students or teachers, facilitated the learning process. The researchers argued that teachers and students should be the ones who decide the optimal use of L1 or L2. Karimian & Mohammadi (2015) investigated the opinions of 40 teachers: 20 were teaching at language schools in Iran, and 20 participated from other countries via the Internet. Both groups reported that L1 could play a positive role in the language classroom on some occasions and was necessary in certain situations.

Yaqubi & Pouromid (2013) examined the perceptions of teachers and parents of young learners in Iranian private institutes. The results showed that both teachers and parents held negative attitudes towards the use of L1 whether by teachers or by students. Teachers' attitudes were influenced by external factors, since parents exerted some pressure on teachers and principals to influence language choice in the classroom. Since these were private institutes, entirely funded by the learners' families, the teachers were not the ultimate decision makers. Young and less experienced teachers were more vulnerable to parental pressure. The authors recommended that teacher training programs be improved to address the negative attitudes towards L1 use and inform teachers about

the useful functions of L1 in the L2 classroom. Carless (2007) explored teachers and teachers' educators' perceptions of the use of L1 by students during task-based learning. The participants adopted a pragmatic approach, considering the use of L1 as unavoidable.

Other researchers have explored students' views about the use of L1 by their teachers or themselves. A study of Spanish-speaking university students in Mexico reported positive responses towards the incorporation of L1 in their EFL classes ((Brooks-Lewis 2009). Neokleous (2017) conducted a qualitative study employing class observations and interviews with students in monolingual EFL classrooms in Greece. Participants perceived their L1 as beneficial, and opposed its exclusion from the L2 classroom. The researcher emphasised the importance of considering students' opinions and needs when planning lessons and selecting teaching strategies that reflected these needs. Thongwichit (2013) investigated Thai university students' attitudes to L1 and its roles in the L2 classroom. Students expressed positive attitudes and identified important functions for L1, although they appeared to be aware of the potential shortcomings of using L1 extensively.

Macaro & Lee (2013) explored the opinions of Korean learners about code-switching and EO instructions. The sample comprised two age groups: children (12 years old) and adults (university level). Although both groups rejected the idea of excluding L1 from the classroom, adult learners were more accepting of EO instructions as a result of their longer experience in language learning and their higher proficiency levels. Children, on the other hand, embraced the use of L1. Sa'd & Qadermazi (2015) triangulated data from class observations, interviews and learners' written reports to investigate the perceptions of intermediate EFL learners in an Iranian language institute that adopted a strict English-only policy in relation to the use of their L1 (Persian) in English classes. The majority of participants held positive attitudes. The researchers recommended the judicious use of L1 in EFL contexts as a better approach than English-only which, they argued, was based on ideological perspectives rather than scientific data. Following Auerbach (1993), they challenged the commonly accepted assumption that L1 hinders the learning of L2. However they also cautioned that the inappropriate use of L1 could be counterproductive if students came to rely on L1 for learning. They encouraged teachers to become more aware of why students need L1 when learning L2 since this would acknowledge their needs and preferences and facilitate class management. Storch &

Wigglesworth (2003) found that students reported useful roles for L1 in the ESL context although their usage of L1 was limited.

Other studies sought the opinions of both teachers and students. Tajgozari (2017), for example, showed that teachers and learners in an Iranian institute had different views regarding L1 use in English classes. The 11 teacher participants expressed their opposition to the employment of L1 in teaching, explaining that it might demotivate students and reduce their exposure to the target language. They did, however, comment that L1 could be used to clarify grammatical and cultural points. Four of the 11 acknowledged the role of L1 in improving teacher-student relationships and reducing stress in the classroom. The study did not satisfactorily resolve the apparent contradiction between teachers' negative attitude to L1 use and their belief that it could function positively in the classroom. No information was provided about the teachers' language background; it is possible that their negative attitudes reflected their lack of knowledge of learners' L1. In contrast, the results showed that positive attitudes were held by 90% of elementary, 73.3% of intermediate, and 52.1% of advanced students. These figures suggest a relationship between students' attitudes and their English proficiency levels.

Al Hariri (2015) designed an online survey to explore the perceptions of teachers and advanced students towards the use of L1. The teachers gave positive responses to the use of L1, especially outside the classroom. Their attitudes towards the role of L1 in controlling the classroom and creating positive relationships with students varied; about half believed that these functions could be accomplished using L2. The majority of the students tended to prefer the English-only approach, although one-third reported that they used L1 to ask the teacher or their friends about things they could not understand. This suggests that L1 was a source of comfort and confidence.

Despite the significant contribution of these studies, their narrow focus on attitudes fails to capture the complexity of the issue. Moreover, most failed to include or discuss negative attitudes. The present study explores both positive and negative attitudes and also considers how teachers' beliefs influence their teaching practices. It examines the attitudes of individual teachers at a deeper level in order to reveal the hidden ideologies that unconsciously affect their views about Arabic and English and shape their teaching.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the key analytical frameworks that informed the study design. The use of L1 in English language classrooms has attracted the attention of researchers over recent decades, and a considerable number of studies have been conducted in different contexts to explore the potential roles of L1. The results identified a number of positive roles.

The present study extends these findings by exploring the dimension of power relations. It adopts a Foucauldian perspective to explore how power is exercised through various pedagogical practices, and how these practices encounter resistance. Fairclough's (1989) understanding of language as a tool for practising and sustaining power via particular ideologies is deployed to analyse the hidden assumptions, subtly entrenched in Saudi educational policy, that legitimise and sustain the EOA in KSA. The practical framework developed by Forman (2016) is used to categorise the different roles of the Arabic language in the English classroom.

A review of the debate around monolingual and bilingual approaches identified gaps in the literature. The complexity of the phenomenon under investigation demands the adoption of a range of theoretical perspectives in order to provide a holistic understanding. Together, these frameworks facilitate in-depth analysis of the data.

## Chapter 4

### Methodology and Research Design

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#### 4.1 Introduction

As previously explained, this study investigates: i) language ideologies that underpin the informal ban on the Arabic language in EFL classrooms in the KSA, ii) power practices in Saudi EFL tertiary classrooms, and iii) how the inclusion or exclusion of Arabic in English classrooms might influence these practices. Chapter 3 presented the conceptual framework and showed how the study was guided by a number of theoretical perspectives.

This chapter explains the methodological approach and describes the procedures of data collection and analysis that were employed to address the research questions (Rudestam & Newton 2014). A qualitative case study design was adopted, and the data were collected through class observations, interviews and focus groups.

The chapter begins with a restatement of the research questions. The second section discusses my role as an insider researcher. The following section explains and justifies the research methodology. Then, a description of the research site and participants is provided. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the qualitative tools used to collect and analyse the data. Then, some language issues are presented. The final sections discuss ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

#### 4.2 Research Questions

Research questions guide the choice of research strategies (Yin 2002). The research questions this study sought to answer were:

- What language ideologies underpin the perceptions of teachers and university students' regarding the use of Arabic in the Saudi tertiary EL classroom?
- How is power exercised through language choice in the Saudi tertiary EL classrooms?
- What role/s does Arabic play in the Saudi tertiary EL classrooms?

Previous research in the KSA indicated a generally positive attitude toward the inclusion of L1 in L2 classes, but the official language policy continues to favour the English-only approach. This study builds on previous findings to explore the complexity

of the topic at a deeper level. It not only investigates participants' attitudes, but also aims to reveal the language ideologies that underpin them. A qualitative approach that generates rich, in-depth data is more appropriate for this purpose.

The second question is concerned with the actual exercise of power through language use. Data were collected to shed light on teachers' use or avoidance of Arabic in their classes and how power was exercised through their teaching practices. The interviews with teachers were designed to provide insight into how they conceived their roles as teachers and the roles of their students and how their perceptions influenced their classroom behaviour in relation to specific power practices. This question was also explored through class observations to show how power was exercised linguistically through the use of Arabic or English. The power relations frameworks of Foucault (1977, 1980) and Fairclough (1989) were deployed to interpret how power operated in this setting.

The final question sought to identify the various roles of the Arabic language in the Saudi tertiary EFL classroom. This question has been investigated in many EFL contexts, but only limited research on this topic has been conducted in the KSA and the Arabic world in general, and the available studies employed single research tools, mainly interviews. This study aims to bridge this gap by employing an additional method, classroom observations, as well as interviews to examine how Arabic functions in reality. Forman's (2016) framework was used to organise and interpret the data, with particular focus on how the presence or absence of Arabic might affect the practice of power by teachers or students. This level of analysis has not previously been attempted.

### **4.3 Insider Research**

An insider researcher is a member of the population under investigation (Kanuha 2000) who shares identity, experiences and language with participants (Asselin 2003). This role has strengths and challenges for qualitative researchers (Dwyer & Buckle 2009), as Kanuha (2000) explains:

For each of the ways that being an insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding a population that may not be accessible to a non-native scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research

project are raised because perhaps one knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied (p. 444).

Therefore, insider researchers are advised to collect their data with high awareness, but at the same time they need to assume that they know nothing about the issue under investigation to avoid any biases that might occur during data collection or analysis (Asselin 2003).

When I conducted the research, I was working at the participating language Centre as a language instructor and teaching coordinator. After I finish my degree, it is assumed that I will return to the same Centre. The coordinator occupies a more senior position and has more responsibilities than the other teachers, as she is required to monitor a number of teachers and everything related to the teaching process, such as schedules, syllabus distribution, exams, etc. My role as an insider gave me several advantages. My institutional familiarity with the research site facilitated the research process, starting from the initial step of obtaining official permission to conduct the study, through knowing from whom, when, and where to collect the data, and ending with the actual data collection, which ran smoothly. My insider status also facilitated the interview process to a certain extent because I was familiar with most aspects of the topic and did not need to go into detailed explanations. As Dwyer & Buckle (2009) explain:

Participants might be more willing to share their experiences because there is an assumption of understanding and an assumption of shared distinctiveness; it is as if they feel, 'You are one of us and it is us versus them (those on the outside who don't understand' (p. 58).

Despite these benefits, the insider role had some less positive influences on the data collection process and the data itself. For example, most of the teachers in the Centre were unwilling to participate in the research despite my friendly relations with them. Of a total of more than 40 teachers, only 18 responded to the invitation letter. The teaching coordinator who acted as an intermediary in the recruitment process had to send more than one email to encourage them to participate in the research.

My powerful position as a coordinator is also likely to have had some influence on the research findings. For instance, some participant teachers might have assumed that I supported the general position of the Centre, which opposed using L1, so they might

have expressed opinions that aligned with the Centre's language policy to create a favourable impression. Similarly, the same teachers might have changed their normal classroom behaviour by avoiding L1 during class observations to demonstrate their adherence to the Centre's instructions. In other words, they might have been practising self-surveillance (Foucault 1977) during my presence in their classrooms.

During focus groups, some participant students initially appeared somewhat shy and uncomfortable about openly expressing their opinions to me. To address their hesitation, I encouraged them to talk, assured them that their participation would not affect their performance appraisal, and reminded them that their identities and responses would remain confidential.

Of all the challenges that are expected to occur in qualitative research, the insider role was the most difficult for me and required a great deal of awareness throughout all phases of the research.

#### **4.4 Research Methodology**

The choice of research methodology is not straightforward since a researcher should take into consideration the purpose of the study and the contribution to knowledge she/he aims to achieve. The research questions themselves provide the essential starting point. Since this research focused on exploring complex issues related to language ideologies, power practices and potential roles of the Arabic language in the classroom, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate. Unlike quantitative research, which is concerned with discovery and description, qualitative research is useful for understanding social experience and behaviour (Klenke 2008; Stake 1995). This does not mean that one approach is superior to the other, rather, that the selection of a particular form of research should be based on what the researcher aims to find out (Creswell 2005; Silverman 2003).

Qualitative inquiry is widely used in social science research, including applied linguistics. It involves a variety of methodologies, such as ethnography, case study, phenomenology and grounded theory (Johnson & Christensen 2000; Klenke 2008). These approaches employ a variety of data collection methods, such as observation, interviews, diaries and open response surveys (Croker 2009; Johnson & Christensen 2000).

The following section explains the qualitative case study approach and discusses its advantages and limitations.

#### **4.4.1 Case Study Approach**

Case study is defined as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake 1995, p. xi). Case study research has the potential to provide an in-depth exploration of a particular case because it relies on multiple sources of data, which generate a rich holistic description of the phenomenon (Creswell 2005; Johnson & Christensen 2000). According to Stake (1978), it is suitable for studying human experiences because this type of enquiry is “down to earth and attention holding” (p. 5).

A case study can combine numerical data with textual data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013). It enables the researcher “to understand the world not only in terms of the generalities produced by quantitative methods, but also through close and extended analysis of the particular” (Hood 2009, p. 67). Because it can be used to test a theory, there are quantitative case studies; it can also generate theory, along with other qualitative approaches (Stake 1978). However, the majority of case study projects are qualitative (Merriam 1988; Stake 1978, 1995; Yin 2002).

“Case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin 2002, p. 1). In other words, three conditions need to be met in order to justify the case study strategy. First, the researcher is seeking answers for ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions. Second, the researcher has little or no control over the phenomenon being studied. Third, the focus of the researcher should be on contemporary events. For Bassey (1999), the answers to ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions require the kind of rich data that can be generated by case study research.

One of the concerns expressed about case study research is related to the issue of scientific generalisation (Yin 2002). This type of research has been criticised because the results cannot be generalised to other cases. Sometimes, however, a case study is unique and needs to be studied in its own terms (Punch 1998), so there is no intention to generalise the findings. Another case might represent an extreme that is totally different from other cases; here, “the logic is that we can learn about the typical by studying the atypical” (Punch 1998, p. 54). Stake (1978) believes that “themes and hypotheses may be important, but they remain subordinate to the understanding of the case” (p. 7). Jones &

Lyons (2004) challenge the appropriateness of the term generalisation, suggesting the term transferability instead. They argue that it is the job of the researcher to provide a sufficient and rich description of the case; then it is “up to the reader to decide if the results are generalizable or not” (p. 74). Therefore, generalisation in qualitative research, such as case studies, is “arrived at by recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings” (Stake 1978, p. 6). Thus, generalisation is not the aim of this approach; rather it seeks to develop a thorough understanding of the case, which might be similar to or different from other cases.

The literature identifies different categories of case study. For example, Yin (2009), classified case study into three types in relation to their intended outcomes: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. Stake (2005) identifies three types: intrinsic case study, in which the researcher is only interested in studying a particular case and does not aim to generalise from it; instrumental case study, in which the researcher focuses on a particular case in order to gain a general understanding of a research question or problem; and collective case study, in which the researcher studies several instrumental cases to investigate a particular issue.

In the present study, the collective case study approach (Stake 2005), in which four EFL classrooms were selected as the individual cases was adopted. Each of the four classrooms I observed represents a unique case, since every classroom differs in relation to the teacher and her beliefs and attitudes, and the students’ English proficiency level. For each case study, multiple sources of data were used, namely, class observation, interviews and focus groups. A multiple-case study design allows each class to be described in detail as a separate entity, and cross-case analysis can then be used to elaborate the interpretation.

#### **4.4.2 Rationale for choice**

In applied linguistics, researchers are concerned with connecting the knowledge they have about language with their understanding of how it is used in the real world. Language use can be investigated through either quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods research (Croker 2009). Qualitative research is particularly useful when little is known about a particular phenomenon and an exploratory approach is indicated. This allows researchers

to discover new ideas and sometimes generate theories about the phenomenon (*ibid*). This was highly relevant to the present research problem and questions.

Case study provides a way of generating holistic and meaningful information about complex social phenomena (Yin 2002). It can be deployed as an explanatory, exploratory or descriptive research strategy, because it allows the researcher to directly observe the activity under investigation and interview people involved in it (*ibid*). These characteristics make the case study approach appropriate for the present inquiry.

Individual attitudes can be examined using interviews and focus groups. These data can be analysed to explore the language ideologies that underpin them. As Maxwell (1996) explains:

In a qualitative study, you are interested not only in the physical events and behaviour that is taking place, but also how the participants in your study make sense of this and how their understandings influence their behaviour (p. 17).

Overall, the complexity of the issues under investigation indicated the importance of collecting observational data in a naturalistic setting, such as classrooms, to complement other sources such as interviews and focus groups. The use of a single method would have produce limited results and, therefore, limited understanding. Accordingly, a combination of qualitative tools was essential for the study.

#### **4.4.3 Research Site**

The research was conducted in an English language Centre in the Future University, a new university in a medium-sized Saudi city. This university offers a compulsory Preparatory Year Program (PYP) which aims to improve students' English proficiency level in order to equip them for their future university majors. The English language Centre serves the whole university, catering to over 20 faculties providing English language programs for about 10,000 students of both genders every year. The Centre's goals are to:

- Prepare students to undertake their studies through English-medium instruction in their disciplines;
- Provide credit English courses to those enrolled in theoretical faculties;

- Serve as the cornerstone for the unified Preparatory Year Program for all students across the University faculties; and
- Conduct academic research in areas related to English language teaching and learning.

In Saudi universities, male and female students are located on separate campuses. The study was limited to the female campus because cultural norms prohibited the researcher from accessing the male campus or to having face to face contact with male participants.

## **4.5 Sampling and Recruitment**

In qualitative research, the participants are generally small in number but are selected carefully (Croker 2009). The participants in this study were English teachers and PYP students.

### **4.5.1 Teachers**

Four female English language instructors participated in this research. They taught at the English language Centre at the Future University, came from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and differed in age, nationality, teaching experience, and English proficiency. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identities.

An independent intermediary negotiated the teachers' participation in the research. As mentioned previously, I worked in the language Centre, and I did not want to influence teachers' decisions to participate or not. The intermediary emailed an invitation letter to all the teachers (see Appendix E) and then sent me the names of those who responded. Eighteen teachers ultimately agreed to participate. After some consultation with the centre vice-director and the coordinator, four teachers were selected as they were the most experienced. They are briefly described below and their characteristics are summarised in Table 4.1.

*Salma* was Arabic and, aged in her forties, she was oldest of the four participants. She obtained her most recent degree, Master in English Literature, from the UK. She had the longest teaching experience. She taught traditionally, relying on the board and the textbook. She never used any additional materials during my observations of her teaching.

*Maha* was an Arabic teacher in her thirties with 14 years' experience in teaching English. She had taught in Iraq before she came to the KSA, and all her teaching experience was with tertiary level students. She learned English bilingually, starting at a very early age, at kindergarten level. She had some administrative experience as she worked as a coordinator for a number of years, and her reflections on this experience provide insight into why the decision-makers adopted the EOA in the Centre. She had an expert level of English proficiency, and she taught bilingually. Like Salma, Maha's teaching was traditional, relying on the board and textbook only.

*Rita's* first language was Urdu, and she was around 35 years old. She had ten years' teaching experience in the KSA; however, her knowledge of Arabic was very limited. Her teaching was traditional too, and she relied heavily on the English-only approach in her teaching. She was very strict about the use of Arabic by students even for non-learning purposes, such as informal chatting in the classroom.

*Judy* was the only native-English speaking teacher and the youngest of the participants. She had seven years' teaching experience in KSA. She adopted the English-only approach in her teaching, but she allowed students to use Arabic. Unlike the other participant teachers, she employed modern technology in her teaching such as PowerPoint shows. She had no knowledge of the Arabic language.

Table 4.1: Characteristics of Teacher Participants

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>L1</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Proficiency in Arabic</b>
Salma	Egyptian	Arabic	Masters in English Literature	20 years	Fluent
Maha	Iraqi	Arabic	Masters in TESOL	14 years	Fluent
Rita	Indian	Urdu	Masters in linguistics	10 years	Beginner
Judy	American	English	Masters in TESOL	7 years	Lower than beginner

#### **4.5.2 Students**

As explained in Chapter 2, English is a compulsory subject for Saudi students from grade 5, but the time allocated for English at schools tends to be limited (four 45-minute periods weekly). The study sample comprised female students taking a preparatory year program in which they studied English for 12-15 hours per week in preparation for future academic

demands. The students were aged 18 years and above as they had finished secondary school. They were linguistically and culturally homogeneous in that their first language was Arabic, and they were all Saudis.

The participant students belonged to two study streams: Science Stream and Health Stream. In general, the Science Stream students' proficiency level in English ranged between elementary and intermediate. They studied 12 hours of English a week. The Health Stream students had an advanced level of English, and they graduated from high school with a higher GPA. They were going to study medical and pharmacy majors. This group studied English for 15 hours a week, and English would be the language of instruction in their future majors. For more information on how students were recruited, see section 4.6.3.

The following section describes the qualitative methods used to collect data (interviews, focus groups, and non-participant observation). The strengths and limitations of these tools are discussed.

## **4.6 Data Collection Methods**

As previously indicated, three qualitative methods were used to collect data: class observations, interviews with teachers, and focus groups with students. Each of these is discussed below.

### **4.6.1 Classroom Observations**

Since one aim of this research was to investigate the negotiation of power in the English classroom, interviews alone would not have provided relevant data because “it is not unusual for persons to say they are doing one thing, but in reality they are doing something else” (Corbin & Strauss 2015, p. 41). Therefore, the observation method was included to provide a “reality check” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013, p. 456) and to address the final research question, which concerned the different functions of Arabic in English classrooms.

Observation as a research process has many distinguishing features. For example, it provides the researcher with “live data from naturally occurring social situations” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013, p. 456). As well, some participants prefer to be

observed rather than take part in time consuming interviews or fill out questionnaires (*ibid*).

During observations, it is recommended that the researcher record detailed information about the physical setting and its layout, the people in the situation, the time of the observation, the chronological order of the observed events, and any critical events that take place during the observation (Moyles 2002). Babbie (2007) offers some guidelines for note-taking. First, the researcher's memory is untrustworthy, so she/he should not rely on it; rather notes should be recorded either during or immediately after observing an incident. Second, taking notes can be done in stages. In the first stage, only sketchy notes are needed to enable the researcher to follow the incidents taking place; these provide an *aide-mémoire* for adding more details in the following stage. The researcher should record as many notes as possible even if she/he is unsure about their importance. Babbie (2007) advises researchers to "take a ton of notes, and plan to select and use only the gold" (p. 312).

I used naturalistic observation because "when observing real people in real situations, many unexpected problems can arise" (Humphries & Gebhard 2012, p. 110). My observations focused on events and behaviours (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013) as I wanted to discover how Arabic language was used and how such usage could affect power relations in the classroom. I was a non-participant observer; I did not react, participate or comment on anything that took place so that participants would, hopefully, forget about my presence or at least feel less anxious. I observed each class from a side position at the front of the class in order to observe both teachers and students. I sometimes sat at the back to capture more details about students' behaviour and teachers' facial expressions; this was not always possible, especially in those disorganised classrooms where chairs were too close together to allow someone to walk through.

The first day of each observation was a critical period for me and for the participants. I feared that students would be uncomfortable about my presence or might not behave naturally. I did not use the recording device on the first day of observation with each class as I wanted to familiarise myself with the classroom, teacher and students, but I did take notes from the first day. Initially I recorded details about the space, such as room size, air conditioners, windows, number of students, boards, and the organisation of rooms (Moyles 2002) since such details influenced classroom interaction. I used a field

journal to record memos (Babbie 2007) that were then transferred to a word file on my computer. Each subsequent observation was audio-recorded, and the relevant sections were transcribed.

I observed four classrooms over a period of 12 hours for each classroom. This provided a total of approximately 48 hours of observation conducted over a period of more than one month. This period was between the mid-term and the final examinations. The mid-term exams started in the fourth week of the academic year and lasted for one week. I chose this period rather than the beginning of the semester because students were freshmen and needed some time to settle into their classes and get used to their teachers.

The four classrooms were taught by the four teachers who participated in interviews. The first three classrooms belonged to the Science Stream, and the fourth classroom to the Health Stream. I dealt with each class as a separate case study, observing each for four days. The teacher was interviewed and the focus group was conducted over the following days. Class observations yielded rich data about actual teaching practices, students' behaviours, and relationships between the teacher and students. Class observations provided valuable material that I incorporated into the subsequent interviews and focus groups.

#### **4.6.2 Teachers' Interviews**

Teachers' interviews complemented class observations and generated insight into various issues that emerged from the observations. Interviews "are often very productive sources of information for a particular observer who wants to verify observations he or she has previously made" (Hopkins 2002, p. 109). An interview, as defined by Babbie (2007) is "a data-collection encounter in which one person (an interviewer) asks questions of another (a respondent)" (p. 264). It allows verbal communication between an interviewer and interviewee (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013).

In the process of preparing and conducting my interviews, I drew on the guidelines provided by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2013). I interviewed the four teachers whom I had observed. The interviews were semi-structured and contained 21 open-ended questions. This type of interviewing allows flexibility for the researcher to alter the sequence of questions or to add additional questions according to the participants' responses. In order to clarify findings obtained from the classroom observations, I

interviewed each teacher directly after completing the observational sessions of her classes. I asked the teachers about any significant incidents that took place during their classes. The interview questions (Appendix A) dealt with the teachers' attitudes towards the use of Arabic in English classes, the different roles of Arabic, the teachers' perceptions of their roles as teachers and the roles of their students. Other questions addressed how they taught English and whether they found the English-only approach effective or not.

Interviewers are cautioned not to reveal their biases and values and not to be judgmental (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013). In order to encourage participants to express their views freely, I sought to avoid letting them know my opinions about the issues under investigation by carefully formulating the interview questions and how I asked them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013). The teachers in general were enthusiastic about sharing their opinions, especially in relation to the use of L1 in the classroom.

All the interviews were conducted in one room, which used to be the office of the Vice-Director of the Centre. The room therefore reflected a certain power dynamic, which may have affected the results, but it was the only suitable venue as all the other rooms were occupied by teachers. I was also aware of the power relation that could exist due to my position as a researcher and my former role as a coordinator. For these reasons, and because establishing rapport with interviewees is very important (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013), I tried to create a friendly atmosphere by warmly welcoming the participants and thanking them for their participation before and after the interviews. The interviews were fruitful as they provided me with deep and complex data. It was interesting for me to listen to the teachers talking about the same issues but from different perspectives.

#### **4.6.3 Students' Focus Groups**

The focus group is a qualitative method that is commonly used in the social sciences to collect data that are generated from the interaction among participants (Ho 2006). It is "a way of collecting qualitative data, which – essentially – involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions), 'focused' around a particular topic or set of issues" (Wilkinson 2004). The role of the researcher is to moderate the group discussion by asking questions, maintaining the flow of the discussion, and enabling participants to answer these questions (*ibid*). This technique involves "a group

of subjects interviewed together, prompting a discussion”, and it enables the researcher to engage several participants “systematically and simultaneously” (Babbie 2007, p. 308). The sample in a focus group is not statistically representative of the whole population since the selection method is not built on rigorous rules (*ibid*).

Babbie (2007) reviews the advantages and disadvantages of this technique that have been identified in the literature. In relation to the former, it allows the researcher to gather real life data in a social atmosphere; it is flexible and economic, in that it produces valid results quickly. Unlike individual interviews, focus group dynamics can lead to the emergence of unanticipated aspects of the topic. There are also some disadvantages. The researcher may encounter difficulty in controlling the focus group. He or she needs skills to moderate the group discussion, and differences between groups can present a challenge. Also, the analysis of focus group data is not easy. Finally, the process of assembling groups can be difficult.

I preferred the focus group method to individual interviews with the students for a number of reasons. First, it is a quick way of collecting data from a large number of participants. Second, it is more naturalistic than interviews since it is very similar to everyday conversations in which the group members engage, using various communicative processes such as agreement, disagreement, persuasion, challenge, and telling jokes. This dynamic quality is the distinctive feature of the focus group method, and it allows the issues to be elaborated (Wilkinson 2004). I also saw students’ participation in this research as supporting the empowerment of students and giving them an opportunity to contribute to their learning.

I conducted four focus groups, one from each observed classroom and each containing five students. Each teacher was asked to encourage her students to voluntarily participate. The primary selection criterion for students was their willingness to participate and express their opinions in a focus group setting. They also had to represent different English proficiency levels. One meeting, lasting from 45-60 minutes, was conducted with each group. The sessions were conducted in Arabic to put the students at ease, and they students seemed excited about the prospect of participating in what was their first experience of being interviewed.

The focus groups, which were audio-recorded, were all conducted in the same room, which had two desks and a number of chairs, at different times. We sat around one

of the desks to reduce the gap between the participants and the researcher. At the beginning of each session, I reintroduced myself to the group, gave them general information about my research, and then asked each of them to sign a consent form (see Appendix G). I asked them for their names to facilitate the discussion, assuring them that their personal information would be protected.

I intentionally conducted the focus group after data had been collected from the classroom observation and the interview with the class teacher. This sequence helped me to build some rapport with the students, as they were already familiar with me. It also enabled me to ask them about certain classroom behaviours and specific incidents I had observed and to allow them to comment on the teaching styles of their teachers. I prepared a list of questions (Appendix B). In broad terms, students were asked their opinions about the use of Arabic and the use of the EOA by teachers, and which way of teaching they thought was more effective. They were also asked to identify situations in which they needed to use Arabic. More questions emerged during the discussions.

I encountered challenges during the conduct of the focus groups. For example, “in-group power relationships” (Gladman & Freeman 2012, p. 76) did occur, as students who were more influential or persuasive tried to dominate the discussion while quiet or shy students were reluctant to express their opinions. I made every effort to overcome this situation by directing some questions to the latter students and encouraging them to give their views, which were of equal value to that of their peers.

## **4.7 Data Analysis**

The qualitative data from interviews, focus groups and observations were analysed in three stages: transcription, translation and thematic analysis.

### **4.7.1 Transcription**

After listening to all the recorded data from interviews and focus groups to get a general understanding, I transcribed the recordings verbatim using Microsoft Word. Data transcription requires a great deal of effort, but it enables the researcher to become “close to the data” (Denscombe 2010, p. 275). The focus group data were first manually transcribed and then translated into English by the researcher. I also recorded any initial observations, such as unexpected information or similarities and differences between groups.

This stage was quite long since each hour of recording required about six hours to transcribe. After transcribing each text, I re-listened to the recording to check for accuracy. I highlighted the participants' speech and my own in different colours. I left sufficient space on each transcript for ease of reading and numbered each line. This step generated a large amount of textual data. I corrected grammatical mistakes in the texts to avoid distraction.

#### **4.7.2 Translation**

When research data are written in a particular language but collected in another language, translation is an essential step that can take place at different stages of the study. The participants in this research were teachers and students with different English proficiency levels, so it was important to have two versions of the students' consent forms and information sheets, Arabic and English. The original questions for the focus groups were written in English and then translated into Arabic. The focus group itself was conducted in Arabic only and then translated into English.

There was no need to translate the transcripts of interviews with teachers. Although they were informed that they could use Arabic during the interviews, they chose to express themselves in English only.

#### **4.7.3 Thematic Analysis**

After these initial steps, each text was read thoroughly many times in order to obtain a general understanding. They were then coded and these codes were organised into themes and sub-themes, which were established *a priori* according to the three research questions. However, the thematic analysis generated four major themes, and it was important to cover each theme in a separate chapter. Hence there are four chapters, each dealing with an overarching theme: perceptions towards the use of Arabic, power practices, resistance strategies, and the roles of Arabic language. The sub-themes were analysed according to relevant frameworks identified in the literature review. For example, for Question 3, which addressed the roles of Arabic in the English classroom, Forman's (2016) framework was used to categorise the various functions. For Question 2, power practices were classified into themes and subthemes using the analytical frameworks of Fairclough (1989) and Foucault (1977, 1980) (see Chapter 3).

For each transcript, I used Microsoft Word and Excel to locate and highlight extracts of text that were relevant to the research questions. I assigned each segment a theme using the comments feature of Microsoft Word. I sometimes coded the same segment more than once, putting each code or theme in a separate comment box. Then, all codes and the relevant text segments of each document were extracted and presented in table form in a new document using the small computer programs, called macros, that are embedded within Microsoft Word and Excel. The resulting table had numerous columns showing the number of the interview or focus group, teacher's names, page number, the highlighted text, and the text's code or theme. This step was useful since it presented the relevant data separately from the original texts. Then all the tables were copied to the Excel program so the data could be sorted by code. Detailed information about this process of coding texts using Microsoft Word is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbjfpEe4j5Y> (Peach 2014).

#### **4.7.4 Language Issues**

This research was conducted in an Arabic-speaking country, so Arabic was the native language of all the participant students and some teachers. Interviewers should always consider the socio-cultural context of the interaction, and the first language is an essential part of this context (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2013). Patton (1980) suggests that an interviewer should use a language that is suitable for interviewees in order to gain rich and authentic data. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the participant Arabic teachers were informed that in the interviews they could speak the language they preferred. During the focus groups, as previously noted, Arabic was used exclusively, which was necessary to enable the participants to share their insights, but it had some methodological implications. The questions were first written in English, then translated into Arabic. The transcripts of the focus group discussions were translated into English. This long process was exhausting and time consuming, and has the potential to result in some loss of meaning. Therefore, I paid close attention to each stage of the process to guarantee a high level of accuracy and clarity.

### **4.8 Ethical Considerations**

In order to meet the ethical requirements of conducting human research, the following steps were taken. First, I obtained approval from the Research Ethics Committee at UTS (approval number 2015000455), and official permission from the research site (Appendix

D). Prior to data collection, an invitation to participate was sent to the teachers working in the Centre (Appendix E). As previously mentioned, an intermediary sent the letter to avoid any embarrassment to the teachers who did not want to participate. The invitation letter assured them that their participation was voluntary, and that it would not affect their jobs or their performance reports. Information sheets (Appendix F) and consent forms (Appendix G) were provided to all participating teachers and students. All the participants in this research were fully informed about the researcher's identity and educational institution, and information about the importance and objectives of the research was provided. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. The participants' identities and personal information were fully protected by giving them pseudonyms.

#### **4.9 Limitations of the Study**

The present study had several limitations since “no proposed research project is without limitations; there is no such thing as a perfectly designed study” (Marshall & Rossman 1999, p. 42). First, the Saudi educational system segregates the two genders so, as a female researcher, I could not include male participants in the sample. At the same time, there was a positive side to this restriction, since most of the existing research on education in the KSA has been conducted by male researchers and involved male students. Second, cultural considerations precluded the use of video-recording in the classrooms, which would have enabled valuable details, such as participants' facial expressions and body language, to be captured, thereby enriching the data. As well, the audio recording was unable to catch many of the interactions among students because the device was too far away. To address this problem, I thought about placing small audio recorders with sensitive microphones among the students, but this idea was not welcomed by the Director of the Centre, who expressed concern that it could create difficulties with the students and their parents due to the conservative nature of Saudi society. These constraints meant that I had to expend considerable effort to manually record as many details as possible.

Students' participation in focus groups was also problematic since they were not familiar with the concept of research participation and did not understand the importance of sharing their views. Therefore, I took the time to explain the meaning of scientific research and the importance of them taking their participation seriously and providing

truthful responses. Being unfamiliar with the voices of the students who participated in the focus groups, I sometimes found it difficult to differentiate between them as I transcribed the data.

#### **4.10 Conclusion and Overview of Findings Chapters**

The aim of this research was to explore the power practices in the Saudi EFL classroom and to examine the link between these practices and language use. It also sought to identify the language ideologies that influence the positions of Arabic and English in the Saudi EFL classroom. The complexity of these issues was reflected in the choice of research design, which needed to be able to generate rich, in-depth data on various dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, a qualitative case study approach using mixed methods of data collection strategies was employed.

This chapter presented the methodological framework of the research. The research questions were stated and my role as an insider researcher was discussed. The research methodology used to address the questions was explained, the case study approach was described and justified, the research site and participants were discussed, and the methods of data collection and analysis were presented. Finally, ethical considerations and limitations of the study were examined. The next four chapters present the results of analysis of the data relevant to the research questions.

The findings of this research are presented in four chapters (Chapters 5-8) in relation to the research questions. These chapters present the results derived from analysis of the data from teachers' interviews, students' focus groups, and class observations. The major purpose of this research was to investigate power practices through language choice. Specifically, this research investigation attempted to: a) explore language ideologies influencing the prohibition of Arabic in English tertiary classrooms in the KSA; b) examine how these ideologies were practically reflected in classroom practices that legitimise power dynamics; and c) explore language choice in the English classroom and how the use of L1 or L2 sustains or limits the exercise of power.

The findings from the interviews, focus groups and observations are presented under the relevant themes of the chapters. The classroom observation extracts are numbered to distinguish them from the interview and focus group quotations. Within the observational extracts, brackets are used to indicate the researcher's comments or immediate impressions of the data and to provide English translation of Arabic texts.

Three dots (. . .) are used to indicate participant's silence. When one student is included in the dialogue, her pseudonym is given, but when more than one student is responding together, this is indicated by ss.

The presentation of findings is organised around the research questions and the thematic analysis. Chapter 5 addresses teachers' and students' perceptions about the use of Arabic in English classes. These perceptions reflect particular beliefs about how English should be taught and are also influenced by informal language policy. Therefore, chapter 5 explores how power relations and language ideologies affected teachers' and students' attitudes towards the use of languages.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 discuss practical outcomes of these ideologies. They describe what actually happened in English classrooms and how Arabic and English languages were used. Chapter 6 addresses the second research question, which focuses on the different forms of power dynamics that resulted from adherence to particular ideologies about language use. Chapter 7, which relates to the second question, explores the strategies of resistance that took place in the Saudi English classroom as a result of the exercise of power. Chapter 8 is concerned with the final research question. It examines the different functions of the Arabic language in the Saudi English classroom. The findings show how teachers' attitudes and ideologies influenced their language choice and how the inclusion or exclusion of Arabic impacted on power relations in the classroom.

The findings are presented in this way in order to highlight the connection between the major themes of this study. The overarching theme that connects these four chapters is the interrelation between language, power, and ideology in the Saudi English classroom.

## Chapter 5

# Language Ideologies Underpinning Perceptions of the Use of Arabic

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### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first research question: **What language ideologies underpin the perceptions of teachers and university students regarding the use of Arabic in the Saudi tertiary EL classroom?** The findings presented here are based on analysis of the data from interviews with the four teachers and the 20 students who participated in focus groups.

It was essential to explore this issue from the perspectives of both teachers and learners. Teachers' perceptions could reveal the underlying assumptions that influence their teaching practices in relation to the inclusion or exclusion of L1. Students, as the centre of any learning process, could provide essential information about their English learning experiences. Although some recent studies have explored students' opinions about this contested topic (e.g. Brooks-Lewis 2009; Macaro & Lee 2013; Neokleous 2017; Sa'd & Qadermazi 2015; Storch & Wigglesworth 2003; Thongwichit 2013), they were conducted in different contexts, and with students who had different levels of EL proficiency. Little research, however, has been conducted among university level students in the Saudi context to determine their attitudes towards use of Arabic in English classes. The present study aimed to fill this gap. In addition, most research on attitudes towards L1 use has examined the issue from a pedagogical perspective. The findings from this study will contribute to existing knowledge by investigating the language ideologies and power relations that affect perceptions.

It was important to adopt an ideological perspective for a number of reasons. First, as indicated in Chapter 2, there has been rapid growth in English language teaching in the KSA, particularly in higher education where an increasing number of universities are implementing EMI in their scientific, medical and technological majors, and EOA policy is gaining more acceptance, despite research evidence demonstrating the positive functions of L1 in L2 classes. It was essential to explore the reasons behind this discrepancy by exploring the ideological power (Fairclough 1989) that underpins these

policies. Second, many scholars (e.g. Auerbach 1993, 1995; Lin 2013; Rivers 2011) have called on researchers and English teachers to investigate L1 use from the perspective of ideology and power relations to explain the persistence of such exclusionary policies and perceptions. Finally, the adoption of this critical approach reflects my belief, based on long experience in English teaching and immersion in the relevant literature, that excluding L1 from L2 classroom enhances power inequalities, especially in the Saudi classroom, where teachers are already culturally armed with a great deal of power.

The findings presented in this chapter show that the participants, both teachers and students, held widely different opinions about the use of Arabic in English classes. Two teachers positively evaluated the use of Arabic in their classes, but the other two expressed a negative attitude. Students' attitudes varied according to their English proficiency level. Students in the Science Stream showed similar, generally positive attitudes towards the use of Arabic. Health Stream students, in contrast, were less enthusiastic and expressed a preference for the EOA. The participants embraced different ideologies about how English should be learned, which reflected various naturalised assumptions.

## **5.2 Arguments for the Use of Arabic**

Two teachers, Maha and Judy, expressed positive attitudes towards the use of Arabic in the EFL classroom, believing that it was effective and helpful. Maha in particular advocated the use of Arabic by teachers, referring to the cognitive, affective, and pedagogic (Forman 2016) functions Arabic served in English classes (these functions are discussed further in Chapter 8). Teachers' support for L1 use was underpinned by an ideology that considers the emotional and socio-cultural context of students. Maha stated, 'I agree a lot, I use Arabic in teaching English because I think it is very sufficient, it is very important'. She drew on her own experience in learning English bilingually to explain her positive stance:

We used to have an Arabic teacher, a helper with the American teacher. The American teacher never said anything in Arabic although she knew; she was married to an Arabic person. When the helper, the Arabic teacher, felt that a student did not understand anything, she translated to Arabic, so this helped us as students a lot. This [is] what makes me insist on using Arabic inside the classroom if I need of course.

Judy, as a non-Arabic teacher, could not use Arabic in her teaching, but she had no problem with her students using it when they needed to. As she explained:

I think it is fine, I think it is helpful . . . Personally when I am trying to learn another language, if I can't use English myself as a way to translate, I just get overwhelmed or give up, so for me I know it is very important to use it, so I feel it is ok for my students to use it too.

Like Maha, Judy's positive attitude was influenced by her personal experience in learning another language bilingually. She put herself in her students' shoes. Neither talked about teacher training or particular teaching methodologies. This indicates that the two teachers' advocacy of L1 use derives from an ideology that perceives teachers and students as equals rather than adherence to a particular teaching method or language policy. They teach as they themselves learned, without feeling constrained by the monolingual policy.

Maha also talked about her experience in teaching English for more than 14 years:

I have been teaching in Iraq and here. For both students, English is a [foreign] language. Some of them are not prepared, so I feel that it is unfair to keep giving them in English without using Arabic when they need.

This suggests that Maha adopted a broad socio-cultural perspective in her teaching. Her statement that 'English is a [foreign] language' for students in Iraq and Saudi Arabia means that she takes into consideration the actual social context of students and their learning needs, acknowledging that some of them were 'not prepared' enough to be taught using English only because they had graduated from high school with a low-proficiency level. Interestingly, she described the insistence on the English-only approach and exclusion of students' L1 as 'unfair', which implies a social-justice perspective on the issue. She recognised the power inequalities that might result from the implementation of monolingual teaching in English classrooms. Similarly, Judy appeared to refer to the effect of unequal power relations when she commented 'I just get overwhelmed or give up' if she could not translate into her native language.

These responses align with the criticisms of the English-only approach in the Saudi EFL context by Jenkins (2010), Machaal (2012) and (Khresheh 2012) (see Chapter

2). The problems identified by Maha in relation to the EOA have been discussed by a number of scholars and researchers (e.g. Althobaiti 2017; Elmetwally 2012; Ford 2009; Forman 2016; Hamdallah 1999; Weschler 1997) (see Chapter 3).

In summary, these teachers' endorsement of the use of Arabic in the Saudi EFL classroom was based on pragmatic considerations regarding students' socio-cultural context and learning needs. They are in accord with the findings of numerous studies that investigated teachers' perceptions of L1 use from a pedagogical perspective (e.g. Al-balawi 2016; Al-nofaie 2010; Al Hariri 2015; Carless 2007; Gulzar & Al Asmari 2014; Karimian & Mohammadi 2015; McMillan & Rivers 2011) (see Chapter 3).

The students from the Science Stream also talked about the unequal power relations created by the use of the English-only approach. They asserted that it was suitable for a limited number of high proficiency-level students, but that the majority of students would be marginalised and less engaged. They associated the implementation of this approach with silence, disengagement and negative feelings (Auerbach 1995). The overall attitude of these students was that the EOA was inappropriate for them. They reported difficulty communicating in English only, and in many cases were unable to make themselves understood to the teacher, so they had to resort to using gestures. One participant said that she could not understand new vocabulary until she went home and found translations for those words.

The inappropriateness of the EOA for EFL learners has been documented in numerous research studies. Sa'd & Qadermazi (2015) investigated the perceptions of intermediate EFL learners in an Iranian institute where a strict English-only policy was adopted. The study revealed positive attitudes towards use of the students' L1 (Persian) and the researcher recommended that the judicious inclusion of L1 in EFL contexts was more suitable than the EOA, which was mostly based on ideological assumptions rather than on scientific research. These researchers, therefore, challenged the assumption that L1 delayed the learning of L2 and called for the EOA to be re-examined.

The use of Arabic was positively evaluated by the Science Stream participants, and they identified many advantages. One student described the use of Arabic by the teacher as 'beautiful', and another said, 'it is a must'. The participants from all Science Stream groups identified various cognitive, pedagogical and affective functions of the use of Arabic (see Chapter 8 for elaboration). They also expressed a preference for bilingual

teachers who could speak their native language. These findings are consistent with those from various recent studies in different EFL contexts studies that reported positive attitudes among university students towards the use of their L1 in EFL classrooms such as Thongwichit (2013) and Brooks-Lewis (2009).

At the same time, Maha, Judy and the majority of the Science Stream participants acknowledged drawbacks in the over-use of Arabic. Both teachers emphasised the importance of learners speaking the target language, because this must be the ultimate aim of language teaching:

If I translate all the time, if I teach English in Arabic, it will affect negatively.  
(Maha)

I don't think that it should be used all the time because you should encourage them to use the new language as much as possible. (Judy)

The students indicated that the teacher's use of Arabic should be limited to certain situations when the use of English alone did not work. They acknowledged that overreliance on Arabic could delay English learning because they would wait for translation and not attempt to speak English. As one student reported, 'I recognised the harm of using too much Arabic when I travelled abroad. I was not able to communicate.' Another mentioned that during intermediate school, she was taught grammar in Arabic, so when she went to high school, she was not able to cope with the new level of English. These students' awareness of the negative effects of the extensive use of Arabic is consistent with previous research findings that, while students had positive attitudes towards the use of L1, they understood that its injudicious use could be counterproductive to the goal of learning English (e.g. Al-nofaie 2010; Sa'd & Qadermazi 2015; Storch & Wigglesworth 2003; Thongwichit 2013).

Interestingly, the teachers seemed to have underestimated students' awareness of the shortcomings of over-reliance on Arabic. They believed students would prefer to use Arabic all the time:

Students would love to be taught English in Arabic, not to say single English word in the classroom, students would love it because it is easier for them because listening to a foreign language all the time or being given instructions in English

all the time is difficult ... As much as they will find a chance, they will use [Arabic]. I told you they would love use it because it is easier for them. (Maha)

Similarly, Salma, the third participant teacher, commented, 'If the teacher gives them the chance to use their mother tongue, they will use it most of the time, and if I insist on making them use just English, they will use it'. This perception, arguably based on an unexamined common-sense assumption, is in contrast to what the students were saying. In fact, students believed their English learning needs were more effectively met by the judicious use of Arabic, but they were aware that too much reliance on it could hinder their learning. Some researchers (e.g. Neokleous 2017; Sa'd & Qadermazi 2015) have emphasised the importance of teachers taking students' needs and preferences into account when planning lessons and selecting teaching strategies rather than relying on their personal beliefs. They encourage teachers to increase their awareness of students' needs regarding the use of L1 when learning L2, which is an important form of acknowledgement.

In summary, the positive perceptions of teachers towards the use of L1 in the English classroom were underpinned by a bilingual ideology that was not only pedagogically driven. Rather, it derived from awareness of students' English learning needs from a socio-cultural perspective, was informed by their positive personal experiences of the role of L1 in education, and reflected a belief in the equality of teachers and students. The students who expressed positive attitudes towards the use of Arabic in the English classroom gave various pedagogical reasons and also identified aspects of power relations associated with the monolingual ideology. They were aware of the potential disadvantages of overusing Arabic, but their teachers were operating under a different set of assumptions.

The following section discusses some common-sense assumptions associated with the monolingual ideology.

### **5.3 Arguments for the English-only Approach**

The monolingual ideology involves a number of assumptions about English language teaching that have dominated the field of ELT for a long time. Fairclough (1989) argues that "conventions routinely drawn upon in discourse embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere 'common sense', and which contribute to sustaining

existing power relations” (p. 77). Some of these assumptions were detected in the findings of this research. These included the belief that English should be learned in isolation from students’ L1 in order to avoid interference between the two languages. Some participants believed that the presence of Arabic would affect the amount of English students could be exposed to, while others thought that native English speakers were a model that students should follow in order to learn English properly. These ideological assumptions had an impact on the legitimacy of Arabic in English classes and positioned Arabic at a lower status than English, consistent with Fairclough’s (1989) argument that common sense operates “in the service of power”( p. 77).

### **5.3.1 Language Interference**

Language interference is one of the main arguments for the monolingual or English-only approach. The advocates of this approach claim that the use of L1 leads to its linguistic components, such as sounds, grammar and structures, being transferred into L2; that is, there is interference between the two languages (Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins 2011). Language interference was raised as a key issue against the use of L1 in this research. Two of the participant teachers argued for the importance of separating English and Arabic in Saudi EL classrooms. A similar attitude was adopted by the Health Stream students. This assumption was based on a perception of the two languages as two different worlds that should never meet, even in the learner’s mind. Expressing her negative attitude towards the use of Arabic in English classes, Salma said “I am sure it hinders their learning of the target language”, justifying her opinion in this way:

Students have to think in the target language to give their ideas. If they think in Arabic, they cannot speak the target language. Their pronunciation comes as Arabic accent; ideas, structure come out as Arabic not English, so they are going to speak what I call Arabic English not English itself ... It could take the students far away from learning the language because they are speaking Arabic, so their thoughts, ideas, will be far away from the lesson. They will start chatting or giving wrong ideas.

These comments indicate that Salma believed that, when learners are allowed to use Arabic, they will rely on it to produce English. That is, they will mentally process the English information they receive using Arabic. As a result, the English output would be

what she called ‘Arabic English’. She therefore preferred her students to learn English in isolation from Arabic, without even thinking in Arabic. In other words, she saw Arabic and English as two different entities with clear boundaries between them.

These comments demonstrate how the principles of the monolingual approach encourage teachers to immerse learners in the target language by excluding their first language (it could take the students far away from learning the language). Yet, the two languages inevitably interact with each other in learners’ minds (Forman 2007; Halasa & Manaseer 2012; Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins 2011). As Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins (2011) argue: “The bilingual brain does not store the two languages in separate boxes which are completely isolated from each other. Rather the two languages are in contact and talk to each other” (p. 4).

The monolingual ideology expects English teachers and learners to behave as if they do not know any language other than English, but this goal is unfeasible (Cenoz & Gorter 2013) because it contradicts the natural processes taking place in learners’ minds through L1. The teacher argued for the importance of thinking in L2 by students, but thinking is an unseen mental process, and it is hard for any teacher to determine whether students are thinking in L1 or L2. Second language learners naturally think in L1 to produce L2. Teachers might be able to prevent learners from speaking L1 in the English classroom, but they cannot control the invisible presence of L1 in learners’ minds (Butzkamm 2003; Cook 2001; Kerr 2015) (see Chapter 3). Weschler (1997) refuted the isolation assumption by examining what happens in second language classrooms where students make use of either mental or oral translation in order to process the new language information. The isolation assumption ignores the cognitive role of L1 in L2 acquisition, that is, the processing of L2 knowledge through the existing L1 knowledge which takes place in the learner’s mind during the learning of L2 (Forman 2016).

Moreover, the ‘Arabic English’ which Salma derided can be viewed from other perspectives. First, there is widespread acceptance of the existence of different varieties of English in the world. ‘Gulf English’ (Fussell 2011) and ‘Saudi English’ (Mahboob 2013), among others, have developed as a result of the spread of English, and these varieties challenge the Standard English ideology (McKay 2010; Tollefson 2007). Second, the emergence of ‘Arabic English’ is an indication that students are creating a new identity; Saudi students might want to speak English in their own way instead of

mimicking one form of English. This ‘Arabic English’ represents students’ identity when they interact in the international domain. This phenomenon is occurring everywhere, and Saudi students are no exception. Thus, this new variety of English can be interpreted not just as language interference, but as something positive, rather than as a weakness that justifies the exclusion of L1 from English classrooms.

Rita’s attitude towards the use of Arabic also reflected the language interference assumption. She advocated the EOA and emphasised that this approach was necessary with her students because ‘they are beginners, so they should speak English, and teacher should speak English only’. She then moderated her response somewhat: ‘At the school level, it will be fine if they use Arabic and English together, translate some words, but in university level I do not think so’. This contains an internal contradiction: She acknowledges the appropriateness of using Arabic for translation with school level students, but not for her students even though she described them as ‘beginners’. She went on to talk about her experience in teaching beginners:

What is my experience slowly and gradually they start catching the words, catching sentences and after finishing the term, I found them very improved in English; they can speak like a beginner at least.

It is clear that some teachers’ adoption of the English-only approach is based on the belief that learning a second language is similar to learning the first language, and that students learn English exactly as they learned their L1 by ‘slowly and gradually . . . catching the words, catching sentences’; therefore, L2 can be learned without relying on L1. This assumption is refuted by a number of linguists and researchers (e.g. Butzkamm 2003; Cook 2001; Weschler 1997). Cook (2001), for instance, argues that L2 learners have more linguistic and social skills than L1 learners, and that such skills facilitate the learning of L2 (see Chapter 3).

Rita’s comment that the EOA is suitable for teaching beginners further implies that it leads to limited learning outcomes. Using this method, she expected this outcome from her students: ‘after finishing the term, I found them very improved in English; they can speak like a beginner at least’. Thus, the result she appears to expect is for the students to make very limited progress. This is precisely the ‘child-like’ outcome that Auerbach (1995) and Hamdallah (1999) associated with the EOA. The claim that EOA is useful

with beginners is also contradicted by research that identified the positive roles of L1 for low proficiency learners (e.g. Machaal 2012; Weschler 1997).

Moreover, the monolingual ideology and its associated assumptions do not take into consideration the socio-cultural context of students. Salma, for instance, did not refer to her students' needs or real life circumstances. As discussed in previous chapters, English learners in the KSA tend to have low motivation for learning English. The teachers' interviews also revealed that the majority of their students had low proficiency levels. Rita's goal of preparing her students to speak at a beginner level is in contradiction with the aim of the intensive English course provided for PYP students, which is to prepare them for EMI future majors. Does this limited result meet the desired goal for university students studying 12 hours a week for four months? Kerr (2015) observes that the English-only approach is not supported by published research over the last 15 years, and indicates that teachers nowadays tend to adopt a more practical approach towards L1 use that takes account of the teaching context and learners' needs.

The Health Stream students, however, appeared to have adopted the language interference assumption. They expressed extremely negative attitudes towards the use of Arabic in the EFL classroom. When they were asked about the advantages of using Arabic in the EFL classroom, one responded, 'I do not see any advantages', while another commented, 'There are more disadvantages in the use of Arabic than advantages'. Their comments implied a stigmatised status for Arabic. They believed the use of Arabic should be limited to weak students, and that it should be used only as a last resort to teach vocabulary when other ways of conveying meaning had failed. These comments suggest that this ideology was deeply entrenched in this group of students.

The following section discusses another assumption of the monolingual ideology.

### **5.3.2 Maximum Exposure to English**

Exposing English learners to a maximum amount of English is one of the assumptions adopted by the supporters of the monolingual approach to argue against the inclusion of L1 in the English classroom (Cook 2001; Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins 2011). This assumption was also evident in the data. Rita, for instance, commented:

If we use the mother tongue language in the classroom, students will expect more use of it, so it is better not to use it and let them speak English only ... If teacher

uses Arabic and let students use it, I think they will expect more of Arabic; they also depend on their language that is easier than the foreign language.

The Health Stream students expressed a similar attitude. They reported that the teacher should be strict and should keep the use of Arabic limited, otherwise students' speaking skills would not improve: they would wait for a translation, and come to rely on Arabic to learn English. Some believed that the English teacher should not use Arabic at all and, whenever she needed a translation, a student should provide it. One participant gave the following justification:

Because the students should be used to the use of English only by the teacher to improve their level in English and to recognise that they should speak English with the teacher. This motivates them to learn English. If the teacher says the meaning in Arabic, I won't do any effort to find the meaning of the word.

This argument against the use of Arabic reflects the belief that the use of Arabic by the teacher would lead to more Arabic in the class and consequently students' exposure to the target language would be reduced. This assumption has been challenged by the results of a considerable number of studies that confirmed the positive roles of L1 in facilitating the learning of L2 and improving its output (see Chapter 3). Exposing students to L2 does not necessarily mean that L1 use is harmful, since a certain amount of L1, used systematically, can support L2 learning (Cook 2001).

Advocates of this position also base their argument on the assumption that the English teacher and classroom are the only resources for learning English, but this is not the case nowadays. The English classroom is no longer the only source of English language because students can learn from the online environment (Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins 2011). This was confirmed by the participating students, who reported that they learned a lot by playing online games with people from different English-speaking countries and by watching YouTube. According to Lam (2000), a student who was excluded and marginalised in the English classroom because he did not speak like a native could increase his self-confidence, develop a new identity, and improve his literacy skills by joining a chat room on the internet which allowed him to feel connected with the worldwide English-speaking community. Students nowadays have more opportunities to learn English than students in the past. This situation undermines the claim that the

presence of L1 in English classroom will reduce the amount of English students need to be exposed to in the classroom

The Health Stream students described the EOA as the best way of learning English, and they believed that the EOA was effective for them. They perceived the EOA as beneficial because it pushed them to improve their level of English proficiency by, for instance, learning how to construct sentences correctly, and forcing them to take language learning more seriously. One possible explanation for this preference could be that they had had negative learning experiences at school, where teachers used Arabic extensively. Their strong support of the EOA could also be related to their future needs. They had graduated with high grades from high school and were expected to specialise in medicine or pharmacy the following year. They were therefore highly motivated to learn to speak English because it is the language of instruction for all subjects.

The preference for EOA among high proficiency learners is documented in research. Macaro & Lee (2013) investigated the opinions of Korean students (aged 12 years) and adults (university level) towards L1 use and EO instruction. Both groups opposed the exclusion of L1 from the classroom. Children embraced the use of L1, although adults were more accepting of EO instruction due to their longer experience in language learning and their higher proficiency levels. Al Hariri (2015) found that the majority of advanced English learners preferred the EOA, however about one-third of the participants acknowledged the positive role of Arabic in facilitating communication with their teacher and classmates. Tajgozari (2017) reported a relationship between students' English proficiency level and preference for the inclusion of L1; 90% of elementary, 73.3% of intermediate, and 52.1% of advanced students had positive attitudes towards L1 (see Chapter 3).

The Health Stream students' preference for the EOA seems to have been ideologically based. Like Salma and Rita, they talked about the EOA and its associated assumptions as matters of fact that excluded alternative approaches. This illustrates "how ideologies are embedded in features of discourse which are taken for granted as matters of common sense" (Fairclough 1989, p. 77). The danger of adopting a particular ideology lies in the fact that it prevents a person from re-thinking or re-evaluating her beliefs - what Fairclough (1989) refers to as the "invisibility" that is "achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background

assumptions” (p. 85). These students’ negative perspectives towards the inclusion of Arabic in the English classroom lends some support to the warning by Faruk (2014a) and Al-Jarf (2008), among others, that the use of English as the medium of instruction at tertiary level and its increasing acceptance by university students indicates that English is perceived as superior to Arabic, which has been assigned a limited role in teaching subjects like religion and history. These researchers believe that the status of Arabic is threatened at the Saudi tertiary educational level (see Chapter 2).

The contrast between these students’ support for the EOA and the attitudes of the Science Stream students raises questions about the tension between advanced-level and low-proficiency students in relation to including or excluding L1 in the classroom. Auerbach (1993) argues that this tension can be resolved by posing the question to students for reflection and dialogue, which allows for power sharing in the classroom. These contrasting stances among students, however, can be seen to reflect an ideological struggle over language which, according to Fairclough (1989), comes from “differences in position, experience and interest between social groupings, which enter into relationships ... with each other in terms of power” (p. 88). When the advanced students argued for the EOA, they failed to acknowledge the existence of other students with less English proficiency, who would be overwhelmed by such an approach. The following section discusses another widely held common-sense assumption.

### **5.3.3 Nativespeakerism**

The assumption that the native speaker is the ideal teacher of English (Phillipson 1992) and that native speakers are “the guardians of standard English” (McKay 2010, p. 110) was evident in the opinions of some teachers and students, and this has a number of implications for EFL learners. Salma’s comments about the EOA implied an idealisation of English native-speakers and their culture and a lower status for Arabic language and culture:

The more you try to follow the culture of the language, the more you think as the native speakers of the language, the better you get in acquiring the language. If you use your own environment, your own culture, it will not help.

Salma’s reasons for refusing to allow Arabic need to be interpreted through the lens of nativespeakerism ideology. She obtained her master degree from the UK, so her reference

to ‘native English speakers’ mostly refers to those from Inner Circle countries. Clearly, she is committed to this ideology in her insistence on excluding the learners’ local language and culture, which she positions as a hindrance to English learning. Despite her strong belief in the use of Arabic in English classes, Maha referred to the notion of *foreign culture* while defending the use of Arabic:

If I need to explain something in the foreign culture, a reading text let’s say, and there are couple of expressions, which are really new for the students, and it is not used in their culture, like customs, traditions. If I give them more than one explanation in English, they won’t get the idea exactly, so I try to alternate in Arabic, give them the example in Arabic and try to explain in Arabic, so they get it.

This nativespeakerism ideology also influenced the students. The Health Stream students expressed appreciation of the fact that they were being taught by a native English speaking teacher. They reported that she made them take their learning of English seriously, and motivated them to improve their level. They viewed the NEST as the perfect teacher and judged the Saudi teachers as less qualified because of their use of Arabic. Therefore, they strongly advocated the EOA and evaluated it as the best way of learning English.

This powerful nativespeakerism ideology raises a number of questions: Who is this so-called native speaker? Do Saudi students or EFL learners in general need or desire to sound like so-called native English speakers regardless of who these native speakers are? Do students need to be immersed in the English culture to acquire English? If yes, which culture should they learn? Is it the American, the British, or the Australian culture? In fact, the English language is not owned by any particular country or culture. The argument for learning the target culture or sounding like a native speaker is losing its credibility, especially in EFL contexts where students come from completely different cultures. Holliday (2017 ) calls for making a shift in English language teaching by acknowledging the NNEST and students’ cultural and linguistic experiences and replacing authentic American or British content with more meaningful material that belongs to students’ own culture.

The purpose of studying English in EFL contexts is different from those purposes in ESL contexts. EFL learners study English not because they are interested in it or need

it, but because English is a subject that they need to pass (see Chapters 2 and 3). Their motivations to learn English are generally low, and they have no desire to sound like native speakers. There are certain things learners need to know about a language, such as intonation, stress and pronunciation, but they are not concerned about sounding like native speakers or engaging in the foreign culture of English. McKay (2003) argues that such learners have limited purposes for learning and using English, which differ from those of learners who live in English-speaking countries, and which

...undermine the traditional relationship that has existed between culture and the learning of English, in which the teaching of English has often involved learning about the concerns and cultures of what Kachru (1985) terms Inner Circle countries (McKay 2003, p. 2).

The native-like goal associated with the monolingual approach is unreachable for the majority of EFL learners (Cook 1999). McKay (2003) argues that the quantity and quality of English to which learners in the Outer or Expanding Circle are exposed are restricted, so it is unlikely they will acquire a native-like competence. It is clear that this ideology positions EFL learners as deficient. It portrays them as unable to reach the desirable goal of English learning, which is to sound like native speakers, and as lacking access to the so-called native culture. The belief that underlies the nativespeakerism ideology is that learners are seeking a goal that they are incapable of attaining.

Holliday (2006) argues that nativespeakerism ideology has a great impact on ELT and asserts that this ideology implies othering of students and NNESTs, and this led to cultural reduction since it problematizes the NNESTs and their culture describing them as dependent, passive, uncritical, and easily-dominated. NESTs, on the other hand, are perceived by this ideology as unproblematic. This ideology involves a marketing of NEST and western teaching methods such as learner-centeredness and collaborative learning as superior teaching methods, and it presented NNEST as deficient and unable to achieve any success in their profession without receiving guidance and assistance from the West (Holliday 2006).

In summary, these findings show how deeply entrenched these common sense ideologies about how English should be taught and learned are in the Saudi EFL context. They influence teachers' and students' attitudes alike. Although some participants in this research showed positive attitudes towards the use of Arabic in the Saudi EFL classroom,

confirming the findings of numerous other studies, the negative attitudes of others were clearly derived from a number of false assumptions. These assumptions are not driven by personal beliefs only, but are influenced by language policies that naturalised them within the common sense ideology of the English Language Centre at Future University, as discussed in the following section.

#### **5.4 Informal Language Policy**

The language policy adopted by educational institutions has a great impact on language choices and teaching practices. According to Fairclough (1989), “institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations” (p. 33). In this research, the EOA was informally embraced by the language policy in the English Language Centre at Future University and was imposed on all the Arabic and non-Arabic teachers (see Chapter 4) despite the positive functions of L1 documented in research (e.g. Al-nofaie 2010; Halasa & Manaseer 2012; Machaal 2012; Storch & Aldosari 2010; Thongwichit 2013; Weschler 1997).

As Salma reported, ‘We have been told directly by the responsible people, the coordinators, that from the beginning we should not use the mother tongue in classes’. This policy was also imposed on the non-Arabic teachers. Rita strongly defended the EO policy:

We are getting so many times instructions from the director and coordinators that we should not use Arabic in the class because this is a language Centre, and we are preparing students to learn English. They are already perfect in Arabic, and we should not give them chance to speak their language. How can they learn English otherwise?

These comments clearly indicate that this language policy has become naturalised. The teachers accept it without question as normal and necessary. As Fairclough (1989) explains, “a dominant discourse is subject to a process of naturalization, in which it appears to lose its connection with particular ideologies and interests and becomes the common-sense practice of the institution” (p. 107). Maha explained the Centre’s policy from a decision-maker’s point of view:

Maybe the decision makers here do not want things to get out of control. I was a coordinator here, and I was a coordinator in Iraq, and I know how they think and what they believe. Three weeks ago, one teacher said, ‘I translate everything in class’. Now this is what the decision makers do not want to happen. There is not a certain rule to tell the teacher use Arabic here and use English there. So they try to make as less problems and as less insufficient teaching inside the classroom as less as they can, so they ask us not to use Arabic because they do not want things to go into translation inside classrooms.

This comment is significant as it discloses some of the reasons behind the adoption of the EO policy. It seems that, in part, the policy was imposed in reaction to the teaching practices employed by certain teachers which relied heavily on translation. Rather than educating these teachers about the optimal use of Arabic in English classes, the decision-makers completely prohibited its use. Similar situations have been reported in many EFL contexts, where the grammar translation method was replaced by the EOA in order to avoid the negative consequences of that method. Although it was clear that teachers were aware of the no-Arabic rule, some continued to use it for a variety of reasons - because students’ proficiency level was low, because the teacher herself lacked English competence, or because she was uncertain about how to use the EOA.

There was some ambiguity around the non-Arabic policy, which was generally only conveyed verbally to teachers and was not formally incorporated in written guidelines. According to Maha, for instance:

I do not believe we received anything. Maybe once when I first came before four years for a special case because it was a problem or something, so they sent us an email. They did not send anything written after that concerning using Arabic inside the classroom.

This lack of a clearly formulated language policy and guidelines supports Rivers’s (2011) contention that language policies in EFL contexts are not based on pedagogical motivations, but are driven by ideological assumptions. Such policy can be seen as “the result of blind acceptance of certain dogma” (Weschler 1997, p. 87).

As an insider researcher, I can confirm that the Centre’s language policy was influenced by the kinds of ideologies embraced by the teachers. For instance, native

speakers are preferred as teachers of Health Stream students. At the time of the study, there were six groups of students in the Health Stream who were expected to enter medicine and pharmacy majors the following year. Five of the six teachers assigned to these groups were native English speakers of American or British nationality; the exception was a Saudi teacher who had obtained a master degree from an Australian university. Second, the course book of the Preparatory Year Program was prepared and written by an Australian University. These practices imply that “the native speaker is the most qualified provider of the purest kind of standard language skills and knowledge” (Mahboob & Lin 2016, p. 31). The language policy of the Centre not only idealised native speakers, but also problematized local teachers for using Arabic and located them in an inferior position. As Rita commented, ‘because we have Arabic teachers; we have Saudi teachers, and the instructions are for them’. Similarly, according to Salma:

If we use the mother tongue, most of the teachers are non-Arabic speakers, so why some of the teachers use Arabic while others cannot, so it will not be fair. That is why we have to use English only.

Although this claim may sound logical, it is not supported by the data collected for this research, which indicated that non-Arab teachers were required to have a reasonable level of Arabic because in many contexts advanced level students were required to translate English into Arabic for their peers. Also, these comments differentiated teachers working at the centre as Arab and non-Arab. Thus the English-only policy accorded higher status to native English speaker teachers while the local teachers were seen as less qualified.

The lower status of Arabic is also indicated in the fact that the non-Arabic teachers in this research had not attempted to learn the language, despite their long residency in the KSA. Rita described her Arabic proficiency: ‘It is below average I think. I cannot speak Arabic, I can understand because this is 16, 17 years I am living here in KSA’. However, she never tried to learn Arabic in order to improve communication with her students. She said that she hoped to learn Arabic as a language but not to use it with her students. Judy had also lived for several years in the KSA, but she had not tried to learn Arabic despite acknowledging that it would have helped her teaching:

I do think it helps to know Arabic because ... it depends on the level of students. My students now are quite a high level learners, there are a few lower students.

sometimes I ask the other students to come and help me if I am explaining something, and mostly in terms of how to run a class whether it is a concept or grammar or something usually I can explain in English alone, that is fine, but when they try to explain to me why they come late to the class, or sometimes they ask me question and I cannot understand them, I do feel that it is quiet useful if I knew Arabic because I need Arabic speakers to come and help me.

The interviews and observation data in fact showed that the non-Arab teachers needed Arabic in many situations to communicate fully and effectively with their students; however, they did not act on their claims that it would be beneficial to learn Arabic. Therefore, rather than prohibiting the use of L1 because some teachers cannot use it, English teachers who lack fluency in L1 are advised to develop their knowledge in L1 and to benefit from their students' linguistic knowledge (Atkinson 1987; Cole 1998).

In summary, the Centre's policy requires university students in their first year to study between 12 and 15 hours a week of English, during which English only must be used. Arabic should be avoided regardless of students' level in English because English will be the language of instruction for both the Science and Health Streams. This policy implies a stigmatisation of the Arabic language and positions English as the superior language of science. Zughoul (2003) argues that these language policies in higher education represent a "sharp regression" in the status of Arabic and exemplifies "a return of the imperialist neo-colonialist English medium education" (p. 123) (see Chapter 2).

#### **5.4.1 Implications of Language Policy**

The top-down EO policy imposed on the teachers had a number of implications for teachers and students alike. It created tensions, contradictions and resistance (see Chapter 7). Teachers felt conflicted whenever they used Arabic, even when they were ideologically in favour of its use. In response to questions about their feelings when they used Arabic, Salma said, 'I don't like it. I don't like myself when I have to use Arabic . . . when I use it, I feel guilty actually'. This type of feeling was not unexpected due to her strong beliefs about the use of EOA, but she also commented that she used Arabic to achieve a range of pedagogical purposes during her classes. The observation of her classes confirmed this, as discussed in detail in Chapter 8. Maha expressed similar feelings:

I do feel guilty when I have to translate some of the expressions or sentences while reading because it will break the beauty of the whole meaning of the paragraph. Maybe with reading I feel guiltier when I use Arabic.

When her students used Arabic, she reported, ‘It is not a nice feeling. It really makes me irritated sometimes because they are supposed to use English’.

In summary, the two teachers experienced negative feelings and guilt when they used Arabic because this contravened the Centre’s English-only policy. Similar findings have been reported in other contexts (Atkinson (1987); Halasa & Manaseer (2012); Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins (2011). Auerbach (1993), for instance, found that 80% of participant teachers allowed their students to use L1; however, “the English-only axiom is so strong that they didn’t trust their own practice: They assigned a negative value to “lapses” into the L1, seeing them as failures or aberrations, a cause for guilt” (p. 14).

The informal EO policy was also responsible for contradictions between belief and practice among some participants. For example, Rita’s students reported that she sometimes asked them to translate, which contradicted what she said in interview and what I observed in her classes. Another example of these contradictions between teachers’ beliefs and practices was observed in Salma’s class. In the interview she talked about the importance of using Arabic to give exam instructions, but during class observation she behaved in a different way, as shown in the following observation from my field notes.

### **Observation 5.1**

There was a mid-term speaking exam during the last 30 minutes of Salma’s class. Before the exam, the teacher used Arabic to tell the students who should stay and who should leave as not all students were supposed to do the exam on that day. The teacher named the four students who should sit for the exam saying, ‘for now, I need Bashayer, Sarah, Nada, and Nourah’. Then she explained the task of the speaking exam for the four students in English only, and she gave all the exam instructions in English. The students looked unsure of what they should do, so they asked the teacher in Arabic to make sure of what was required from them for the exam, but the teacher did not reply their questions, and she reminded them that it was a speaking exam, and that they should speak English only!

This incident not only illustrates a contradiction between her beliefs and practice in relation to the use of Arabic, but also indicates an unnecessarily strict implementation of the EOA. This was the first speaking exam for those students, and the teacher's insistence on using English only can be seen as the exercise of power (see Chapter 6).

My role as an insider researcher (see Chapter 4) also appeared to have had an impact on teachers' stated opinions and practices in classrooms. In addition to my teaching role, I worked as a coordinator and was responsible for monitoring the work of a number of teachers. It is likely that this powerful position influenced some teachers to portray themselves as committed to the language policy of the Centre. As Foucault (1977) has argued, the presence of a symbol of authority can lead to self-surveillance. This may have affected what the teachers said in interview and how they behaved in the classroom when I was present.

Contradictions between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices have been documented in many studies and have been variously interpreted. For example, Edstrom (2006) reported from her self-study that her own L1 practices contradicted her pedagogical beliefs regarding the exclusive use of L2. She explained this in terms of her moral obligation to her students: 'my concern about my students as individuals, as human beings, at times transcends my concern for their L2 acquisition process' (p. 286). Alsaawi (2013) investigated the inconsistency between teachers' attitudes and practices regarding the use of students' L1 in a Saudi university. He found that, although teachers expressed strict views about the use of Arabic in English classes, in practice they regularly used Arabic. The researcher attributed this to the students' low level of English. He concluded that the teachers' views had been influenced by the general attitude of English staff in the university, which opposed the use of Arabic in English classes, although no pressure was exerted on teachers to avoid L1. This influence had not, however, extended to their practices.

Farrell & Lim (2005) compared the beliefs of two English language teachers about teaching grammar with their actual classroom practices and found divergences, which they attributed to a range of factors. For example, teachers' practices were affected by external factors such as time, school and parents. Teachers' strong emotional attachment to traditional grammar teaching also influenced their teaching despite their stated preference for a communicative approach.

Farrell & Kun (2007) studied the connection between top-down imposed language policy and teachers' beliefs and practices in the Singaporean language classroom. They described teachers' reaction to language policy as a complex process that involved feelings of confusion and tension. Although teachers' practices were consistent with their beliefs, those beliefs were themselves in conflict, and the teachers' actual practices were influenced by the strength of their beliefs. For instance, the teachers experienced tension between the goal of building rapport with students by using simple English and that of producing academic English to meet the language policy requirements. The teachers were confused about the language policy, and had different understandings of it. Therefore, the authors recommended consulting teachers before any language policy is implemented in the classroom.

In the present study, the inconsistency between beliefs and practices seems to have resulted from the language policy that normalised the EOA and positioned it as the norm for both teachers and students. Interestingly, observations conducted in the Health Stream classroom showed a contradiction between what the students reported in the focus group and what actually happened in their classroom. The students expressed extremely negative attitudes towards the use of Arabic, which they saw as disadvantageous, and described the EOA as the best way of teaching English. However, they acknowledged that Arabic could be useful in the classroom for certain purposes, such as explaining exam instructions and facilitating pair or group work. They also reported that their teacher sometimes asked the higher proficiency students to translate some vocabulary for the rest of the class. Their teacher acknowledged various roles for Arabic, and these were observed in their classroom (see Chapter 8). Thus these students' attitudes seem to have been ideologically based under the influence of the Centre's language policy, which naturalised the monolingual ideology and led to negative perceptions towards the use of Arabic. Fairclough (1989) argues that institutional authorities exercise power through consent, which he refers to as *ideological power*, the exercise of which results in people unconsciously accepting certain practices. These students never questioned English as the medium of instruction for their current and future study, seeing it as natural.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Analysis of teachers' and students' attitudes towards the inclusion of L1 in English classes identified various ideologically driven stances. The bilingual ideology adopted by some participants stemmed from real life experiences. These teachers drew on their own

learning and teaching practices, which strengthened their beliefs in the practicality of using Arabic. Their opinions were influenced by their perception of students and teachers as equals. They adopted a broad socio-cultural view that considered students' circumstances and learning needs. The majority of students were in favour of Arabic for its pedagogic roles in English classes. They associated the EOA with marginalisation, inequality and disengagement. All participants referred to the drawbacks associated with the extensive use of Arabic, and expressed a generally positive attitude towards the learning of English.

Some participants adopted a monolingual ideology that aligned with the Centre's language policy. The findings showed that some common assumptions and ideologies around the teaching of English were embedded in the Saudi tertiary context. The monolingual ideology with its associated assumptions, such as language interference, maximum exposure to English, and the idealisation of English native speakers, had a considerable impact on participants' attitudes towards the status of Arabic in English classes. This is consistent with Auerbach's (1993) argument that the English-only approach "is rooted in a particular ideological perspective", and it "rests on unexamined assumptions" (p. 9). The informal language policy that supported the EOA had many implications for teachers' and students' beliefs and practices, resulting in various contradictions and conflicted feelings of shame and guilt.

The next chapter examines how these ideologies were reflected in teachers' practices around the exercise of power in Saudi tertiary EL classrooms.

## Chapter 6

### Power Practices in Saudi EL Classrooms

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#### 6.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter explored the language ideologies that underpin the ban on Arabic in Saudi EL classrooms. This chapter addresses the second research question by exploring the ways in which power was practised in Saudi English classrooms. It explores how the ideologies held by the teachers were reflected in their teaching practices. Analysis of the data showed that teachers disciplined students either through surveillance or through the use of the Arabic language. They also exercised power by using the English-only approach, and by employing teacher-oriented practices.

It is not an easy task to analyse power practices as most of them have been normalised and are accepted as common sense (Fairclough 1989). Foucault's (1977) analysis of power provided a useful approach for understanding the ways in which apparently 'normal' teaching practices in the classroom (such as teacher-centred teaching) in fact imply a power practice. Foucault's approach helped me to understand how the discipline of students through dynamics such as the physical arrangement of the classroom and the teachers' gaze kept students under observation all the time. Fairclough's (1989) analysis of power *in discourse* was beneficial in indicating the ways in which the English language was used by some teachers to control students and exercise power over them.

I investigated power practices through class observations and interviews with teachers. During class observations, I recorded incidents that involved different power practices by the teachers and sometimes by the students (see Appendix C). Interviews with teachers provided many further examples of how teachers exerted their power in the classroom. I did not ask the teachers directly about the exercise of power. Rather, I asked them to talk about their roles and those of their students and whether they aimed to create a teacher-centred or student-centred classroom. I also asked their opinions about their students' right to disagree with or reject classroom practices. From the teachers' answers to these questions, I was able to gain an understanding about the ways in which the teachers unconsciously exercised power in their classrooms.

This chapter reviews the ways in which the teachers exercised power through surveillance, use of the Arabic language to discipline students, the adoption of a teacher-centred approach in the classroom, and the insistence on an English-only policy.

## **6.2 Disciplinary Strategies**

Discipline is a power practice that is mostly maintained through surveillance. For Foucault (1977), “a relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching” (p. 176). The teachers employed different procedures to maintain surveillance in their classrooms. Some teachers arranged their classrooms in a way that exposed students to maximum visibility by separating students’ seats into sections and dividing students into groups for various tasks. Examinations and punishment were also used by some teachers to exercise disciplinary power over students.

### **6.2.1 Traditional Physical Arrangement of Classrooms**

The physical environment of the classroom is important for students. Teachers are advised to make classrooms as comfortable by keeping them neat and orderly and arranging students’ seats appropriately (Brown 2007). The physical arrangement of the classroom can also help teachers to maintain discipline by facilitating surveillance.

The classroom observations showed that the non-Arab teachers utilised classroom space to achieve discipline and to maintain control over their classrooms. Judy’s and Rita’s classrooms had a traditional physical arrangement. There was a chair and a large desk for the teacher at the front of the room. Students were seated on chairs with small desks attached to them, facing the teacher’s desk in straight rows. Students were divided into three sections with enough space between them for the teacher to pass through. Such a traditional arrangement allowed teachers to observe all the students, because they could walk around easily to watch them as they performed tasks and observe their behaviour. These practices of constant observation enhanced the teachers’ disciplinary power.

The observational data in this study indicated that the traditional physical arrangement had positive effects on students. It enabled the teachers to assist students who needed support and re-engage students whose attention might have wandered. Rita, for instance, could see that some of her students had not brought their books and pens although they were sitting at the very back of the classroom. Other positive effects of this nonverbal disciplinary power were observed in Judy’s classroom. She walked around

students to make sure they were doing what they were meant to do. Her constant surveillance kept them on track and ensured all students were engaged in the tasks. This supports Foucault's contention that power in the modern age can be productive rather than oppressive because it regulates people's behaviour (Bălan 2010; Ford 2003; Mills 2003; Schirato, Danaher & Webb 2012).

[W]e must overcome the idea that power is oppression, because – even in their most radical form- oppressive measures are not just repression and censorship, but they are also productive, causing new behaviours to emerge (Bălan 2010, p. 56).

These practices are not uncommon in teaching. Brown (2007), for example, advises teachers to have frequent eye contact with students and to walk around the classroom rather than remaining in the same place for the whole class period. However, he adds that having a well-organised classroom does not mean arranging students in rigid rows as in a military formation; rather students can sit in u-shapes or circles that enable them to work in pairs or groups and facilitate interaction and communication. In the same vein, Joseph (2006) argues:

This English linguistic imperialism is embedded in the very structure of the education system and even the set-up of the classroom. The teacher, as the sole native English speaker or at least the English expert, stands before a roomful of students, who are seated (therefore in a lower position), and whose mother tongue is treated not as an asset but an obstacle to the goal of learning the 'valuable' language (p. 51).

Oral (2013) reported that the teacher utilised classroom space to control students through surveillance; students were not allowed to move from their desks or communicate with each other. In Benesch's (1999) study, the instructor communicated his authority through the physical set-up of the room. The raised platform placed him above the students; the bolted seats forced students to face the teacher and made it difficult for them to interact together; and the width of the room made it easy for the professor to watch over all students. According to Foucault (1977), "It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection" (p. 187).

These physical arrangements were less apparent in the Arab teachers' classrooms. Maha's and Salma's classrooms had similar physical features - the teacher's desk, chair, and the direction of students' seats - but the sections and intervening spaces were different. Maha's classroom had only two sections, with little space between them for the teacher to walk through. Salma's classroom was generally disorganised, and there were no clear sections. Students sat in an arbitrary fashion. The majority sat in clusters in the middle of the classroom, surrounding themselves with their classmates and leaving very little space between them. The teacher was unable to pass between them or approach those who were sitting at the back. This suggests that the classroom space was exploited by the students rather than the teacher. This back space was the preferred seating area of students who were inattentive or disinterested. These students usually arrived about 20 minutes late, and intentionally sat at the back of the classroom to avoid the teacher's surveillance zone as far as possible. This reduced the teacher's capacity for physical surveillance as she could not go around students. Thus her control was limited as she had no way of knowing what the noisy girls at the back of the room were doing. She appeared unable to discipline the class, on occasion having to clap her hands, knock on her desk, and repeat her statements to attract students' attention. These attempts at discipline, however, failed most of the time.

A comparison between Salma's classroom and those of Judy and Rita indicates that the utilisation of space and the physical arrangement of the classroom can facilitate surveillance, thereby increasing the teacher's ability to exercise discipline. The arrangement of students' seats facilitated or hindered teachers' ability to observe students' behaviour.

### **6.2.2 Grouping**

Dividing students into groups is a pedagogical practice that invisibly sets up a multi-dimensional exercise of power by teachers and students alike. Grouping is a teaching technique encouraged in ELT literature to facilitate teaching large classes and to allow more roles for students. Unlike traditional classes in which talk is only initiated by the teacher, in group work students can play different roles since they can initiate speech, negotiate meanings and exchange roles (Brown 2007). In the present study, grouping had many pedagogical advantages; however, it was also used by the teachers to exercise disciplinary power by facilitating hierarchical surveillance over students.

All the teachers reported that they divided their students into groups and assigned a leader for each group to achieve their teaching goals, but they did not talk about the techniques they used to divide students or the selection criteria for the leaders. Salma, for example, said:

Sometimes I divide them in groups to do activities together, and I choose a leader to explain to them when they do not understand, to be as a teacher, and then I ask them: do you understand from your colleague? Ok! That is good! Then I ask them randomly to answer the questions.

The observational data showed that Salma, Maha and Rita adopted a whole-class teaching approach (Brown 2007) in their classrooms. Students generally worked individually rather than in groups, except on one occasion in Maha's class where students worked in groups on a task. The only role of group leaders in these classrooms was to check the attendance with the teacher. Maha reported: 'I manage them into groups, and I put lots of responsibility on group leaders'. This suggests that these three teachers divided students into groups to enhance their disciplinary power in the classroom, and the leaders' job was to support the hierarchal surveillance of individuals.

Judy, on the other hand, provided more details. She divided her students into 11 groups of six students each and allocated a leader to each group, emphasising that, 'The leaders give me all attendance'. Explaining the pedagogical goals of grouping, she commented,

They prepare warming up activities. I give them 20 minutes at the beginning for warming up activities. It has to be useful, it has to be fun, and it has to revise something they studied before.

In Judy's case, grouping had some clear pedagogical objectives. Every day one group was responsible for preparing the warm-up activities for the rest of the class, and this job rotated among the 11 groups. These activities were expected to involve revising the previous lesson and preparing students for the new material. The other students were expected to participate in these activities in their groups. Grouping also served some disciplinary functions for Judy:

I give them a lot of time for talking and working in groups, so they can be quiet the rest of the time while I am lecturing. Usually I just let them work, and they work. I walk around to see what they are doing.

Thus, in addition to the pedagogical advantages, grouping had some disciplinary benefits. It provided an opportunity for students to talk to each other for 20 minutes, leaving the rest of the class time for them to focus on the teaching goals. Judy explained the rotation of the groups' location in the classroom in this way:

I let them rotate their group, so that they become close to me. This gives them a chance to sit in front sometimes instead of sitting at the back. This is fair for them.

These data raise a number of questions. Does grouping give students more voice in the class through group leaders who can convey messages from the teacher to students and vice versa, or does it oppress them by reducing the number of students (i.e. group leaders) who can speak directly to the teacher? Usually teachers selected the most influential students to be leaders, and these leaders were usually the most proficient English speakers in their group. The teachers did not change the leader until the end of the semester. In this case the teachers can be seen to give some of their authority to the leaders, who may adopt a teaching role and try to dominate the group. This was the case in one observational session with Judy's class in which a group leader dominated the warm-up activity, which was presented in front of the class by the whole group.

### **Observation 6.1**

There were six students in the group, but the group leader played a primary role. She talked more than the other group members since she was the one who read the questions, she explained the tasks, and she also re-explained the task using Arabic language when she recognised that it was not clear for students. The rest of the group members tended to act passively during the presentation since they were standing behind the leader articulating short phrases or single words.

Thus, grouping, despite its pedagogical advantages, allows both teacher and students to exercise power at a multiple level.

### 6.2.3 Speaking Examinations

The observational data showed that speaking examinations were occasions for some teachers to exercise power. These examinations involved certain *rituals*, *objectifying* students, and putting them under *constant surveillance* (Foucault 1977). The exam was used by some teachers to *punish* students (Foucault 1977) and to control their linguistic contribution (Fairclough 1989). The following observation shows how Salma verbally exercised power over students during the speaking exam by imposing English only:

#### Observation 6.2

It was the time for the mid-term speaking exam in Salma's class. She named the students who would do the exam. Unfortunately, and due to her different accent because she belonged to another Arabic country, she mispronounced a student's family name, so the students laughed at her. Then she used Arabic to inform students that they could leave the classroom except those who would perform the test.

Salma: For now I need Bashayer. (She named three more girls)

Two students came to the front of classroom and sat in front of the teacher. Then Salma explained the task of the speaking exam and gave all the exam instructions in English. Students wanted to make sure of what was required from them, so they asked her in Arabic for more clarification, but she did not answer their question and reminded them that it was a speaking test, so they should speak English only.

In this incident, the teacher gave herself the right to use the Arabic language to discipline her students before the exam, but she prevented her students from exercising such a right to understand the exam question. It was the first speaking test for the students, and they were not sure what they were supposed to do since the whole task was explained by the teacher in English only. The teacher insisted on using English only, and this might have been because the situation was more formal, or it might have been 'payback' for the laughter that accompanied her mispronunciation of the student's surname. In the interview, she reported that Arabic was used during exams to clarify instructions, and this use of Arabic was confirmed by all the teachers. This observation, however, suggests that she insisted on EO to regain her authority. This *constraint* on language represents the practice of *power in discourse* (Fairclough 1989).

The following observation indicates how power was visibly and invisibly exercised by the teacher during a mid-term speaking exam.

### **Observation 6.3**

It was the last hour of Rita's class, and it was the time for the first mid-term speaking exam in the year. Each student was supposed to say some pre-prepared sentences about her likes and dislikes.

Najla: I do not like English.

Rita: ...

(The teacher did not react and did not ask her any more questions. The teacher was gazing at Najla during the test without saying anything. Many students said that they liked English to please the teacher, but Najla did not.)

The following student also said that she did not like English:

Lulu: I do not like English.

Rita: .....

Lulu: I like people optimist.

Rita: Where did you get this from? I did not teach you this!

During this speaking exam, Rita was sitting at her desk and calling students' names one by one. Each student came and stood in front of her. The student faced the teacher with her back to the rest of the class. Students spoke very quietly during the test although they spoke loudly when they were chatting with their classmates. The teacher wrote down marks after each student finished speaking. She did not interrupt and did not correct any pronunciation mistake. She looked directly at the student throughout the exam. One student was unconsciously rocking backwards and forwards during her speech, which could be seen as an indication that she felt under pressure.

These two incidents illustrate how teachers exercised power over students by following particular rituals throughout the exams that involved objectification of students. As Foucault (1977) argues: "At the heart of the procedures of discipline, [the examination] manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the

objectification of those who are subjected” (pp. 184-5). This objectification involved exposing students to maximum visibility. Students who were supposed to do the test were selected by the teacher, and the other students were either moved backwards, as in Rita’s case, or asked to leave the classroom, as in Salma’s example. This allowed the teacher to focus more intently on the student taking the test. The remaining students were called one by one. Once a student heard her name, she left her seat and stood directly in front of the teacher, who was sitting on her chair. This was quite different from what happened in everyday class, where the teacher was standing up and the students were sitting down. Throughout the exam, the tested student was subjected to the teacher’s direct surveillance. Recording marks in front of the students while they were speaking was another element of power practice. Each student was treated as a different case that was judged and evaluated separately. As Foucault (1977) points out, “in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized” (p. 184). The speaking test was difficult for most of the students, who appeared shy, nervous and afraid.

Although this is a normalised exam practice in educational contexts, it seems to have created feelings of uncertainty for the students during one of the most stressful situations for EFL learners, since speaking skills can be especially difficult for some (Brown 2007). This was confirmed by students in the focus groups, who reported that speaking was the most challenging of the four English language skills for them. This issue was also supported by the teachers. Rana, for instance, reported that ‘they sometimes come to my office four or five students and ask each other ‘كيف أقول؟’ (How to say it)’. They have the problem of how to say’. Whether their difficulties related to vocabulary or pronunciation, speaking English was sometimes a struggle. According to Brown (2007), “one of the major obstacles learners have to overcome in learning to speak is the anxiety generated over the risk of blurting things out that are wrong, stupid, or incomprehensible” (p. 269). He therefore recommends providing a less threatening, warmer and more positive environment in which students can practise without the fear of being judged by the teacher. The speaking exam rituals and the teacher’s behaviour during it appear to reinforce an unequal power relationship.

These two observations also show how teachers exploited exams to punish students. Salma refused to translate the exam instructions, possibly because the students had laughed at her mispronunciation. Rana’s punishment was less visible, but more offensive. Najla had a strong personality, and was one of the students who sat talking at

the back. She played with her mobile most of the time, and did not pay attention to the teacher. This irritated Rana, who appeared to punish Najla during the speaking test by embarrassing her and putting her under a great deal of pressure. She gazed at the girl silently, showing no facial expression, and did not even ask her why she did not like English. The invisible practice of power was manifested in the teacher's passive behaviour. She offered no help or support during the test, allowing them to speak without praise or correction. Her only action was to record the mark. This lack of response can be seen as objectifying the students. As Foucault (1977) expresses it:

The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them (p. 184).

In the following comment, Rita indicated that she was aware of the power of eye gazing: “[A student] can catch my expressions whether I am happy or I am sad. When I look at her continuously, she stops talking”. A question occurred to me as I was observing the speaking exam: If the teacher understands that gazing at a particular student can influence her to stop talking, why did she adopt this normalizing gaze in a situation where students were required to talk? It was more likely to have suppressed rather than encouraged them to speak.

This observation further illustrates how the teacher exercised power in discourse by constraining students' participation by controlling the content of the discourse during the exam. “Power in discourse is to do with powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants” (Fairclough 1989, p. 46). First, the teacher decided the content of the exam, which was about likes and dislikes. Students were asked to prepare and memorise sentences and narrate them during the exam. Thus, the powerful participant, the teacher, had some control over the lexicon, pattern and order of discourse produced by the non-powerful participant, the student. In addition, the student spoke only to the teacher, with her back to her classmates, which reinforced the unequal power relationship between teacher and student. When the second student, Lulu, said, ‘I like people optimist’, it seemed that she wanted to show that she had learned a new word, ‘optimist’, but such new knowledge annoyed the teacher because she expected them to use only words she had taught them. The teacher was not concerned

with teaching the students the proper structure of the sentence, but with how the student learned that new knowledge: ‘Where did you get this from?’ She resorted to her subject position as a teacher: ‘I did not teach you this!’ as if she was reminding the student of her subordinate position in the teacher-student relationship. What surprised the teacher was not that her students did not like the subject but that they had learned something new by themselves. This is consistent with the teacher’s belief that her role is to ‘control’ her students’ behaviour (see section 6.2.5); the fact that her student had learned something by herself might be interpreted by the teacher as a challenge to her knowledge authority and to her position as a teacher. Thus the teacher maintained her power in the teacher-student relationship by asserting the subject position of each participant and constraining students’ contribution by controlling the lexicon used in the test.

In summary, the speaking exam was shown to be a situation in which teachers exercised a great deal of power over students. “The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance” (Foucault 1977, p. 185). The power exercised by the teachers during speaking exams, where students experienced fear of the exam itself and the fear of speaking in front of the teacher, subjected students to objectification, surveillance and judgement, and constrained their contribution.

#### **6.2.4 Punishment**

Some teachers talked about punishment as a means of exercising disciplinary power, and this was observed in some classrooms. Punishment was accompanied by other disciplinary practices, such as threatening and calling students by name. Maha, for instance, reported:

One day I tried to punish a group that caused lots of trouble for me. I decided to punish the whole classroom. One student came and said, ‘it is not our business that that group is messy; it is unfair to punish us’. Of course I had to take the punishment back because she was right.

This comment is evidence of the over-use of power by the teacher. Maha did not say how she would have punished them, but during the interview she did talk about using loss of marks as a threat. She did not indicate what language was used during this incident but, since Arabic language was the means of communication between Arabic teachers

and students (see Chapter 8), it is likely that Arabic was used. This supposition is given credence by the fact that students were able to resist the punishment and make her re-evaluate the situation.

Class observation revealed that Rita was the teacher who relied most heavily on punishment to discipline students, using different means to do so. First, she had a loud voice, so it was easy for her to attract attention, even among those students who were sitting at the back. In interview, she said:

Here we have large classes. My voice is enough to control them. Sometimes when I give them activities, they speak too much; I tell them ‘I do not like this’. Then they stop it and behave again.

Judy’s voice, in contrast, was so soft that she had to ring a chime whenever she needed to attract students’ attention.

Calling students by name was another disciplinary practice which Rita used more than the other teachers to control her classes. Teachers, especially those with large classes, are encouraged to learn and use their students’ names rather than using numbers, which make students feel less important (Brown 2007). Rita seemed to know the names of all 75 of her students, and she used this for control by addressing particular students directly. The following observation is an example:

#### **Observation 6.4**

Rita was checking students’ attendance, and one of the students, Saleha, was talking to her friend:

Rita: Saleha! I do not expect you to speak.

(Saleha immediately stopped talking).

In interview, Rita commented, ‘Yes, because I know them, so when I call them, they become conscious. When I need their attention, I need to call them, just to make them aware that I know you are talking’. Unlike Rita, Salma rarely used her students’ names; even during roll call she used their serial numbers. The class observation showed that she rarely addressed them by name; she either talked to the class in general or pointed at a particular student. This reduced her capacity to exercise control in her class. She sometimes put her index finger to her mouth and looked at a certain girl as a sign that she

should stop talking. This behaviour is culturally associated with disciplining children, so it seems unsuitable with university students.

Rita used a variety of forms of threat and punishment to discipline students, including exposing them to extra surveillance and deprivation of privileges as illustrated in the following observations.

**Observation 6.5**

Rita noticed that Nora and Ahlam, who were sitting in the middle of the classroom, were talking to each other:

Rita: Nora and Ahlam! If you keep talking, I will bring you to the front.

(The two students stopped talking.)

**Observation 6.6**

Two students were talking in the back of the classroom:

Rita: Salwa and Reem! Can you come here and continue your discussion?

(The two students stopped talking.)

**Observation 6.7**

Students started talking in Arabic during Rita's class:

Rita: I know you are talking because you do not understand. Can you stop talking and look at the board?

(The students were still talking.)

Rita: Please girls, do not talk, otherwise I will cancel your break.

(They continued talking.)

(Rita started calling students by their names to make them stop talking).

Writing on the board was another form of threat and punishment that Rita used to discipline students as illustrated in this observation:

### Observation 6.8

Rita distributed a worksheet to practice making plural nouns. The students were discussing the task in Arabic quietly, but the teacher asked them not to talk and to answer quickly.

Rita: If any girl talks, I will make her come and write 10 sentences on the board.

Rita: Copy these questions and answer them in your notebooks. (She started writing some questions on the board)

(The students started talking again).

Rita: I will cancel the break.

(She started going through columns of the students to return them under control, but they continued talking in Arabic. There was a lot of noise and confusion among the students because they thought that the questions written on the board was an exam. The teacher told them many times that it was just a practice, but they did not understand until one of the students told them in Arabic that it was just a practice.)

In this incident, the teacher threatened the students with punishments, although they were talking quietly and they were discussing the task, but because she was not a speaker of Arabic, she did not know what they were talking about. The forms taken by these punishments reflected her awareness of what students would be most concerned about, such as being under the direct observation of the teacher and the whole class and having to perform the unfamiliar task of writing on the board.

Interestingly, all these incidents from Rita's classroom suggest a link between punishment as a power practice and the use of Arabic by students. The teacher used threats and punishment whenever students talked in Arabic, regardless of what they were talking about. This is likely to convey the impression that using Arabic was an unacceptable behaviour that warranted punishment. They also reflect tension in the teacher-student relationship. It seems that the overuse of institutional power reduced the teacher's ability to develop rapport with her students. Unlike Maha's students, Rita's students were dominated by the teacher's practice of power and unable to resist any

punishment imposed by the teacher because they were not able to communicate properly in English.

### **6.2.5 Teacher-centred Classes**

In traditional teacher-centred classrooms, the teacher is expected to exercise more power over students since she or he usually plays the central role and students are given peripheral roles. In traditional language classes, teachers' talk dominates students' talk because the teacher lectures, clarifies grammatical points, and guides students' discussions; therefore, students' opportunities to talk are limited (Brown 2007).

The data from class observations and teachers' interviews indicated that the teacher-centred approach was used by all the participant teachers except Judy, who employed more student-centred activities. The classrooms of Salma, Maha and Rita had a very similar teaching atmosphere. The teacher was the centre of the teaching process. She stood in front of the students all the time, talking most of the time, asking questions, telling students what to do, and reading questions from the book. She was the one who explained tasks, selected who could answer, corrected mistakes, completed students' sentences, and introduced topics. The teachers relied mainly on the book and the board. In some classes, however, the board was not adequate for the students' needs. Students' roles, on the other hand, were mainly responses to the teacher. They answered her questions, followed her instructions, and did what she told them to do, and the interaction between teacher and students in the classroom was generally limited. The roles played by the teacher and students in these classrooms align with the accounts presented in other studies of the Saudi English classroom, where the teacher plays a central role and students play peripheral roles (Al-Seghayer 2011; Elyas & Picard 2010). Al-Seghayer (2014b) described the limited interaction between teacher and students in the Saudi English classroom. This traditional teaching reflects the powerful position of the teacher vis-à-vis the students.

Maha explained her reasons for adopting teacher-centred teaching:

Unfortunately it is teacher-centred. The reason which does not help me to have a student-centred class room is that I do not have internet connection. I have from A to F students, so I cannot really give a fully student-centred. I try sometimes to give extra student-centred, but I find myself automatically go back to teacher-centred classroom. Having 75 students for three hours!! It did not work with me.

Maha talked about other constraints that prevented her from applying student-centred principles:

Our curriculum, the time, the level of the students, the background of the students, helps me to tell them this is the information you need, understand it, work with it, and that it is. I would love to expand and have more roles with them, to try to use English outside the classroom, but it does not work most of the time.

In this context, Judy reported:

I think it is a mix. I try to make it student-centred, but it is only little you can do with 80 students . . . I try to do the mix, I try to make them teach each other, I try but sometimes it is teacher-centred. I mix up between activities. I try to make as student-centred as I can.

Then she talked about constraints:

We do not have materials and we do not have copiers, printers or anything here and because it is 80 students it takes a lot to make them understand the activity, I walk around to make them understand.

The class observation data showed that Judy applied more student-centred principles in her classes even though she was constrained by the same conditions that Maha identified as obstacles to student-centred classroom practices. The observational data showed that Judy did not talk most of the time, but allowed more time for students to work within their groups and to discuss tasks among themselves. Unlike the other teachers, Judy did not stick to the book, but provided many tasks and worksheets that contained extra material. She also employed modern technology in teaching, using her laptop and the class overhead projector for PowerPoint presentations of material from the course book or content she had prepared.

The teachers' preferences for particular teaching styles reflected their personal beliefs about the roles of teachers and students in the classroom. According to Rita:

I think it is the duty of students to understand, and teacher's duty is to make them understand. I can change the way to make them understand [...] The role of

teacher itself is very important because she is doing the same thing the mother is doing at home. We have to control their behaviour.

She believed that the role of students is ‘to behave well in the classroom even when they are weak in the subject’. This perception of the teacher’s role as a controller of behaviour is common in different educational contexts, where it is associated with a teacher-fronted classroom where the teacher acts as class leader, deciding and performing most activities in the classroom (Brown 2007; Harmer 2015). For Harmer (2015), this role has some advantages, especially with early stage learners, in relation to organising the class, making announcements or directing tasks. However, for most teachers “controlling is the role they are used to and are most comfortable with”, although remaining in this ‘comfort zone’ can result in less interesting learning (Harmer 2015).

While Rita perceived her role as a controller of students’ behaviour, Salma saw the teacher’s role as facilitating learning in the classroom:

I think it should be as a facilitator, she should just try to facilitate the language or the difficulties in the lesson, but every time she gives them the chance to understand themselves under her control she will be facilitator because she encourages them.

She went on to talk about the drawbacks of spoon-feeding:

If [the teacher] starts from the beginning to give everything ready and just let them just listen to her, they will not move on. They will not like the subject, they will not feel that it is their responsibility to learn, they will feel it is the teacher’s responsibility to let them understand, so they will not give any effort to understand.

Her view of students’ roles, however, was more limited:

Well, the teacher gives instructions, the book gives instructions, so the students should listen to the instructions of the teacher, of the book, understand clearly. If they do not understand, they have to ask their teacher. If the teacher asks, they have to respond to her questions . . . They have to do practices inside the class

either in the book or given by the teacher . . . They have to copy if she writes something important on the board.

In this comment, Salma positioned herself and the course book as the source of knowledge and instructions, and the students' role was to follow these instructions. Such a depiction of students' roles tallies precisely with what any teacher-centred classroom looks like: the teacher initiates actions, and students respond. As well as constructing their roles as dependent on her actions, she also portrayed them as obligations, using the expression 'they have to' repeatedly. Further, she specified what they 'had to' do: 'They have to keep silent and give their full attention to the teacher'.

Talking about the role of the English teacher, Maha commented:

I try not to spoon feed them the information. I try my best to make them think . . . my role is just to try to get them through the curriculum as much as I can plus whatever I can give them from outside which goes with the information, not something different or an idea that comes from another background. It has to go with the curriculum. I do spoon feed them but in an indirect way.

Talking about students roles, she observed:

In their minds, the main role is to pass the subject. Most of them do not come [. . .] So mostly their roles are to get the information, study, memorise, do the exam, get passed, and that is it.

This comment aligns with Freire (1970) concept of 'banking', where the teacher deposits the knowledge in students' minds. This process, Freire argues, turns learners into 'containers' of the content narrated by the teacher.

The three teachers' perceptions of their own and their students' roles are consistent with the implementation of teacher-centred teaching. When teachers perceive themselves as controlling students' behaviour or spoon-feeding students, and students as being obligated to receive whatever teachers provide, it is expected that students will be dominated by teachers' practices. Similarly, Elyas & Picard (2010) report that interaction in the Saudi English classroom is limited because the teacher has the absolute authority; he/she is "imbued with both ideological and spiritual power", and students have been taught the Arabic proverb "he who taught me a letter became my master" (pp. 137-41).

Harmer (2015) believes that teachers who perceive themselves as transmitters of knowledge are usually comfortable with their roles as controllers.

Harmer (2015) identifies a number of disadvantages associated with teaching that relies on transmitting knowledge. First, it reduces students' opportunities to build their own learning experiences since the teacher does everything in the classroom. Second, students' opportunities to speak are very limited since the whole class is treated as a one big group rather than being divided into groups where individuals have more chances to speak. Third, this style of teaching tends to produce a boring atmosphere since the types of activities are limited. The teacher is required to play the controller role in order to perform numerous organisational functions in the classroom, but "it would be unfortunate if this was the only role we took on" (Harmer 2015, p. 116).

According to Fairclough (1989), in educational institutions, individuals unconsciously reproduce power relations through discourse. The particular roles these teachers assigned to themselves and their students sustained power relations. This is what Fairclough (1989) calls the 'hidden agenda' of education (p. 40), whereby teachers are unaware of how, by occupying this social role and by reproducing this conventional discourse, they help to sustain the teacher-student power relationship. These roles imply "differences in position, experience and interests between social groupings, which enter into relationship . . . with each other in terms of power" (p. 88). As Fairclough (1989) argues:

[T]his is a case where social structure, in the particular form of discourse conventions, determines discourse. But it is also the case that in occupying particular subject positions, teachers and pupils reproduce them; it is only through being occupied that these positions continue to be a part of social structure. So discourse in turn determines and reproduces social structure (p. 38).

Describing her role as a teacher, Judy said:

My role is to clarify for them. Sometimes I present stuff to them, but sometimes I show them something and ask them to practice, then I check. I make sure they are doing the right thing. I always work with my students to point to the mistakes they are doing. They make the same mistakes, so I try to put slides on the common mistakes, and they have to work in their groups to correct the errors. Something I

have taught to them, something very common. My students have too much confidence, they are like ‘we know it’ but they make the same mistakes again and again. They know the rules, but they need to practice. I encourage them, and motivate them.

She talked about different roles for her students:

They have to work in their groups to correct the errors. . . . I try to make them take as much responsibility as they can. They can teach. They always want me to check for them, I let them check for each other. I always tell them I am one person, I cannot check them every day, I have other classes, I have other things to do, so I have them check each other in their group. I ask for volunteers for students who like more responsibility. The best ones are the ones I rely on.

In short, the teachers who adopted teacher-centred practices perceived the roles of English teacher and students in a way that reinforced the teacher’s position of power over learners.

#### **6.2.6 Arabic: A Tool of Maintaining Discipline**

L1 plays a crucial role in maintaining classroom discipline (Cook 2001; Forman 2016; Hall & Cook 2012). Cook (2001) states that giving classroom imperatives and instructions utilising students’ L1 is beneficial because students will easily understand them and take them seriously. This useful function of L1 was recognised by the Arabic teachers, Maha and Salma; that is, they acknowledged Arabic as a language of discipline. Maha believed that Arabic was more effective than English for disciplinary purposes:

For instructions inside the classroom, I use Arabic first and then English because it is important. You saw in some classes how much I repeated in English and then in Arabic, and still they did not follow the instructions, so I believe that the instructions must be in Arabic first then in English.

She believed that trying to maintain classroom discipline using English was a waste of time and effort:

I shout sometimes, and in Arabic mostly because threatening or controlling in English for my students does not make sense for them. It will waste my energy,

my time, my voice, my words, to make nothing. But in Arabic it affects immediately.

Maha highlighted the influential role of Arabic for controlling students:

Some teachers cannot control their students because they cannot use Arabic. We had more than one incident where the teacher had students out of control, and she could not control them at all, and one of our coordinators had to go to the classroom, speak to them in a very harsh language in Arabic, so they start to behave well because she told them, 'I am going to teach this teacher some Arabic words to understand what you are talking about, so she can control you.

The observational data were consistent with her comments. During Maha's classes, Arabic dominated when she was checking the attendance with group leaders. She also used Arabic to threaten some students who were talking: *يا بتسمعي ياتسحبي حالك* (either listen to me or leave the classroom). In the same vein, Salma reported:

Sometimes [the students] chat a lot. Sometimes English does not give that power to stop them from talking, so I use Arabic like for example *يا بنات!* (Girls!) because their ears respond to Arabic actually more than English when giving instructions.

She added, 'When there is a mess, when I need to give instructions [that] do not concern the lesson, I use Arabic'. Salma believed that 'Arabic is their mother tongue, so it gives the real effect on them'. However, Salma contradicted herself during the interview when she discussed the inclusion of Arabic as a problem in the classroom since it could lead to a loss of control: 'If I speak in Arabic, I lose my control.' She explained:

Well, the problem is talking in Arabic. This is the biggest difficulty in the classroom. If you can stop talking in Arabic, if the teacher does not speak Arabic, [the students] will not feel it is allowed to speak Arabic, so the class will be quiet. But if the teacher start speaking Arabic, she cannot control the class because they will turn to speak and chat in Arabic.

This association between the use of Arabic by the teacher and loss of control was not supported by the observation of Salma's classes. She did use Arabic on many occasions to maintain discipline, often using the word *يا بنات!* (Girls!) to attract students' attention on

different occasions, for instance during attendance checking. The following observation is another example of her use of Arabic for discipline:

### **Observation 6.9**

Salma: الامتحان التحريري النصفى بعد يومين. متى راح تذاكروا؟ (The written mid-term exam is after two days. When are you going to study?)

Here Salma castigated the whole class for not studying hard and warned them to take the mid-term exam more seriously. Observation showed that Maha reacted in a similar fashion after she had corrected their mid-term exam, expressing her disappointment at some students' marks in Arabic. According to Canagarajah (1995), L1 is more spontaneous and effective than English to express teachers' disappointment or anger, so they resorted to it to advise or admonish students. Similarly, Hamdallah (1999) notes that giving advice to students in their L1 is more natural for teachers, and L1 can help when they are unable to convey something in English.

In summary, the teachers exercised disciplinary power through the physical arrangement of the classroom, grouping students, speaking examinations, punishment, and teacher-centred approach. When the teacher shared L1 with her students, she relied on that language to maintain discipline in the classroom.

## **6.3 English-Only Approach**

### **6.3.1 English-only Approach as a Power Practice**

Analysis of the data showed that the English-only approach was associated with hierarchical power practices. As reported in Chapter 5, the Centre imposed the EOA on the teachers without providing any pedagogical justifications or supporting the teachers to use it. They simply instructed them to avoid Arabic and use English only. This approach, in turn, was imposed on students by some teachers without consulting students, asking them about their preferences in learning English, or reflecting on its appropriateness for their students.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the participants had different attitudes towards the use of Arabic and the EOA, although there was general support for the inclusion of Arabic in English classes. However, these attitudes were not taken into consideration by the

language policy makers nor by the teachers who uncritically adopted this approach and imposed it on their students. As discussed earlier, Salma and Rita advocated the use of EOA, and they did not allow students to use Arabic. They used a variety of power practices to impose EOA on their students. Rita reported:

At the time of speaking, I do not let them speak Arabic, so I am giving them instructions not to speak Arabic and tell them I will mark them absent, something like that.

Similarly Salma stated, 'I don't allow [students] to speak Arabic. Of course they try. Even they try to explain the book instructions to each other in Arabic, but usually I stop them, I try to stop that'. She also mentioned, 'Actually most of the time. I try to force them to use the target language. Because they have to use it, to practise it, to learn it'. She described her method of enforcing the EOA saying, 'Well, I do not respond to their Arabic sentences and questions, and I ask them just to use the English language'. She also talked about her reaction when students used Arabic in the classroom:

I stop them. Immediately I stop them. Even when they ask each other for example a pen or a pencil, usually I tell them 'ask in English; try to practice the language in class, what we are teaching; this is an English class, try to speak English'. And most of the time, always, I encourage them actually to greet each other in English.

These quotes show how the teachers resorted to their authority to prevent students from speaking their L1 and to enforce L2 instead. Although they tried to provide pedagogical reasons such as 'this is an English class, try to speak English', or 'Because they have to use it, to practise it, to learn it', their words imply the exercise of various forms of power practices, for example: 'I am giving them instructions not to speak Arabic and tell them I will mark them absent' or 'I do not respond to their Arabic sentences, questions'. This "authoritarian use of power" has been associated with negative interpretations of power (Harjunen 2009). Preventing students from using their L1 is described in the literature as "aggressive" (Auerbach 2016, p. 938) and "oppressive" (Canagarajah 1999, p. 125). The teachers' comments clearly show that the students used Arabic for social interaction. Banning the use of Arabic is likely to influence such interaction because students' low level of proficiency does not allow them to communicate using English only.

It appears that the EOA is used not for teaching purposes, as the teachers tried to explain, but for disciplinary purposes as well. Salma associated the use of the EOA with having a quiet classroom. When she was asked about the use of English only during teaching, she stated that this approach guaranteed a quiet classroom, since the use of Arabic either by the teacher or by students would lead to a lot of chatting among students:

Well, the problem is talking in Arabic. This is the most difficulty in the classroom. If you can stop talking in Arabic, if the teacher does not speak Arabic, [students] will not feel it is allowed to speak Arabic, so the class will be quiet, but if the teacher start speaking Arabic, she cannot control the class. Because they will turn to speak and chat in Arabic.

This resonates with a teacher's contribution to a teachers' blog on the web:

The most apparent [benefits to having only English spoken in your ESL classroom] ... is the level of noise and chatter drops dramatically. All of a sudden, when students are required to use English, that hot topic they wanted to talk about doesn't seem so important (Eric, 2005, cited in Auerbach 2016).

This suggests that the EOA is not always imposed to make students speak English, but to stop them talking. The teachers appear to recognise that their students do not have the linguistic skills to interact in English only, so they prohibit the use of L1 just to reduce the noise and classroom interaction.

The students were asked if they thought that the English-only approach could give the teacher more authority; one of them responded, 'Yes, because our level in English is less than hers, so we have to keep silent in the classroom'. It has been argued that "[t]he power of micro aggressions lies in their invisibility to the perpetrator, who is unaware that he or she has engaged in a behaviour that threatens and demeans the recipient of such a communication" (Sue 2010, p. xvi, cited in Auerbach 2016, p. 937). When a teacher uses her authority by impose sanctions, such as reducing grades, to compel students to do things that they may not wish to do, this can have a negative impact on students' engagement in the classroom (Pace 2003). Hence teachers' insistence on using the EOA is not driven by pedagogical considerations but is implemented to enhance their power in the classroom by reducing students' participation, which requires some assistance from their L1. As Auerbach (2016) puts it:

Enforcing English in ESL classrooms is an example of this dynamic in that it devalues the linguistic resources and hence the identities of some language minority learners under the guise of “helping” them to learn English (pp. 936-7).

Thus, the adoption of the EOA and the ban on students using Arabic in the Saudi English classroom is not motivated by convincing pedagogical reasons. It is not deployed to teach English effectively but to exercise power over students.

### **6.3.2 English-only Approach as Knowledge Power**

For Foucault (1980), power can only be made sense of through its connection to forms of knowledge and discursive practices. “Power produces knowledge . . . power and knowledge directly imply one another”. The literature around teachers’ authority suggests that teachers’ knowledge in their fields is a considerable source of power (Buzzelli & Johnston 2001; Freire 1970; Harjunen 2009; Steutel & Spiecker 2000). In the case of English teachers, it could be argued that their linguistic knowledge is an obvious source of power.

The interview data indicate that the teachers perceived their knowledge of English as a source of power and privilege in the classroom. When Rita was asked about consulting students on lesson content or teaching strategies, she replied, ‘no, I am not consulting. I do not need’. A similar power ideology was adopted by Salma. When she was asked about students’ right to reject some content or a particular teaching technique she said:

They should not reject anything of course. Yah. Because the teacher knows. She is well experienced. She is well trained. She has the knowledge, and they do not have, so they have to accept what she gives them, the way she gives them. What they do not understand, they have to ask her to explain inside or outside the classroom. This is their right. The only right is to ask what they do not understand to be explained to them.

These comments indicate that the teachers perceived their knowledge of English as a source of power and superiority. In his discussion of power relationships in the classroom, Freire (1970) refers to the contradictory teacher-student relationship where the teacher occupies the knower position because she owns the knowledge, while the ignorant student lacks such knowledge. He argues that the teacher’s knowledge and authority as a teacher

allow her to act as the subject of the learning process and, therefore, as the one who disciplines, decides and selects for students, who act as the objects in such a process:

[T]he exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power . . . Knowledge and power are integrated with one another . . . It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power' (p. 52).

The observational data also indicated that some teachers recognised that English language was a source of power, but students did not, as Salma's comment showed. Accordingly, they tended to use English whenever they criticised students. This gave them more power because the students were not able to reply to such criticisms using the same language. Such an exercise of power constrained students' participation in English classes, as the following observations indicate.

#### **Observation 6.10**

Salma asked the girls to make sentences using the words *like* and *dislike*:

S: I dislike cooking.

Salma: She depends on her mother to cook for her. (In a serious tone)

(The student smiled shyly and never commented).

The teacher here used English to embarrass her student. The teacher's reply to the student's sentence implied that the girl was lazy, dependent and irresponsible at home as she did not assist her mother in cooking, and this behaviour is unacceptable. The teacher did not comment on the correctness or otherwise of the sentence structure. The teacher's power in this instance derived from her knowledge of English and of the student's culture. The student looked embarrassed and could not defend herself. The following observation shows a similar practice of power by the same teacher:

#### **Observation 6.11**

Salma selected a student to write on the board:

S1: أش أكتب؟ (What should I write?)

Salma: Write the sentence you wrote about yourself in your book.

(The student came to the board and wrote an answer which was not correct, so another student was selected by the teacher to correct the answer.)

S2: أَمسح إجابتها ؟ (Should I erase her answer?)

Salma: No, just correct her sentence.

(Different students were selected to correct their friends' answers, and finally one student wrote the answer correctly, but unfortunately, the subject pronoun *I* looked too long.)

Salma: She wrote a very long I, taller than me.

In this incident the teacher's position of power derived from her authority as a teacher and her knowledge of English. She selected the girl, and the girl came to the board without knowing what she should do. The teacher selected another student to correct the mistake without helping the first student to correct the mistake herself or at least tell her what was wrong with her sentence. The sentence was finally written correctly, but the teacher did not praise the student for that, criticising her handwriting instead. Throughout this incident, the teacher only spoke English although the students asked questions in Arabic. Here the teacher's linguistic knowledge enabled her to determine what was correct and what was wrong, and to be the one who criticised. Her authority as a teacher was strengthened by her knowledge of English, so she was able to make fun of the student's handwriting, and the student was not able to reply.

In these two incidents, the teacher exercised power by selecting students to answer even when they had not raised their hands. She criticised their behaviour and made fun of their handwriting, which made the whole class laugh at them. Students, in contrast, seemed powerless, unable to reply or to defend themselves either because they did not understand her words, or because they were not able to speak English perfectly. In either case, English was the source of their lack of power. The following observation from Maha's class shows a similar exercise of power as the teacher used English to make fun of a student's appearance.

### **Observation 6.12**

Maha: Who can form a sentence using *can* or *cannot*?

S: I cannot play judo.

Maha: Of course you cannot because you are very thin.

S: . . .

(The other students laughed.)

This example is perhaps even more offensive, given the importance of appearance among 19 year-old girls.

In all three incidents, the students smiled shyly and did not respond to the teachers' harsh comments. The unequal power relations were obvious, and the teachers' comments appeared to constrain students' contributions (Fairclough 1989). Students gave correct answers to the teachers' questions, but none of the teachers commented on that. Another shared feature was about the use of English only, as if the teachers knew that students could not defend themselves in that language.

Students themselves recognised teachers' use of English to exercise power over them. As one commented, 'although my teacher at high school used to use Arabic a lot in her teaching, she used English to berate us because she was sure that we wouldn't understand her words'. This explains why the affected students did not reply. Students reported that the teachers' authoritarian use of English was one of the factors that discouraged them from participating in English classes: 'I am not afraid of making mistakes, but of being made fun of'. Therefore, it is safe to argue that the teachers' use of English to embarrass students reduced their participation and made them hesitant to answer teachers' questions.

The following observation from Rita's class indicates how she tried to regain control by resorting to the English-only approach when she felt that her lack of knowledge of Arabic was affecting her control of the classroom.

### **Observation 6.13**

Rita: What is your special breakfast in Saudi Arabia?

S: عريكة (a traditional dish in the south region of Saudi Arabia). Students laughed a lot.

Rita: Why do you laugh? You should be proud.

Ss: قراص وسمن, فول وتميس, معصوب. (These are other names of Saudi traditional dishes, and students were shouting them in a humorous manner).

Rita: Do not talk to each other. Talk to me. I will not get more answers because you will laugh.

The teacher immediately stopped them and moved on to the following task.

(During this task, the students were happy, and they were laughing during the articulation of those names because they sounded very strange in the English-only classroom.)

This observation shows how power can be practised *in discourse* (Fairclough 1989). Here the teacher's authority was threatened as the students were talking in their mother tongue. Being unable to understand, she felt that she was losing control because the students were laughing and chatting, so she stopped the discussion and moved to the next task without further discussion of these dishes. This termination of students' contribution is evidence of power in discourse, where the powerful participant controls the contribution of less-powerful participants (Fairclough 1989). It confirms Phillipson's (1992) argument that the EOA involves ignorance of the learners' local language and culture and enhances the authoritarian and linguistic superiority of the teacher.

The example also suggests that the use of EOA implies a stigmatisation of the Arabic language, as the teacher ended the activity and moved on to the next task, thereby positioning Arabic below English. She gave the impression that their local language was inappropriate in an English class, even though she told them that they should be proud of their culture. The situation provided a good opportunity for the teacher to learn something about her students' culture and language, yet she chose not to do so. Valuing students' contributions could also help to engage them at a deeper level of learning. Brown (2007) indicates that when a teacher encounters an unexpected event, for example when students are engaged in a discussion that is relevant to the topic but was not in the teacher's original plan, she needs to deal with the situation by making a *midstream change* that demonstrates respect for the students' contribution while maintaining the focus of the lesson. Instead, the teacher's resort to the EOA contributed to stigmatisation of Arabic. According to Phillipson (1992), "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (p. 47). He uses the term 'linguicism' to describe the "ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and

reproduce an unequal division of power and resources between groups which are defined on the basis of language” (p. 47).

#### **Observation 6.14**

In Rita’s classroom, two students were sitting at the back without books or pens. The teacher was constantly gazing at them while she was walking towards them. She stood very close to them and said,

Rita: Where is your book?

Ss: . . .

Rita: Where is your pen?

S1: (After some silence and hesitation to talk) المصيف . . . friend.

(المصيف is a big bookstore where students can buy course books).

The student used some gestures to make the teacher understand that they were sharing the book with another friend. The second student remained silent and did not react at all. On that day, I was sitting at the back, very close to the two students, and I was able to closely observe the situation, including the facial expressions of all the participants. As an insider researcher, I knew what the students meant when they said, ‘المصيف . . . friend’. They were trying to tell the teacher that the course book was sold out from that book store, so they shared the course book with their friend until more books were available.

As an insider researcher, I also know that there are no formal rules about the amount of personal space that is acceptable in the university context, but there is a general sense that the instructor should leave some space between herself and the students. To position herself very close to students could be acceptable at school level, but in this case these students would have felt embarrassed that the teacher had moved into their space at the back, which they had seen as a safe area. Harmer (2015) cautions that teachers should be careful about how they position themselves in the classroom, especially when they belong to a culture that is different from that of their students. There are no fixed rules about proximity, so teachers need to put themselves in their students’ shoes to decide how close is acceptable.

Observation 6.14, however, indicates that the teacher’s behaviour does not seem to have resulted from cultural differences but, rather, implies the exercise of power. The

teacher appeared more powerful than the students through her utilisation of space. By sitting at the back, these students were trying to remain *in the shade* (Foucault 1977, p. 187) to avoid the teachers' observations but, because the desks were divided into sections, it was easy for the teacher to approach them. She walked about seven metres to approach the two students, gazing at them all the time. "It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection" (Foucault 1977, p. 187). The students were shocked and unable to answer her questions initially. The teacher used different tools to practise power: eye gazing, standing very close to students, and asking them in English, which was particularly threatening since they were low-level learners. The use of English only in this instance enhanced the disciplinary power of the teacher, and positioned students in a powerless position because they were not able to communicate properly with the teacher.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

The data indicated that teachers exercised a great deal of power via certain disciplinary strategies which, despite their positive pedagogical impact, exposed students to maximum surveillance by teachers and facilitated control. The non-Arab teachers in this study utilised a careful physical arrangement of the classroom to discipline students while the Arab teachers relied on Arabic language as a disciplinary technique. Grouping is a common pedagogical technique, but in this study it was mostly used for disciplinary purposes. It also sustained power relations among members of the group. Some teachers practised *power in discourse* during speaking examinations, which gave them an opportunity to objectify, punish, payback, and control the linguistic contributions of students. Punishment was another power dynamic by some teachers. It was accompanied by other strategies such as threatening and calling students by their names. In most cases, the use of Arabic by students was the main reason for punishment.

Most of the teachers in this study adopted a teacher-centred approach that gave them absolute power in the classroom and marginalised students into playing very limited roles. The teachers' preferred teaching style was influenced by their own perception of the roles of teachers and students in the classroom. That is, teachers who adopted a teacher-centred approach perceived themselves as controllers and knowledge transmitters, while the only teacher who adopted student-centred approach acknowledged more responsible roles for students.

Arabic, which was rejected by some teachers as a teaching technique, was used by them to threaten, blame, and discipline students. The EO approach also appeared to enhance some teachers' power. They embraced it not to help students to better learn the language, but to embarrass them and control their contributions. The link between power and knowledge was apparent in this study through some teachers' insistence on the EOA, which contributed to their already existing power; students, who lacked such power, were marginalised. This approach involved a stigmatisation of Arabic and practice of power in discourse.

The following chapter shows how power circulated in the classrooms; it was not always in the hands of teachers, but was also exercised by students. Resistance manifested in the verbal and nonverbal activities of participants.

## Chapter 7

### Resistance Strategies

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#### 7.1 Introduction

The Foucauldian conceptualisation of power paints a broad picture of how power is exercised and resisted. For Foucault (1980), “individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application”. Individuals are perceived as active subjects who “are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” (p. 98). The data indicated that the imposition of the EOA in the Saudi tertiary EL classroom was accompanied by the practice of power both by the Centre, through its enforcement of the language policy, and by the teachers through their exclusion of Arabic from their classes. This exercise of power, however, was resisted by some teachers and students. This resistance took different forms. Students responded either verbally, through the use of Arabic or English, or nonverbally through silence, low participation, sitting at the back, or misbehaviour.

#### 7.2 Teachers’ Resistance to Language Policy

As reported in Chapter 5, the English-only policy adopted by the English Language Centre was vague and poorly supported by evidence, and it was complicated by teachers’ feelings of guilt, conflicted feelings within some teachers, and contradictions between beliefs and practices. This section indicates how some teachers resisted this policy because it contradicted their own personal beliefs and experiences. Maha, for instance, argued:

[The decision-makers] tend to ask us not to use Arabic, but for me if I need to use it, I will use it for the benefit of the students not for the benefit of me because it is easier for me to use one language instead of alternating, but sometimes for the best of the students.

This comment indicates that Maha prioritised her students over obedience to institutional rules. Similarly, Judy stated that she allowed her students to use Arabic among themselves because she believed that their mother tongue had the potential to assist them in their learning. The observations of these teachers’ classrooms confirmed that Arabic was present and played different positive roles (see Chapter 8).

The teachers' resistance indicates that the policy might not adequately consider the students' context and needs (See Chapter 2 for discussion of EOA in EFL contexts). In practice, the two teachers resisted the EO policy either by teaching bilingually (Maha) or by allowing students to use Arabic while talking to each other (Judy) (see Chapter 8). They could not comply with this policy because they recognised the influence of excluding Arabic on their relationship with students and on the general atmosphere of the classroom, so they taught in a way they believed to be more suitable for their students' needs.

In section (5.4), Maha reported that some teachers in the Centre over-used Arabic in their teaching although they were aware of the EO policy. This could represent a form of resistance to the unclear EO policy imposed on teachers. Those teachers might have used Arabic extensively because they or their students lacked the necessary level of English proficiency. This indicates that the rules imposed on teachers under the institutional policy were inappropriate in the actual teaching and learning context.

Students themselves adopted different forms of resistance, as the following sections indicate.

### **7.3 Students' Resistance to Power Practices**

The preceding chapter described how teachers exercised different forms of power, both linguistic (as represented by the use of the EOA) and disciplinary, over students. These practices added extra power to the teachers' already existing authority. Since "there are no relations of power without resistance" (Foucault 1980, p. 142), such power practices encountered students' resistance. According to Foucault (1980), "like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies" (p. 142). Students in this study resisted the teachers' practice of power verbally and nonverbally, as described below.

#### **7.3.1 Verbal Resistance**

Some students resisted the power exercised by their teacher verbally, using Arabic or English. The most notable form was resistance to the EOA or, according to some teachers, to the English language itself. Maha, who used Arabic in teaching more than the other teachers, reported:

I try whenever they have to practise speaking; I try to enforce English only. I fail most of the time with them [...] They do not want to discuss anything with me in

English. They do not. So there is no enthusiasm in trying to get a lot from that language.

This view was shared by Salma: ‘When [students] cannot understand, they do not like you to continue speaking in English’. Students’ resistance to English extended outside the classroom, as Maha indicated: ‘They refuse to understand anything in English outside classroom especially in my office’. Similarly, Salma reported that students sometimes came to her saying, “Teacher we do not understand, please explain to us in Arabic. They say this in Arabic of course”. Thus, students resisted the EOA, and Arabic functioned as the language of resistance. It seems that Arabic helped students to negotiate some power with teachers in the form of resistance. Maha described the paradoxical impact of imposing English only:

If they feel that English is not important for them, it will be like the opposite. ‘If you want to use English all the time, control me if you can! I am not using it, and I am using Arabic all the time’ [...] But when they start missing some of the meaning, and they cannot connect the meaning together, this makes them really frustrated, and this will make them go back, and they refuse to use English and use Arabic.

This view was confirmed by Salma, who said that her students tried to speak Arabic most of the time during the class, thereby challenging the language policy – the opposite intention of the EOA.

The following evidence from Rita’s class was discussed in section 6.2.3, and it is restated here to indicate how students used English itself to express resistance.

### **Observation 7.1**

Students were supposed to say some sentences about likes and dislikes in the mid-term speaking exam:

Najla: I do not like English.

Rita: ...

(The teacher did not react and did not ask her any more questions. The teacher was gazing at Najla during the test without saying anything. Many students said that they liked English to please the teacher, but Najal did not.)

Another student also said that she did not like English:

Lulu: I do not like English.

Rita: ...

Lulu: I like people optimist.

Rita: Where did you get this from? I did not teach you this!

This observation not only illustrates students' resistance to English, but also how power was negotiated between teacher and students. The teacher exercised her power nonverbally by constantly gazing at the student and not responding to the students' answers, making them unsure of whether they were right or wrong. The students, on the other hand, resisted the teacher's power verbally by directly telling her that they did not like English. This example further suggests that the teacher did not recognise the bilingual life of her students, who could exercise their own agency to learn the language outside the classroom using various resources, such as the internet. I interpreted this student's use of the new word 'optimist' as a form of resistance to the teacher's control over their knowledge. She wanted to show that she had the ability to learn on her own without any assistance from the teacher.

During focus groups interviews, I asked Najla and Lulu why they had said they did not like English during the speaking exam. They reported that they really did not like English and wanted to express their opinion. They said they were sure that the teacher would accept their opinion. Lulu added: 'I wanted my teacher to understand that I do not like English, so that she stops blaming me in the classroom for not participating or engaging in the lesson activities'. This indicates that she not only resisted the English language, but she also resisted engagement in English classes. These students expressed resistance verbally during the exam and nonverbally by sitting at the back and isolating themselves from the other students during English classes.

Rita commented on students who sat at the back: '[they] come to me and say 'no English', and I tell them, 'no Arabic'. This comment strongly suggests that sitting at the back is an active form of resistance, a way for students to detach themselves from the rest of the class due to their inability to cope with the teaching style of the teacher. However, they approached the teacher and explicitly asked her not to use English only (see section 7.3.2 for other examples of non-verbal forms of resistance).

The following example shows how students in Salma's class resisted being objectified by the teacher and negotiated power with her using Arabic.

## Observation 7.2

Salma was checking attendance by calling numbers from her list without using names:

Salma: 28?

S1: 28 هنا. (28 is here)

Salma: Is 32 absent?

S2: لا لا أنا هنا (No, no, I am here).

(Students should answer the teacher quickly and loudly, otherwise they would be marked absent.)

This incident shows how disciplinary power objectifies students (Foucault 1977) by using numbers rather than names to identify them. It shows also that students used their mother tongue to confirm their attendance, when they could easily have said 'yes'. It is also interesting to compare the responses of these two students. While the first student subjected to the teacher's objectification by using the number to express her identity, the second student said, S2: "لا لا أنا هنا" (No, no, I am here)". This can be seen as an exercise of power by reconstructing her identity using her mother tongue. The use of Arabic in this example can also be seen as a form of resistance to the use of EOA. Calling students' number was a familiar part of the daily routine. They were supposed to use English to reply, since they only needed one or two words to indicate their presence. Their use of Arabic in this context does not mean that they were unable to use English but, rather, indicates resistance to the teacher's objectification of students or to the EOA itself. In either case, they used Arabic as a tool of resistance. Benesch (1999) reported similar findings. She found that the professor was unaware of his students' names throughout the semester because he allowed them to check their attendance themselves and did not bother to learn their names. Students resisted such ignorance of their identities by asking questions as a way of distinguishing themselves during the lecture.

The EOA was not the only thing that students resisted. The teachers also reported that students sometimes resisted parts of English lessons they did not like. Salma mentioned that they sometimes tried to get rid of some elements of the syllabus. Rita said that her students sometimes refused to perform some speaking tasks, saying "no, it is difficult. We do not want it." According to Maha:

If they feel that I use difficult language for them, they come to me and tell me ‘you are not using our level language, use more simplified language’ [...] If they feel I am talking quickly, they come and tell me.

Judy mentioned that her students sometimes complained about her giving them too much homework or speaking too quickly. The following extract from Maha’s interview was presented earlier in the context of punishment, but it also shows how students verbally resisted unfair punishment:

One day I tried to punish a group that caused lots of trouble for me. I decided to punish the whole class. One student came and said it is not our business that the group is messy; it is unfair to punish all of us. Of course I had to take the punishment back because she was right.

This evidence indicates that students were active subjects in the power relations with their teachers. Méndez & García (2012) argued that students’ voice played an important role in power dynamics because they used it to express their complaints, agreement, disagreement and opinions, and to support their peers.

It is instructive to explore the different ways in which the teachers reacted to their students’ resistance. Maha, for instance, displayed tolerance when she cancelled the whole class punishment because one student had provided a logical justification for her resistance: ‘It is not our business that that group is messy; it is unfair to punish us’. In contrast, when Rita’s students said to her ‘No English’, she replied, ‘No Arabic’. Not only did she resist their input, she was unwilling to discuss the reasons. It was one of the students at the back of the classroom who said, ‘No English’, which clearly indicates her low level of proficiency in the language. The teacher could have handled this sensitive group of learners with more openness and acceptance and recognised their resistance as an indicator of the reason for their disengagement, but she failed to do so.

Sever (2018) interviewed ten university lecturers in Turkey to investigate students’ resistance. He found that the lecturers perceived students’ resistance negatively, and they blamed students as the main source of resistance. They believed that students’ resistance had destructive results in the classroom. The researcher argued that the lecturers’ negative evaluation of students’ resistance prevented them from recognising the constructive effects of resistance, which could be used to bring about transformation.

He advised teachers to increase their awareness of this phenomenon by understanding its impacts and potential uses in order to create a more productive and satisfying learning environment. In the same study, the lecturers were asked about how they managed students' resistance. They reported various strategies, such as using specific teaching approaches to accommodate students' different learning styles, identifying recalcitrant students, and developing empathy with those students.

These two teachers' reactions reflect their personal beliefs about students' rights. Maha, for instance, responded to a question about whether students could reject an item of content or a particular teaching technique in this way: 'Well, it is their right. After all, the teacher and the class are for them. They are the centre of the whole process. If they have to reject, it is their right'. Talking about student consultation, Maha stated:

I do it at the beginning of the semester. I make a trying lesson to show them how I teach. And if there is any problem with them, if they respond to me within the first week, we will change according to how they get more benefits. And I always tell them throughout the year 'if there is anything not suitable, come and tell me.

In other words, she reacted positively to their resistance. In the following quote, Rita expressed a similarly open-minded view:

They can say to the teacher to change the technique or change the way. Sometimes when they cannot understand, they complain to the coordinator. They come in a group and complain about some teachers. The teacher should be very conscious actually because we have large classes and because we are teaching a foreign language, and we are also foreigners, and we cannot speak their language. So if they do not understand something, teacher should change the way. If my students do not like something, I will take it positively.

However, when her weak students asked her for less English, she immediately resisted the request by insisting on 'No Arabic'. Talking about rejection by students, she stated:

I did not experience that, but sometimes when I give them speaking dialogues, they say 'no it is difficult, we do not want it'. Sometimes we need to listen to them, sometimes we do not. Sometimes when it is set by the university or by the book, we have to do it. So sometimes I am forcing them to do it even when they do not like.

This comment indicates that Rita's actions reflected, at least in part, her subjection to the hierarchal authority of the institution that imposes the EOA on teachers. The interviews with the teachers in general revealed how institutional authority was exercised over teachers as well as students. When I asked them about the students' right to reject teaching content, they reported that they were teaching a particular curriculum, and so students and even teachers could not reject any components of it. From my experience of working at the English Language Centre, I know that teachers are required to finish teaching the syllabus within a specified time. They can add any extra material they like, but they cannot ignore or omit any items from the syllabus. Written examinations were usually prepared by a committee at the Centre, and the teachers were not entitled to know the questions that would be in the tests. The teachers reported that they worked long hours, teaching large classes of 60-80 students for three hours a day. They also complained of a lack of teaching resources such as internet access, copying machines, printers, projectors and so on. This shortage of resources, the teachers said, did not allow them to teach in the ways they had hoped (see section 6.2.5).

Similar results were found by Benesch (1999) who adopted a critical teacher/researcher role to investigate power practices and resistance in a paired EAP writing/psychology lecture course in an American college whose ESL population were mostly immigrant students. The study was guided by Foucault's concept of power. She found that non-native-speaking students resisted the institutional power practised by their professor by complaining and writing assignments in which they suggested changes in the teacher's approach, such as reducing the amount of teacher talk and allowing more time for students' discussion and class work. The professor reacted to these suggestions by asserting the current policy and confirming that no changes would be made with regard to students' discussion time because the professor himself was controlled by the requirement to cover the syllabus. The students resisted this institutional and professional control by asking many questions during the class in order to create the time they wanted for discussion. They also used questions to take a break from the overwhelming flow of information, to control classroom discourse and time, to slow down lectures, to process the material they had received, and to resist non-stop lecturing.

There was also a relationship between the teacher's ability to speak Arabic and students' verbal resistance. Students could verbally express their resistance to Salma and Maha because they shared Arabic as their mother tongue, and this served as a means of

self-expression. In Judy's case, the students were advanced learners of English, and they seemed capable of expressing their ideas in English. Rita was the only teacher who reported that her students usually did not reject anything. This does not mean that everything was fine with them, but it could indicate the existence of a power relationship. That is, Rita was a non-Arab teacher with very low proficiency in Arabic, so her means of communication with students were limited, especially in the case of weak learners.

Grouping provided another example of verbal resistance by students. As explained in Chapter 6, teachers used grouping to facilitate surveillance, but the data also showed that students themselves used grouping to resist power practices. The teachers reported that, whenever students wanted to discuss anything with the teacher or complain about something, they usually came to the teacher's office in groups in order to support each other. Maha, for example, said:

Once two students came to me and told me, 'this listing exercise is not enough for us', so what I did was I went to the YouTube, I tried to listen to a conversation between native speakers about the same topic, and it benefited me.

Similarly, Judy commented:

They ask their friends, they bring their friends and talk to me in group and try to communicate [...] When they come first and speak to me, they are laughing with each other, and they then help each other to explain it in English.

Rita made the same point:

Sometimes when [students] cannot understand, they complain to the coordinator. They come in a group and complain about some teachers.

When Rita was asked about the limited questions raised by students in her class, she reported that they came to her office in groups of four or five students; however, they usually hesitated to ask because they did not know how to form correct questions, so they sought assistance from each other. These findings indicate that the same power techniques available to teachers are available to students as well. They can use language, Arabic or English, and use grouping to make their voices heard.

### **7.3.2 Nonverbal Resistance**

Students were not always in a position to verbally resist teachers' exercise of power, especially when their English was poor and they were not allowed to use Arabic. Therefore, they had to find other ways to express their resistance, such as keeping silent, failing to participate, sitting at the back, and misbehaving.

#### *7.3.2.1 Silence and Low Participation*

Students' silence and low participation were forms of resistance to the teacher's insistence on the use of the EOA. This was observed in Salma's and Rita's classes, where students were not allowed to use Arabic. The teachers, however, had a different interpretation. Salma believed that silence indicated a student's lack of understanding, while Rita commented:

Some students are good in study, but stay silent because they have no ability to speak. They can understand, but they cannot speak [...] Only one or two who ask to explain, and the others actually depend on them; they just let them ask.

Maha, on the other hand, linked students' silence to the exclusion of Arabic, saying that whenever she insisted on the EOA and prevented students from using Arabic, they resorted to silence: 'They give me sad faces especially in the exam when I do not reply in Arabic at all'.

Focus group participants from Salma's class mentioned that the majority of students (about 60 out of 75) preferred to keep silent during the English classes. Rita's students reported that the use of the EOA caused them to stay silent, emphasizing that they preferred to keep silent to avoid making mistakes or being embarrassed. These comments were confirmed by the observational data, which showed that only a few students participated in Salma's and Rita's classrooms.

The following observation suggests that students' silence could be a form of resistance.

#### **Observation 7.3**

Salma noticed that a group of students were sitting at the very back of the classroom, and some of them did not bring their books:

Salma: The two rows at the back, do you have books or not?

Ss: . . .

Salma: Show me your books.

Ss: . . .

Salma: You do not have books! Look for a book. Where is your book Nawal?

Ss: . . .

Students, of course, are supposed to bring their books in order to engage in the lesson. But this observation can also be interpreted as a negotiation of power. The teacher sought to exercise power by asking questions in English. Students, however, exercised their own sources of power. Salma was not able to approach them because they chose seats at the back. They responded to her multiple questions with silence. This could be interpreted as ignoring the teacher and resisting her use of the English language.

It is interesting to compare this observation with the previously described scenario in Rita's class (Observation 6.14), where students replied using the word '*almassef*' and '*friend*' accompanied by gestures to make the teacher understand that they were sharing a book with their friend. Here, students' silence could be a sign of their inability to speak English. In Salma's class, however, students responded only with silence – arguably, as a form of resistance. Students' silence could be as powerful as teacher's use of English only because it could cause some embarrassment to the teacher whose authority requires students to answer any question she asks. In this regard, Fairclough (1989) states:

Silence is another weapon for the less powerful participant, particularly as a way of being noncommittal about what more powerful participants say; but the latter may again be able to force participants out of silence and into a response by asking do you understand? or do you agree? or what do you think?, for example. (p. 136)

Silence was identified in many studies as a signal of students' resistance to teachers' authority (e.g. Abdullah & Hosseini 2012; Benesch 1999; Perumal 2008). Abdullah & Hosseini (2012) investigated unequal power relations in Iranian high school EFL classes and found that teachers dominated classroom discourse through different discursive strategies such as talking most of the time and controlling the topic. Students were dominated by the teachers, who did not attempt to enhance the creative and critical skills of students, so the students responded powerlessly and passively. Students' use of their L1 was restricted, a situation that the researchers considered to be oppressive

because Iranian students in general lacked English competence to speak only in English. Students mostly remained silent unless they were called upon by the teacher to answer a question. The researchers argued that students' silence did not seem natural because they resorted to it even when they were asked very simple questions. Therefore, they concluded that such silence was a form of resistance to the teachers' practices of power.

Students also expressed resistance to English through limited participation as the following comment from Maha exemplifies:

[Students] have to have more participation ... They do not want to discuss anything with me in English; they do not. So there is no enthusiasm in trying to get a lot from that language. It is only 'give me the information, I will participate if only there is a question that I can answer. If I do not know the answer, I am not trying. I know the answer, I raise my hand, you choose me', and that is it.

When Salma's students were asked about the reason for their limited interaction during the English class, considerable debate ensued. For instance:

S1: Sometimes the lesson is too easy, so we do not need to ask.

S2: Most of us hesitate to answer because we feel afraid of making mistakes.

S3: I am not afraid of making mistakes, but of being made fun of.

These findings align with those of Al-Seghayer (2014b), Khan (2011), and Al-Zahrani (2008), who reported that Saudi students were poorly motivated to learn English and expressed feelings of fear and lack of ability. These findings, however, could represent resistance to the teacher's exercise of power through criticism or ridicule. The observational data provided in section 6.3.2 showed how the teachers exercised power through English language use and how students encountered such power practices by smiling shyly and resorting to silence. Méndez & García (2012) observed elementary school EFL classrooms to analyse power and solidarity relations during students' interactions. They identified different forms of students' practices of power, such as silence and low participation. Some students resorted to silence to force their peers to participate. The researchers argued that students were powerful no matter what form of power they exerted, and they considered a student who did not do homework or did not participate as one who was assuming a position of power in front of their peers.

### 7.3.2.2 *Sitting at the Back*

One of the nonverbal resistance strategies adopted by some students was to sit at the back of the classroom where they could hide from the teacher's direct observation to some extent. It was interesting to observe how power strategies used by teachers were also used by students to resist such practices. That is, classroom space was carefully utilised by some teachers to discipline students and expose them to maximum surveillance (section 6.2.1); however, students used this space to resist such surveillance and to isolate themselves from the rest of the class. This phenomenon was clearly observed in Salma's and Rita's classrooms, and this encouraged me to sit at the back, close to those students, during one of my observations of Rita's class.

Rita's students were asked why they liked sitting at the back. They were hesitant to answer the question, so they were assured again that their identities would be protected, and that their teacher would not have access to the data. This is what they said:

S1: When I sit at the back, the teacher cannot notice me, but if sit at the front, she can easily notice me.

S2: I usually change my place. When I feel that I cannot understand the grammar or the lesson, I prefer to sit at the back and play with my mobile.

S3: I can understand English, but I don't like to sit at the front. I feel bored during English classes. The teacher uses English only, and she talks a lot. The only thing that we do is to write down, and I can do this while setting at the back.

Najla, who said 'I do not like English' (Observation 7.1), was asked to explain why she sat at the back and used her mobile while the teacher was teaching and whether she did the same thing in other subjects. She replied, 'No, I do this during the English class only. In the other subjects, I sit at the front, and I do not use my mobile'.

These comments confirm that students use classroom space to keep away from the teacher's surveillance zone. The third student's comment clearly indicates a resistance to the EOA, the teacher-centred class, and the restriction of students' roles to merely copying what the teacher writes on the board. These teaching practices cause students to resist and exclude themselves from classroom activities. Similar findings were reported by Sever (2018). The researcher interviewed university lecturers who reported that students' low self-esteem was a reason for their resistance. Although they blamed students

for this behaviour, they acknowledged that it resulted from their use of teaching approaches that the students did not like. Specifically, students showed resistance to teacher-centred instruction by sitting at the back or by not coming at all.

### *7.3.2.3 Misbehaviour*

In addition to silence, low participation, and sitting at the back, students in this research expressed nonverbal resistance by misbehaving in the classroom. The observational data showed that in classrooms where students were not allowed to use Arabic (Salma's and Rita's), students behaved in various negative ways to resist their teachers' exercise of power.

Rita expressed her concern with such misbehaviour: 'I tell them if you are zero in English, it is ok I can bring you slowly to hundred, but if your behaviour is not good, you are not going to impress me any time.' This statement indicates the existence of some tension in Rita's relationship with her students, which was supported by the observational data. The field notes recorded in Rita's classroom showed that students behaved in a negative manner to demonstrate resistance to her strict rules. For example, some students were studying other subjects at the very back of the classroom, putting the book for that subject inside the English course book, thus challenging the teacher's constant surveillance. Some other students were playing with their mobiles while the teacher was giving an explanation.

Students in Salma's classroom showed other forms of misbehaviour. For instance, some students put down their heads on their desks to take a nap. Some were chewing; some were looking at their mirrors to apply lipstick. Some students arrived very late and entered the classroom without talking to the teacher or even requesting her permission; they sat at the very back of the classroom and talked noisily during the class. The teacher warned them many times in Arabic, but her warnings failed to modify their behaviour.

Salma's students were asked why they were studying other subjects during the English class. They replied that the teacher's use of English most of the time made them feel frustrated and concerned because they did not understand. Therefore, some of them preferred to keep silent; some slept during the class; some studied other subjects during the class, and some chatted with their classmates. Some also reported that the only reason for attending the class was to get the attendance marks.

The following observation indicates how students in Rana's class challenged her strict regime:

#### **Observation 7.4**

A student's mobile rang loudly during the class.

Rita: girls! Switch your mobiles off please.

(The student did what the teacher said).

After about five minutes, another mobile rang while the teacher was explaining the lesson, but this time the ringing tone was a traditional Saudi song which caused the whole class to explode in laughter.

Rita: If I hear your mobile ringing tomorrow, I will collect them and give them to Mrs. Fatimah. (Mrs. Fatimah is the coordinator of the preparatory year program)

Ss. ...

After some minutes, a third mobile rang.

Rita: A lot of disturbance today! Put your mobiles on silent please!

Towards the end of the class, another mobile rang again, but as a face-saving, the teacher pretended that she did not hear it.

This incident shows that students intentionally and continually challenged the teacher by ignoring her instructions, which caused her to threaten them by bringing in a higher authority figure (Mrs. Fatimah) because she felt that her own authority was not enough to stop students from opposing the classroom regime.

These resistance practices emerged more frequently in Salma's and Rita's classrooms, where the EOA was adopted, than in Maha's and Judy's classrooms, where students were allowed to use Arabic. This suggests a relationship between preventing students from using their L1 and their resistance to such an exercise of power. What happened in these classrooms is consistent with the findings reported by Oral (2013), where students challenged their classroom's regime as a way of negotiating power with their teacher. Sever (2018) found that the most common forms of resistance among university students in Turkey were behavioural rather than verbal. Students expressed resistance by behaving irresponsibly, absenteeism, not being interested in the course, disrupting course routine, and challenging the teacher's practice of power.

## 7.4 Conclusion

Resistance is a complex dynamic that co-exists with power and takes different forms. The EO policy adopted by the Centre was not accepted by all the teachers, some of whom overtly resisted this approach and employed bilingual teaching. Students, as members of the power circle, practised power in their own way by showing resistance. In most cases, students used the same power techniques used by teachers. In other words, some teachers used the Arabic language to discipline students, as indicated in Chapter 6, but it simultaneously functioned to empower the students because they could use it to negotiate power with their teachers. They used Arabic to reconstruct their identities, to ask questions, to resist teachers' punishments, and to resist the EOA. Grouping and utilisation of classroom space were other means of power practice employed by teachers but, at the same time, students used the same practices to resist teachers' power.

Another important finding was the effect of the exclusion of Arabic use on students' participation. When students were not allowed to use Arabic, they were less engaged, less interested, and more resistant to learning English; this was particularly evident in Salma's and Rita's classes. The exclusion of Arabic from some classes contributed to the emergence of more resistance and negative behaviour among students.

The findings showed that some teachers misread students' resistance, perceiving it as bad behaviour that should be met with strict enforcement of the rules. This chapter has shown that resistance is a complex dynamic that occurred when students encountered something that they felt silenced by. Students in this study resisted power exerted over them verbally by means of language. When they could not speak English adequately and were not allowed to use Arabic, they expressed their resistance by resorting to silence, poor participation, sitting at the back, or misbehaving.

## Chapter 8

### **Roles of Arabic in Saudi Tertiary EL Classroom**

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#### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter demonstrates how the ideologies adopted by the teachers (see Chapter 5) were practically applied in EL classes, although some contradictions emerged, through the different language choices that the teachers made. The teachers used L1 and L2 in a way that reflected their own beliefs. This chapter contextualises the teachers' perceptions about the use of L1 and L2.

In this chapter, I present, analyse, and discuss the research findings concerned with the third research question: **What different roles does Arabic play in Saudi tertiary EL classrooms?** The systematic use of L1 in English language classrooms has been described as a great learning resource – indeed, as “the master key to foreign languages” (Butzkamm 2003, p. 31). The findings revealed that Arabic served various cognitive, affective and pedagogical functions (Forman 2016). The data presented in this chapter were obtained from three sources: teachers' interviews, students' focus groups, and class observations. Various positive functions of Arabic were identified, even when the English-only approach was ideologically preferred as a teaching method. Arabic was present either visibly, in its intentional deployment by the teacher, or invisibly when it was banned by the teacher but used among the students.

While Chapter 6 showed how Arabic was sometimes used exclusively to discipline students and keep them under the teacher's control, this chapter shows how Arabic was successfully used in many situations to teach English and help students to learn effectively. This kind of use empowered students, gave them more roles, facilitated knowledge sharing between teacher and learners, and valued students' own language and culture. This chapter also shows how the implementation of an exclusively monolingual approach not only results in ineffective teaching, but also sustains power inequality, marginalisation of students, and stigmatisation of students' culture. The chapter is organised around the three main functions of L1 - cognitive, affective and pedagogical - identified in Forman's (2016) analytical framework (see Chapter 3).

## 8.2 Cognitive Roles

L1 can be utilised by teachers to explain forms of L2 knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar, usage and culture (Cook 2001; Forman 2016). “We can see the embeddedness of learning: how any learning depends on our existing knowledge; how we experience the new from within the known” (Forman 2016, p. 90). The logic behind the use of students’ L1 as a cognitive resource is explained by Forman (2016): “any of us who has learned a foreign language through formal instruction should recall how we first tried to make sense of a new ‘L2 world’ through our existing ‘L1 world’” (p. 90). Thus, students build new knowledge of L2 on the L1 knowledge that they already possess. Knowledge in the mother tongue constitutes the base on which students build their new knowledge. Forman (2007) encourages bilingual teaching as it is hard for students to learn a foreign language in isolation from their mother tongue. Kerr (2015) encourages teachers to permit some amount of L1 in monolingual classes where both teachers and students share the same L1. He argues that L1 “can facilitate more extended production of English” (p. 5).

This study showed that Arabic played essential cognitive roles in some EFL classrooms. Some teachers used Arabic to teach vocabulary and grammar. This was appreciated by the majority of participant students and was observed in some classrooms. The exclusion of Arabic from the EFL classroom had negative impacts on students, especially those with low levels of proficiency, and it was challenging for some teachers.

### 8.2.1 Explaining English Vocabulary

Teaching vocabulary was the most common cognitive role of Arabic, and this role was emphasised by some teachers and students. Maha referred to the cognitive burden resulting from using English all the time: ‘Listening to a foreign language all the time or being given instructions in English all the time is difficult’. She therefore stressed the role of Arabic in helping students to understand new words and use them properly:

[Arabic] might help [students] to learn English. . . . also related to their understanding, like the meaning of a couple of words and putting them inside expressions. It gives them a good understanding of the meaning, and then reusing it.

Judy stated that she allowed her students to use Arabic to explain to one another because she herself could not learn a foreign language without making use of her L1 to translate

meaning. Salma seemed less enthusiastic than Maha about the use of Arabic to teach vocabulary, but she acknowledged its role in explaining words that were difficult to translate: ‘Sometimes we come across a phrase or a word; we cannot find a clear equivalent in English, so I explain it in Arabic to make it clear for them.’

Most of the students reported that Arabic made a major contribution to understanding new vocabulary. Students from Maha’s class, for example, said that her use of Arabic to teach vocabulary enhanced their understanding of the meaning of the new words: ‘It helps us to understand, and it confirms our understanding’. For this reason, they described using Arabic as ‘beautiful’.

The observation of Maha’s classes showed that she effectively utilised Arabic to teach new vocabulary. For example, she used Arabic to help students distinguish between words that were close in meaning, such as *scream* and *shout*, and *garden* and *park*. The pair *like* and *love* are not only close in meaning, but are also abstract words that are hard to explain in English, but by translating them into Arabic, Maha could easily convey the meanings to students.

In the following observations, Maha used Arabic to confirm the meaning of new words and to deepen to students’ understanding of them:

### **Observation 8.1**

Maha: Do you know what *detest* mean?

Ss: . . .

Maha: To detest is to really really hate. (She utilized her facial expression to support the meaning).

Maha: يمقت

### **Observation 8.2**

In a reading task, Maha explained the meaning of *grab*:

Maha: To grab means to catch something very strongly. (She used her body language by making a fist. The textbook also showed a picture that indicated the meaning).

Maha: يمسك

In these two observations, the teacher gave English synonyms of the new words, used body language to supplement the verbal explanation, and referred to pictures in the textbook when possible. As extra support, she provided the equivalent Arabic words at the end of each observation. Although the students seemed to understand the English synonyms she provided in these two scenarios, she used the Arabic synonyms to confirm their understanding. These findings were not unexpected, since Maha is Arabic, and she supports the use of Arabic in English classes. Of all the teachers, Maha was the most enthusiastic about the positive roles of Arabic language, as indicated in Chapter 5. As these observations show, she used Arabic to teach new vocabulary and successfully conveyed the meanings of new words, especially abstract words and words with similar meanings. Anyone who has gone through the experience of learning a foreign language can remember “the cognitive depth of L1” (Forman 2016, p. 90) when it is used by the teacher. Maha’s use of Arabic for this purpose was appreciated by her students, as demonstrated in the focus group discussions.

These findings support Weschler’s (1997) argument that translation is a suitable technique for teaching abstract concepts. The role of L1 in teaching vocabulary has been widely documented in recent research such as Alsaawi (2013), Sa’d & Qadermazi (2015), and Karimian & Mohammadi (2015). These studies indicate that L1 is beneficial for providing the exact meanings of new words (see Chapter 3 for discussion of these studies). The teachers’ use of Arabic also implies a desire on their part to share some power with their students. When Maha used Arabic, she allowed students to access the meaning rather than treating her English knowledge as a source of superiority. In doing so, she created a more democratic atmosphere. These practices reflect her beliefs, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Although the effectiveness of Arabic in teaching new words is clear from these examples, some teachers argued that the EO approach was capable of teaching vocabulary effectively. Salma asserted that Arabic should be used only as a last resort when all other techniques had failed to convey the meaning: ‘If I am following the ways like giving examples, acting, sometimes I ask the students if they know that. Finally if I cannot explain that word, I translate’. Although Salma acknowledged the role of translation, she positioned it at a lower level, a last resort.

Rita had an even more rigid point of view than Salma, explicitly denying that Arabic had any role in teaching vocabulary. She insisted that students could understand new vocabulary without using Arabic, and that there were other ways to convey meaning such as giving synonyms, drawing pictures on the board, providing examples, or showing pictures from the coursebook. Although these techniques are often recommended for EOA practitioners, this study showed that they were not always effective in teaching vocabulary, as illustrated in the following observations.

### **Observation 8.3**

During one of Salma's classes, she used the Arabic word *يهرول* to explain the action verb *jog*.

The teacher translated the new word into Arabic without using any of the techniques that she had suggested to teach new vocabulary (e.g. acting or giving examples). She did not deal with Arabic as a last solution; rather she gave it priority. In fact, translation was an appropriate technique since it would not have been easy for her to portray the act of jogging, for example. Even if she had shown a picture, students might have confused *jogging* with *running*. Therefore, this was a judicious use of Arabic. Nonetheless it contradicted her expressed support of the EOA. The following observation reveals that Salma also used Arabic on occasion to teach grammar.

### **Observation 8.4**

Salma was teaching how to connect sentences using the connective *however*. She wrote two sentences on the board and asked her students to link them using the connector. The students looked confused and unable to understand the meaning of *however*, so the teacher tried to explain the meaning and the usage of the word using English only, but she failed in that job. She therefore had to give the Arabic equivalent *ومع ذلك* at the end so they could understand. Then the students linked the two sentences correctly.

In fact, this abstract word, *however*, posed a challenge for the teacher because it was not possible to explain using any of the techniques she suggested, so Arabic was the quickest and most accessible solution.

The following incidents from Rita's class provide further evidence that the suggested techniques were not always sufficient and were sometimes misleading for students:

### Observation 8.5

Rita was teaching new vocabulary which included different vegetables such as *cauliflower*, *eggplant*, and *okra*. She showed the students a picture of cauliflower in the textbook, but there was not any picture of eggplant and okra.

Rita: Do you know what an eggplant is?

Ss: ...

Rita: Brinjal! (brinjal is a term used in India for eggplant.)

Ss: ...

Rita: It is a kind of vegetables. It is dark purple.

Ss: ...

(Rita drew an eggplant on the board, and students recognized it.)

Ss: بادنجان (eggplant)

Rita: Girls! I want you to understand from my description not from drawing (she looked upset).

Rita: Now, do you know what an okra is?

Ss : ...

Rita: Ladyfingers.

Ss: ...

(Rita drew an okra on the board, but the drawing was not that accurate. Some students were whispering to each other the Arabic word *كوسة* which means a zucchini)

S: بامية (okra).

Here Rita employed principles of the English-only approach to teach the new vocabulary by giving synonyms and drawing on the board. Synonyms failed to convey the meaning of both new words, eggplant and okra. Therefore, she used another technique, drawing on the board, and this technique worked with the word *eggplant*, but not with *okra*. Her drawing of okra confused the students, who thought she was talking about a zucchini. The word *okra* was finally recognised by only one student, and she

shouted the Arabic equivalent to make her classmates understand. This translation saved the situation for the teacher, who otherwise would have been trapped in the limitations of the English-only approach.

Although students recognised the word *eggplant* after the teacher had drawn it on the board, she was not satisfied because she expected them to understand the word by just listening to the English-only description. This suggests that advocates of this approach have unreal expectations about students' abilities. EFL classes involve students with different English proficiency levels, and expecting that the English-only approach would be effective with all of them seems unreasonable.

Another interesting phenomenon evident in the above observation was the teacher's use of the word *brinjal*, an Indian synonym, to explain the word *eggplant*. It seems that Rita was thinking in her L1, which played a cognitive role for her and she assumed, perhaps unconsciously, that Arab students were familiar with this word. As Forman (2016) commented, "it seems that we should also acknowledge how L1 operates as a cognitive tool for teachers themselves" (p. 91).

The following conversation took place in Rita's classroom. It shows how the teacher refused to allow Arabic language in her class:

### **Observation 8.6**

Rita: I will mention a sentence. Tell me whether it is true or false.

Rita: There is a refrigerator in the classroom.

Ss: True.

Rita: There is a fridge in the classroom.

Ss: True.

Rita: Girls! What is a refrigerator? What is a fridge?

S: ثلاجة (Fridge).

Rita: Girls! Do not translate, otherwise your teacher won't understand. Tell me. What do you keep in a fridge?

Ss: Food.

Rita: Is there a fridge in the classroom?

Ss: No.

Here Rita again relied on the EOA to clarify the new word *refrigerator*, and she refused the translation given by one student. The students recognised the word because it was translated by their classmate, otherwise the teacher would have had to spend more time trying to convey the meaning.

These two incidents show how reliance on EOA techniques may sometimes prevent or at least delay students' comprehension. The following observation shows how the teacher totally failed to explain the meaning of a word:

### **Observation 8.7**

In Rita's classroom, students listened to an extract which included the word *bay*, that students were not familiar with.

Rita: Do you know what a bay is?

Ss: ...

The teacher tried her best to verbally describe what a bay looked like, but students still could not understand. She then drew it on the board, but unfortunately her drawing could not convey the meaning.

S: It is a banana! (in an ironic tone)

(The whole class exploded in laughter).

Rita: I am not a good artist!

Then the teacher moved to the next task without explaining the word *bay* to students.

In this incident, the teacher totally failed to explain the meaning of the new word that was repeated many times on the listening track, and the task ended with the students still not understanding its meaning.

This evidence fails to support Salma's and Rita's contention that students could understand new vocabulary by merely relying on the techniques of EOA. A comparison with the scenarios in Maha's classes, where Arabic was used effectively to convey the meaning of new words, indicates that Arabic played a positive cognitive role in these EFL classrooms and its exclusion had a negative impact on students' comprehension. The idea that L1 is not important in teaching vocabulary is not supported by the work of Forman (2016), Kerr (2015) and Nation (2003), who argue for translation as a significant teaching technique. Nation (2003) believes that translation is more effective than other strategies

such as pictures and examples. The negative effect of avoiding translation was evident in Rita's classes, and its influence on students' learning was clear. The three observations from Rita's classes indicate how the teacher's insistence on conveying the meaning without referring to the students' L1 caused students to misunderstand the new words even after she drew pictures on the board. In order to explain the new words, the teacher exploited all her available tools - synonyms, providing English description, and drawing pictures - but these tools failed to achieve the desired results.

These techniques have been criticised by a number of researchers. According to Forman (2016), synonyms can be confusing for students, and L1 can provide accuracy, especially when new words are close in meaning. In Canagarajah (1995) study, the teacher sometimes failed to convey the meaning using L2, but once an L1 equivalent was used, the meaning was immediately clear to students. Butzkamm (2003) similarly criticised the reliance on visual aids suggested by the monolingual approach because they are sometimes counterproductive and misleading. He gave the word 'sky' as an example; students believed that sky meant cloud since the picture in the textbook showed a sky with dark clouds. In this study, students thought that Rita was talking about a *zucchini* when she tried to explain the meaning of *okra*. These data support Butzkamm's (2003) argument that L1 is "the master key to foreign languages, the tool which gives us the fastest, surest, most precise, and most complete means of accessing a foreign language" (p.31). It can therefore be concluded that in EFL contexts, where students share the same L1, its use can be a valuable facilitating resource.

The findings also demonstrated how the monolingual ideology involves a clear exercise of power. In Observation 8.5, the teacher exercised her right to think in and speak her native language by using the word *brinjal*, but in Observation 8.6, she was irritated when students shouted the Arabic word ثلاجة (fridge). She immediately said, 'Girls! Do not translate, otherwise your teacher won't understand'. This is a clear example of a teacher exercising power over her students. It seems that she felt that students' use of L1 not only threatened her knowledge authority and her control of the classroom, because she did not understand Arabic, but would also put students in a powerful position. Observation 8.7 supports this argument because the teacher preferred to move to the next task, leaving her students ignorant of the meaning of *bay* and, consequently, marginalised. Students from this class reported in the focus group that sometimes the teacher did not

care about their comprehension; because they knew she was a non-native speaker of Arabic, however, they did not expect her to be able to explain everything for them.

These observations illustrate how the teacher's classroom practices were dictated by her language ideologies. She did not ask her students to look up the new words in a dictionary or how to say them in Arabic; rather, she maintained her position of authority, positioning students as stupid or ignorant because they did not understand. She made a deliberate decision not to allow students to access the language. She therefore marginalised students through the use of English only. These findings demonstrate how beliefs in the superiority of English as the language of instruction and the need to maintain control can be expressed in the exercise of power.

The findings also demonstrate the connection between teachers' beliefs about Arabic and English and the way they teach. That is, when Arabic is used as a last resort or completely avoided when teaching new words, these actions reflect the teachers' beliefs about Arabic. These teaching practices, in addition to their pedagogical implications (such as wasting the teacher's time and effort and failing to convey the meaning of new words), stigmatise Arabic and position it as either an inferior teaching option or a sin that should not be committed. In this regard, Cook (2001) argues that the monolingual approach stigmatises the use of L1 via pejorative terms such as avoid, ban, and confess.

Reliance on the EOA can also present a challenge for teachers, as was evident in Rita's case. Let us consider for example the word *bay*, whose meaning the teacher could not convey to the students. English was not her first language, and she prohibited students' L1, so her reliance on English only to teach vocabulary can be seen to disempower her. Forman (2016) refers to "the constraints and challenges that can be posed by L2 use - even for those with expert L2 proficiency" (p. 91). The EOA put pressure on the teachers in this study, which resulted in inadequate teaching practices. Therefore, it could be concluded that the whole monolingual project weakens teachers rather than strengthening them. Rita was not conscious of the negative impact of this approach on her teaching outcomes. She was unconsciously following another authority, institutional authority.

The findings also highlighted the importance of the teacher having some knowledge of the students' L1. Judy commented that knowing Arabic would be useful

for her in some situations, for instance when she had to ask students to help her to convey certain meanings or to mediate communication with the class. Rita's self-reported poor grasp of Arabic undoubtedly contributed to her failure to use Arabic to explain vocabulary. She said 'Girls! Do not translate, otherwise your teacher won't understand' when students translated the new word. She was not even able to make sure that the students' translation was accurate. She exploited all her available tools to convey the meaning by giving the English synonym and drawing pictures on the board without achieving the desired goal. Even when students were whispering the wrong meaning to each other (for *okra*) and the correct answer was shouted out by one of them, Rita was not sure that they knew the right meaning. This evidence supports the argument that insistence on the English-only approach could be related to the teacher's low level of proficiency in students' L1, and that the teaching of monolingual classes requires the teacher to be fluent in students' L1 (Cole 1998; Ford 2009; Weschler 1997). Such knowledge is not intended to empower teachers over students but to improve their teaching. Rather than being confined to a single teaching method which might not be effective in all situations, teachers would have a wider range of alternative techniques.

### **8.2.2 Explaining Grammar**

In addition to the use of Arabic to teach new vocabulary, this study revealed that Arabic facilitated the teaching of grammar. Maha was the only teacher who talked about this function. She said, 'When I explain grammar, I feel guilty if I do not use Arabic because I believe sometimes comparing between rules of Arabic and English might help students.' The following comment explains how she compared the grammar of the two languages:

I compare a grammar rule between Arabic and English, so that [students] understand. For example, for the use of adjectives and nouns, in Arabic we put the noun first and then the adjective. In English no, we put the adjective first and then the noun. I give them examples in Arabic, so that they see how different they are, and I try to literally translate it, so that they see mistakes. For example, 'blue car'; I cannot say in Arabic 'أزرق سيارة', so this can help them.

Class observations showed that Maha used Arabic to teach prepositions of place, as shown in the following observation.

### Observation 8.8

The meanings of ‘*in front of*’ and ‘*behind*’ were given in Arabic. Arabic was used to tell the differences between prepositions in general. She used some oral examples, and she used pictures from the book and drew on the board to explain them. The difference between ‘*at*’ and ‘*in*’ was told in Arabic as well.

The use of Arabic in these situations seemed necessary because it helped students to distinguish between prepositions and identify the subtle differences between them. The following observation took place in Maha’s class during a writing task:

### Observation 8.9

Maha: متى بنحط ال capital letters? (When do we need to use capital letter?)

S: في بداية الجملة: (at the beginning of the sentence).

Maha: ماتنسي ال (Do not forget to use the) capital letters. They are very important.

In this observation, the teacher switched between Arabic and English, which helped students to give the correct answer and helped the interaction between teacher and student to flow smoothly. Maha’s use of Arabic to teach grammar was consistent with her strong belief, expressed in interview, in the use of Arabic to facilitate students’ understanding of English grammar. Maha compared the English grammar to students’ existing knowledge of Arabic grammar. The benefit of this approach is supported by the results of numerous studies (e.g. Al-balawi 2016; Carless 2007; Forman 2016; Karimian & Mohammadi 2015; Sa’d & Qadermazi 2015). Al-balawi (2016), for instance, reported that Saudi teachers employed Arabic to achieve several cognitive functions, including clarifying the similarities and differences between Arabic and English.

The findings from the focus groups showed general agreement among the students that the teacher’s use of Arabic was effective in explaining grammar in general. They reported that they needed Arabic to understand English grammar. One participant from Maha’s class said, ‘Now we feel that grammar is easier because our teacher uses Arabic, so we can understand’. Another participant from Salma’s class commented, ‘My teacher at high school used English with a little Arabic, and she was very successful, and we were able to understand and remember the grammatical rules.’ Students from Rita’s group eagerly talked about their experience when a local teacher substituted during Rita’s

absence: ‘Do you remember when our teacher was absent, and a Saudi teacher replaced her. Her teaching was excellent. She used some Arabic in a very useful way.’ As well as using some Arabic to help them understand grammar, they reported, whenever she felt that the students’ attention had wandered, she used Arabic to re-engage their interest. These comments indicate that students appreciated the use of Arabic by their teachers to teach grammar and believed that it was an effective technique. Interestingly, the comments from Rita’s students implied a preference for the bilingual teacher who had only taught them for one day. They talked about how effective her teaching was because she employed Arabic in teaching. Although only one teacher used Arabic to teach English grammar, this practice had a positive impact on her students.

Moreover, Maha’s comparative approach to Arabic and English grammar positioned the two languages equally, explaining the similarities and differences between them without giving students the impression that English was superior. This bilingual teaching technique also showed appreciation of the students’ L1, which was positioned as a valuable knowledge resource rather than something that must be avoided. In this way, students are empowered by knowing that the teacher values their knowledge of their own language and having the opportunity to share it with her. In contrast, when students’ L1 is excluded, this source of power is unavailable. The students’ expressed preference for bilingual teaching in part reflects their ability to share their knowledge, which is valued and appreciated. Thus, the use of L1 in English classes not only facilitated learning and teaching of L2, but also empowered students and allowed them to benefit from their existing knowledge.

The cognitive roles of Arabic, mostly embraced by Maha, had positive effects in her classroom, which were evident from the observations. In Maha’s classroom, students seemed more engaged and interested in learning English. Her use of Arabic was appreciated by her students, as the focus group discussions revealed. In addition to its useful cognitive functions, the use of Arabic also contributed to power sharing in the English classroom and presented Arabic and English as equal languages. The exclusive use of English, in contrast, had negative impacts on students’ learning and led to marginalisation of learners and the stigmatisation of their native language.

In summary, the findings on the cognitive roles of Arabic are consistent with those from a number of studies (e.g. Al-nofaie 2010; Halasa & Manaseer 2012; Machaal 2012;

Storch & Aldosari 2010; Thongwichit 2013; Weschler 1997) that identify L1 as a facilitating tool for English learning. This resource should therefore be judiciously included in EFL classrooms, and regarded as a positive phenomenon rather than as a taboo. When students' L1 is excluded, students' understanding is delayed or prevented, and teachers experience greater challenges.

The following section discusses the affective roles of Arabic which enhanced students' interaction and improved relationships between students and teacher.

### **8.3 Affective Roles**

The affective role of L1 "relates to emotions and interpersonal relations" since the use of L1 by the teacher can reduce "foreign language anxiety" and "performance anxiety" associated with L2 learning and enhance the rapport between English teachers and students (Forman 2016, pp. 89-92). This study revealed that the inclusion of Arabic served many affective functions in the EFL classroom. It helped some teachers to reduce negative emotions associated with learning a foreign language and to create positive emotions and a productive atmosphere in the classroom. It also facilitated the interactions between teacher and students and among students. These functions clearly point to the empowering role of L1, as the following sections indicate.

#### **8.3.1 Reducing Anxiety**

Learning a foreign language is expected to create some negative feelings within learners. In this study, Arabic was reported to ameliorate these negative emotions. This affective function of Arabic was addressed by two teachers, Maha and Judy. Maha said, 'Sometimes students are not prepared for the second language. They come without knowing the a b c, so if I do not use Arabic at all, that is a disaster for them'. Judy described the negative emotions that weak students experience during English classes:

Some students have a lower level, and they cannot understand when you talk to them in English. Even when [other] students explain to them in English, they are still do not understand it. They feel overwhelmed, and if you cannot understand, it can frighten you.

Then she explained why she allowed her students to speak Arabic: 'I want my classroom to be productive and comfortable. I don't want them to be afraid. I want them to be comfortable because it is three hours a day'. She recognised how the use of Arabic, at

least between students, lightened the class atmosphere, reduced the negative feelings of weak students, and facilitated productive outcomes. Similarly, Maha described the emotional benefits of using Arabic:

It sometimes increases the confidence of students when they study English because it helps me when I teach them because some of them are really afraid of the language, so when I give some examples in Arabic, or I explain something in Arabic, it helps them to be more confident because they believe that 'ok now I understand, so I can move on'. So I guess it affects English in a good way if it is used correctly.

The comments by these two teachers emphasised the low English proficiency level of some Saudi students, and how the use of Arabic not only generated positive feelings, but also improved English learning. This is crucial, especially for Saudi students who, as shown in Chapter 2, are less motivated to learn English. The link between the use of students' L1 and self-confidence has been documented in a number of studies (e.g. Al-nofaie 2010; Bozorgian & Fallahpour 2015; Canagarajah 1995; Karimian & Mohammadi 2015). Other research supports the connection between L1 use and positive emotions among learners. For instance, Mouhanna (2009) and Cianflone (2009) results showed that the judicious use of L1 enhanced students' motivation. Carless (2007) reported that teachers were able to gain their students' attention, interest and engagement by allowing them to use their L1. Ford (2009) found that English teachers in a Japanese university used L1 from time to time to create a relaxed atmosphere in their EFL classrooms.

The focus group data also showed that Saudi English learners experienced some performance anxiety (Forman 2016, p. 92). One of the participant students reported, 'I feel that I can speak English, but when it comes to speak, I feel confused and make mistakes'. Another student commented on the positive effect of their teacher's use of Arabic in reducing performance anxiety: 'We feel it is more comfortable. We won't be afraid of making mistakes'. These comments support the teachers' claims that Saudi students feared the use of English, and indicate how the presence of Arabic reduced fear and generated more positive feelings. This is in line with the findings of Brooks-Lewis (2009), who reported that feelings of anxiety resulting from the monolingual approach can be reduced when L1 is used. As Forman (2016) observes: "What is more familiar and

comfortable than the mother tongue? And what feels more foreign than new language imperfectly understood” (p. 90).

The data from the present study also showed how the use of Arabic could give both teacher and students relief from extensive use of English language.

### **Observation 8.10**

Reading activity:

Maha asked a student to read the first paragraph in a reading passage, then the teacher reread it. The paragraph was about a boy who felt hungry during travelling, and then he ate a banana. The teacher commented, ‘شايفين الناس شو بتاكل’ (Do you see what people eat when they feel hungry?) Then all the students laughed, and they looked comfortable and relaxed.

In this reading task, the teacher and students spent a considerable time speaking in English. The teacher’s comment in Arabic at the end relieved the tension. The use of Arabic in this situation reminds us of Maha’s statement, presented earlier, that ‘Listening to a foreign language all the time or being given instructions in English all the time is difficult’. When Maha said, ‘شايفين الناس شو بتاكل لما يجوعوا’ (Do you see what people eat when they feel hungry?), the whole class relaxed and laughed. In Forman’s (2016) study, the teachers referred to “the dissipation of anxiety” (p. 92) they experienced when they returned to L1, even when they were proficient in speaking English and when students could understand English well. They reported that such a return created “a visible easing of tension in the classroom” that might result from “the things that are not real” (p. 92). In the same vein, Hamdallah (1999) states that L1 use can provide students with a break from using English all the time.

Thus, the findings demonstrated the role of L1 in reducing negative emotions and providing a positive classroom climate. This provides grounds for arguing for the inclusion of a certain amount of L1 in the English classroom to enhance students’ progress in English learning.

### **8.3.2 Enhancing Solidarity**

A positive teacher-student relationship in the English classroom is important because it can reduce negative emotions associated with English learning. In addition to reducing anxiety, L1 is capable of enhancing rapport and solidarity and facilitating interaction

between teachers and students (Forman 2016). This function of L1 is highlighted in a number of research studies. For example, Cook (2001) mentions that the use of L1 during personal contact between teacher and students adds a sense of naturalness since “the teacher is treating the students as their real selves rather than dealing with assumed L2 personas” (p. 24).

The teachers in this study had different opinions regarding the language they used to construct relationships with students. Salma stated that she used English to build rapport with her students, but she reported that she used Arabic with her students whenever they talked about anything that was not related to their study. Maha said, ‘at the end of the class when they ask about other stuff like their absence, I do not mind if they use Arabic’. She also linked the language she used to build rapport to students’ proficiency level: ‘this depends on their level. When I taught in medical college, I used English, but when I taught in home economics, I used Arabic. Here, sometimes English, sometimes Arabic, but mainly Arabic’. Tajgozari (2017) also reported varied responses from the eleven institute teachers in his study: four preferred L1 for rapport building, four did not believe that L1 could affect rapport, and the rest of teachers said that it depended on students’ level.

Judy also emphasised the role of Arabic in easing communication with students:

When they try to explain to me why they come late to the class, or sometimes they ask me questions, and I cannot understand them. I do feel that it is quiet useful if I knew Arabic because I need Arabic speakers to come and help me.

Maha added that students used Arabic ‘when there is no way letting the teacher understand English, so they need to use Arabic’ and ‘when they need to pass an idea, and they cannot in English’. These comments show the crucial role of Arabic in facilitating social interaction between teacher and students.

The same role was emphasised by the students, who suggested that Arabic was unavoidable during interaction with the teacher. One mentioned that she might start her question in English, but complete it in Arabic. They recognised the importance of asking questions in English, but in some situations they lacked the linguistic ability to form a question in English correctly. Another said, ‘It is very difficult for us to speak English only. Whenever I try to speak English, I find myself using Arabic with it’. Another stated, ‘whenever we try to speak English only, we find ourselves using Arabic. Arabic is

unavoidable'. These comments suggest that expecting students to speak English only is illogical because they lack the English language skills to do so. These findings support Maha's observation, reported above, that Saudi students in general resorted to Arabic whenever they failed to convey the message in English. These results are consistent with those from Al-nofaie (2010) and Kharma & Hajjaj (1989), which showed that Arabic students resorted to Arabic to express their ideas. Nation (2003) also reported that students resort to their L1 when they lack L2 proficiency.

The participating students who were taught by Arabic teachers reported that the use of Arabic helped them to develop a better relationship with their teachers. They preferred Arabic to discuss private matters with the teacher, such as leaving the classroom early, going to the toilet, or justifying their absence. In Canagarajah's (1995) study, students used L1 to seek help from the teacher when they were experiencing problems and they associated L1 with solidarity, informal interaction and personal matters.

These findings were supported by classroom observations. In Salma's and Maha's classes, students used Arabic frequently to speak privately with the teachers. Both teachers started their classes by greeting students in Arabic:

#### **Observation 8.11**

T: السلام عليكم (peace be upon you).

Ss: وعليكم السلام (peace be upon you too).

Teachers' use of Arabic to greet students seems to have played an affective role, emphasising that their teacher shared their culture, religion and identity. Alsaawi (2013) also reported that English teachers at a Saudi university greeted their undergraduate students in Arabic. Khresheh (2012) found that Saudi advanced level learners purposefully used Arabic to express cultural and religious concepts which the students believed could not be adequately expressed in English. Similarly, Edstrom (2006) reported that L1 was employed in discussions of cultural issues.

In the following observation, Maha used one Arabic word to bring humour to the class. The incident took place during a speaking task:

#### **Observation 8.12**

Maha: Who can drive a car?

Ss: Man, men.

Maha: Who has ever tried to drive a car?

Ss: . . .

Maha: I am not a *هيئة* (the Saudi religious police).

(All the students laughed.)

In this observation, the use of the Arabic word *هيئة* made students feel that their teacher understood their culture. At the time of this research, any woman who tried to drive a car in Saudi Arabia would be followed and arrested by the religious police (*هيئة*); only very recently has the Saudi government allowed women to drive. The word *هيئة* is usually used by Saudi citizens to frighten each other in a humorous manner. The positive effect of the teacher's use of the word is clear in this example. Similarly, Canagarajah (1995) found that the use of L1 added a local cultural flavor to English lessons and helped both teacher and students to negotiate L2 cultural topics, for which there were sometimes no equivalents in L2.

The following observation from Salma's class illustrates how Arabic functioned in teacher-student interaction:

### Observation 8.13

After Salma finished checking the attendance, there was a total loss of control. Many students were surrounding the teacher and speaking in Arabic to justify their absence. The other students were chatting in Arabic. Then the teacher selected from her list the numbers of students who would do the speaking exam. She gave the exam instructions in Arabic. Only some students were supposed to do the exam on that day since the teacher divided them into group and allocated a day for each group to do the exam on. Then a student came to the teacher:

S: Teacher *أنا اختبرت أمس ولازم ألحق الباص. أقدر أطلع؟* (I finished my exam yesterday, and I have to catch the bus. Can I leave now)?

Salma: *خلصتي امتحان* speaking (Did you do your speaking exam)?

S: Yes.

Salma: Ok.

Arabic dominated this interaction between the teacher and students and between students. The exchange between Salma and the student contained an example of translanguaging between Arabic and English which facilitated the interaction between the teacher and student.

#### **Observation 8.14**

During one of Maha's classes, Arabic functioned positively in facilitating the interaction between the teacher and students in the classroom. Maha used Arabic to discuss different issues with the students such as their results in the mid-term exam. Then, she started giving back their exam papers without telling the marks to avoid embarrassment. The teacher called on names, and the students replied mostly in Arabic saying, (هنا هنا) (here). The students were checking their answers and comparing them to their friends', using Arabic. Then, the students gathered around the teacher questioning her about their marks using Arabic language.

Throughout these interactions, Arabic was the language of communication between the teacher and students and among students. These observations suggest that Arabic teachers used Arabic to build rapport with students, and this made the teacher-student interaction easier and more natural. Similar findings are documented in the literature. For instance, Canagarajah (1995) describes how teachers and students would "shift to Tamil to symbolize their vernacular solidarity" (p.191). Polio & Duff (1994) found that university teachers used L1 to add humour and build empathy and solidarity with students. In Edstrom (2006) self-study of her teaching, she found that she relied on L1 to create a positive atmosphere and to strengthen her relationship with her students, since L1 allowed her to tell jokes and discuss cultural issues. She concluded that exposing students to maximum L2 was not as important as building rapport and creating a positive environment, and this could only be achieved through L1.

The findings of the present study also revealed that the teacher's lack of knowledge of students' L1 had a negative impact on the teacher-student relationship, as indicated in the focus group data. The students who were taught by Rita reported, 'The problem is not that [the teacher] does not allow us to use Arabic, but rather she does not understand Arabic'. They said that this created a gap between themselves and their

teacher. This was confirmed by the observational data, which indicated a degree of tension in the teacher-student relationship. This tension was evident in the data (Observation 6.13) which showed how Rita became irritated when students used Arabic and she immediately stopped them.

These findings clearly indicate that the inclusion of students' L1 in the English classroom can support a positive teacher-student relationship that benefits both teachers and students and enhances the English learning process. The conclusion to be drawn from these results, that the judicious use of L1 produces more productive classrooms, is in line with the literature. Thongwichit (2013), for instance, found that L1 was used as a communication tool that facilitated interaction between teacher and students and among students in different situations. In Harbord (1992), L1 was used by English teachers to enhance discussion and interaction in English classes. According to Hamdallah (1999), Arab learners are not able to communicate using English only, and imposing the EOA on these learners is counterproductive and de-motivating since the result will be 'baby talk' from both teachers and students. He argues that allowing some Arabic in the classroom can increase students' motivation for learning English.

### **8.3.3 Facilitating Collaboration**

Another affective role of L1 is to enhance teamwork in the classroom. In Forman's (2016) framework, students are sometimes asked to engage in teamwork activities in order to achieve socio-affective goals rather than linguistic ones. Judy identified the positive socio-affective role of Arabic in teamwork:

I give them a lot of time for talking and working in groups, so they can be quiet the rest of the time while I am lecturing. Usually I just let them work, and they work. I walk around to see what they are doing.

Judy recognised the importance of social communication between students, which would not have occurred if she prohibited the use of Arabic. During teamwork, students could meet their social needs. She was aware of the social benefits of allowing students to interact with one another naturally, which is especially important when the teacher cannot speak the students' language. These students study English for 15 hours a week, and the expectation that they should speak English only for such a long time would be an

affective load. L1 provides the space in which they can express their real selves and interact naturally.

From the observational data, teamwork was more evident in Judy's classes than in the other three classes. It was only observed once in Maha's class. Salma's and Rita's classes did not include any activities of this type; students worked individually during all class observations. Judy's students generally had higher levels of English proficiency than students in the other classes since they intended to major in medicine or pharmacy the following year. Thus, their motivations to learn English were high. However, observational data showed that Arabic dominated their talk during group work. Similarly, Nikula (2007) reported that students in monolingual classes resorted to their L1 not because they lacked English proficiency, but because their L1 provided affective and interpersonal benefits. Other studies have reported that students use L1 during interaction. In Thongwichit's (2013) study, L1 facilitated communication in the classroom among the university students. Storch & Wigglesworth (2003) encourage teachers to allow some amount of L1 to enhance interaction during group and pair work.

The data indicate that the use of Arabic in teamwork activities served pedagogical as well as socio-affective purposes. Working in groups enabled weak or poorly motivated learners to improve their EL proficiency by working with other learners. Judy believed that working in groups allowed students to achieve pedagogical goals because they could learn from each other and check each other's answers. The following incident from Maha's class shows how Arabic helped the teacher and students to accomplish both social and pedagogical goals during a teamwork activity:

#### **Observation 8.15**

Maha asked her students to write a paragraph:

Maha: Choose any shop you like. Talk about where your house is. When do you go to the shop? What do you buy?

(The teacher felt that the question was not understood by students, so the task was explained again using Arabic. She gave them 5 minutes to do the task in groups. The students were discussing the task in Arabic, and the teacher was moving around and helping each group, making use of Arabic language. The students were consulting each other, seeking help from each other using Arabic too. They in general were active and involved while doing the task. After five minutes, the

teacher asked one of the groups to read the paragraph they wrote. She selected a girl from her list to read the paragraph.)

This observation shows how Arabic operated to facilitate teamwork and develop social interaction between students and between students and their teacher. It suggests Arabic had several benefits for the lesson in general and this task in particular. First, the use of Arabic helped the teacher to achieve positive social outcomes. There was a good level of interaction between the teacher and students as she moved around to provide support. Students used Arabic to seek help from each other and to assist one another to complete the task. According to Cook (2001), the use of L1 during teamwork provides scaffolding and offers a number of benefits: students can learn from each other to understand the task; roles can be negotiated among them; and they can check each other's comprehension. He proposed that "code-switching is a normal feature of L2 use when the participants share two languages"; therefore, "there is no reason why students should not code switch in the classroom" (p. 17). Second, the language learning goals accomplished by the assistance of Arabic should be acknowledged. Writing is one of the productive activities that prove difficult for EFL learners, and the use of Arabic here helped students to complete the task successfully and move on to higher level tasks. Students first discussed the task orally, then they transferred the oral content into written form. A similar result was reported by Lameta-Tufuga (1994), who showed that L1 assisted students during discussion of a writing task, allowing them to negotiate L2 vocabulary and use it to accomplish a higher stage of the same task. Storch & Wigglesworth (2003) and Carless (2007) both indicated that use of L1 during discussion of tasks helped students to achieve higher level learning goals.

The findings of the present study further indicate that teamwork activities facilitated by the use of Arabic contributed to a power balance in the classroom, or at least a sharing of power. When the teacher initiates teamwork, she relinquishes some of her power since she is no longer the only source of knowledge in the classroom; rather, students constitute an additional resource. This way of learning challenges the traditional passive role of students since they are able to interact with one another, negotiate the task, and teach each other. This sharing of power and knowledge was facilitated by the use of Arabic. Thus Arabic has the potential to re-distribute power in the English classroom.

## 8.4 Pedagogical Roles

In addition to these cognitive and affective functions, Arabic served a number of pedagogical functions in the EFL classroom. Arabic was used by some teachers to save class time, include weak students in class activities, enhance comprehension, and give exam instructions.

### 8.4.1 Effective use of Time

In EFL contexts, where the time allocated for English classes and students' exposure to English outside the classroom are limited, the use of L1 can help the teacher use the available classroom time efficiently (Forman 2016). Maha and Salma both acknowledged the role of Arabic in this regard. Maha described the use of English only as a waste of her time and energy. Salma, despite her advocacy of the EOA, said that she might use Arabic 'to just cut short to save time'. These comments support Cook's (2001) suggestion that L1 can be "a short-cut for giving instructions and explanations where the cost of the L2 is too great" (p. 24).

Class observations showed that the use of Arabic by either the teacher or students saved time. The following observation from Salma's class shows how she used English first, but turned to Arabic to save time:

#### Observation 8.16

During one of Salma's classes, there was a total loss of control after a number of students left the class early to attend a students' conference. The rest of students started chatting loudly, and the teacher tried hard using English language to explain why those students left in the middle of the class time. She failed to clarify the situation in English, so she had to use Arabic language to make everybody understand the situation.

In the following observation, students resorted to Arabic to save time:

#### Observation 8.17

In Judy's class, a group of students were allocated ten minutes only at the beginning of the class to give a presentation which involved talking about using technology in everyday life and asking some questions at the end of the talk. After the group members finished the talk, the group leader asked the first question and

the rest of the class to participate in an activity, and she gave the instructions in English first, but she felt that they could not understand, so she restated the instructions in Arabic to save time.

Observational data also indicated that the avoidance of Arabic by some teachers contributed to a waste of the teacher's time and effort in trying to explain something relying on English language only. The previously mentioned incidents from Rita's class (section 8.2.1) are good examples; she spent a great deal of time trying to describe and draw each vocabulary item, but this did not always work. Maha, in contrast, saved time by translating new words. The time saved in this way can be devoted to other important language learning activities. As Weschler (1997) argues:

The most efficient use of that very limited time is to exploit those tools she will have most readily available, especially the mother tongue. One could even argue that the time and energy expended by teachers on trying to keep their students from speaking the L1 is time taken from these more worthwhile pursuits. (p. 90)

The time benefits of L1 have been acknowledged by several researchers like Canagarajah (1995), Nation (2003), Karimian & Mohammadi (2015), Forman (2016), and Kerr (2015). Canagarajah (1995), for instance, indicated that using L1 to negotiate task instructions helped the teacher to avoid repetition. Similarly, Forman (2016) found that the use of the students' L1 (Thai) meant that the teacher did not have to repeat the questions many times in English with no response from students.

#### **8.4.2 Comprehensibility**

Comprehensibility “refers both to the content of lessons and the procedures/instructions necessary to manage them” and is one of the principles of using L1 in the English classroom (Forman 2016, p. 94). This role has been recognised in numerous studies (e.g. Carless (2007); Hall & Cook (2012)). The present study found that Arabic assisted students' comprehension, as noted by Maha and Judy. Maha reported that she used Arabic to increase her students' comprehension, ‘I use Arabic inside the classroom when I feel that my students did not understand something no matter how much I give them, otherwise it is English’. She described how she adjusted the amount of Arabic and English according to her students' comprehension level and the lesson content:

It depends on their level. If the lesson is difficult, I may use Arabic. If the lesson is reading, I use English. It depends on the understanding of the students, how difficult something is for them.

She went on to explain:

I do not use Arabic as translation. I try to paraphrase some stuff for them in Arabic, so they get the meaning [...] If I am sure that what I teach them they have took before, or they are aware of, I do not say it in Arabic at all . . . , but if it is new, I do not like to hit them with English immediately.

Maha prioritised English, and only used Arabic when it was necessary: ‘I use English first, if I see there is a block between them and understanding, I switch to Arabic’. Her comments indicate that she was concerned with maximising her students’ exposure to English, but was willing to use Arabic in demanding situations. In the same vein, Judy observed: ‘Sometimes I ask the other students to come and help me if I am explaining something’. These comments align with Forman’s (2016) recommendation that “L1 must be a support to comprehensibility, rather than a replacement for maximum use of English” (p. 95). Judy also talked about how her students achieved comprehensibility through their own use of Arabic:

I expect them to use Arabic to explain things to one another like if I am explaining something in the class, I see them afterwards explaining it to each other in Arabic, and for me that is ok. They are allowed to explain in Arabic because sometimes the instructions can be confusing, so I expect them to try first in English and then to use Arabic when they need to fill in the gaps.

Like Maha, Judy used English first and turned to Arabic if required. The students confirmed these practices. Commenting on Maha’s teaching, students said: ‘She uses Arabic when [we] cannot understand’ and ‘She does not teach everything in Arabic, but rather she gives some hints in Arabic just to help us to understand’. The students also mentioned that whenever they needed to ask the teacher, they tried to use English, but if they could not, they used Arabic. The students from Judy’s class confirmed that she sometimes asked the outstanding students to translate some vocabulary for the rest of the class. When questioned about their own use of Arabic, they reported that they used it to explain to one another and to discuss the tasks.

The comments by Rita's students, in contrast, indicated how the use of English only can sometimes hinder students' comprehension. One said that they needed Arabic 'to explain the questions to make all students understand what is required from them' and went on to relate this incident:

One day the teacher asked us to write a story, but we thought that she wanted us to bring a story, so we got it from Google and gave to her! Then we discovered that we did not understand the question.

Hence the EOA has potential to cause misunderstanding, especially among students with low proficiency levels in English. This raises questions about the appropriateness of this approach for these students.

#### **8.4.3 Exam Instructions**

This role of L1 is not identified in Forman's (2016) framework, but it emerged from analysis of the data in the present study as a crucial role of Arabic. Hence it constitutes an original contribution of the study. This was the only role addressed by all participants, regardless of their views about the use of Arabic. All four teachers acknowledged the importance of using Arabic to explain exam instructions to students. Rita, for instance, strictly adhered to the EOA in her teaching, but made this exception:

Honestly speaking, sometimes when I am stuck, or [students] are stuck like when I give them instructions about exams or something important, I am trying, and when they do not understand, I get help from Saudi students to translate to them the days and schedules of exams because it is very important.

Judy also applied the EOA approach, and her students were high level learners; however, she highlighted the importance of using Arabic to give exam instructions:

For many years I used to have a couple of students who helped me to translate things specially instructions when I talk about exams for example. I ask them to translate because I do not want anyone to be confused because it is very important.

Salma used the same approach, but also acknowledged the usefulness of Arabic in relation to exam instructions: 'If I want to give them a test, I ask them to arrange themselves in Arabic'. She explained that teachers used English first to give the instructions, but Arabic was employed if the students did not understand:

During exams the instructions should be given in English, but if it is difficult to understand, we can translate. That is why most of the time they assign out an Arabic speaker with the other teacher during the exam.

This quote is significant because it indicates that the decision-makers at the Centre acknowledged this role of Arabic by ensuring that an Arabic teacher was included in the exam monitoring process to clarify instructions if necessary.

In this context, Maha described what usually happened when a non-Arabic teacher gave instructions in English:

When the non-Arabic teachers give [students] instructions for the exam in English, they [i.e. students] come to our office asking for more elaboration about the exam: ‘when is the exam, where is the exam’ because the instructions were given in English.

All the participant students also referred to this role. Those from Judy’s class, for example, said that they preferred Arabic for exam instructions although their level of English was higher than that of other students. The students from Rita’s class reported that she sometimes asked good students to translate some words for the rest of the class: ‘When there is something important like exam instructions, she asks the good students to translate for the rest of students’. These findings are consistent with those from other research. Hamdallah (1999) and Al-nofaie (2010), for instance, emphasised the role of L1 during exams.

Hence the present findings indicate an important function of Arabic for exam-related purposes. As noted in Chapter 6, exams involve the deployment of power through rituals, observation and judgement (Foucault 1977), and the findings presented in that chapter showed how some teachers used speaking exams in particular to exercise power over students. Therefore, this study argues for the use of Arabic during exams to clarify instructions. This use can enhance students’ comprehension, as argued in section 8.4.2, and can generate a positive atmosphere, as indicated in section 8.3.1. It can also reduce the tension associated with the exercise of power around the exam process.

#### **8.4.4 Inclusivity**

Another important function of L1 is to engage learners with low EL proficiency. In Forman’s (2016) framework, this role is referred to as *inclusivity*, defined as “using L1

to ensure that all students participate” (Forman 2016, p. 95). Weak learners must be taken into consideration in the Saudi English classroom because this category accounts for a significant proportion of learners. All teachers in this study, except Judy, indicated that the majority of their students were weak and less motivated to learn English. The majority of both teachers and students emphasised the inclusive function of Arabic in this context. Maha, for instance, commented:

The lower level students would feel frustrated. They would love to understand English all the time, but they feel that they are really frustrated because they do not understand. If they do understand, they do not mind at all. But when they start missing some of the meaning, and they cannot connect the meaning together, this makes them really frustrated, and this will make them go back, and they refuse to use English and use Arabic.

Judy also referred to the negative feelings weak students could experience if they do not understand. Her comment below is re-stated from section 8.3.1:

During any communicative activity, I prefer them to use English, but some students have a lower level, and they cannot understand when you talk to them in English. Even when [other] students explain to them in English, they are still do not understand it. They feel overwhelmed, and if you cannot understand, it can frighten you. I want my classroom to be productive and comfortable. I don't want them to be afraid. I want them to be comfortable because it is three hours a day.

Here Judy described the feelings of shock and fear experienced by low-level learners when the teacher spoke English only, so she allowed her students to use Arabic to explain to each other so everyone felt comfortable and included.

This role of inclusivity was also mentioned by the participant students from all classes. The students from Judy's class observed that the inclusion of Arabic was helpful for weak students. An interviewee from Maha's class reported, 'At the beginning, [the teacher] said that she would not use Arabic at all except when necessary, but then she had to use more Arabic because of the level of students'. Students from Salma's class, where the EOA was mostly applied, reported that there were different levels of students in the classroom, so the English-only approach was not suitable for all of them. They stated that this method could be useful with high level students, but not with weak students who

might feel lost as a result. Criticising Salma's use of the EOA, one of her students said, 'the teacher should take into consideration the general level of her students'.

From the observational data, it was clear that there was more involvement of students, including those with low proficiency in EL, in classrooms where the teacher used Arabic or at least allowed the students to do so than in classrooms where Arabic was not welcomed. Maha used Arabic and allowed her students to use it. Judy was not proficient in Arabic, but she allowed her students to use it during tasks. This helped the teachers to engage all students in class activities, and the immediate result was more engagement and more participation. This is consistent with the findings of numerous studies that highlighted the importance of L1 for including low level learners, such as Weschler (1997) and Machaal (2012). Canagarajah (1995) argues that switching to L1 can improve students' motivation and participation in the English classroom. A recent study by Althobaiti (2017) showed that the use of Arabic in English classrooms in Saudi Arabia proved useful, especially for low proficiency students.

Lower levels of student participation were observed in Salma's and Rita's classes, where Arabic was avoided. In the interview, Salma commented: 'Rarely I find the need to use Arabic. When there are some very weak students who cannot understand'. Class observations showed that these two classrooms were similar in terms of participation and engagement. The enforcement of the EOA in these classes seems to have excluded students from participating in class activities and, as a result, only a few students were able to participate and respond to the teachers' questions. Most of the students in these classes were not adequately engaged, and they were marginalised from class activities. Some decided to isolate themselves by sitting at the back of the classroom to avoid being embarrassed by the teacher. The data from these two classes also revealed various forms of disruptive behaviour that reflected students' disengagement, such as coming late to class and studying other subjects during the English class. These phenomena were discussed in Chapter 7 as indicators of students' resistance to the EOA. Hence, it can be concluded that the exclusion of Arabic from these classes negatively affected students' involvement in English language activities. These results support Auerbach's (1993) contention that the EOA might cause students to drop out as a result of being overwhelmed and unable to participate. The inclusion of L1 in English classes, therefore, might help to re-engage such students.

## 8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented, analysed, and discussed the data relevant to the third research question, which addressed the roles of the Arabic language in the Saudi EFL classroom. The findings indicate that the use of Arabic by teachers or learners serves important cognitive, affective and pedagogical functions. Arabic facilitated the learning of vocabulary and grammar. It also served various affective functions, such as reducing negative emotions among students and enhancing positive feelings, improving teacher-student rapport, and facilitating teamwork in the classroom. When Arabic was prohibited by the teacher, there was less interaction and more reluctance on the part of students to participate, and this impacted on English learning. The pedagogical functions of Arabic, such as time-effectiveness, comprehensibility, clarification of exam instructions, and inclusivity were apparent even when the teacher did not believe in the value of Arabic.

Excluding Arabic from the Saudi EFL classroom is not effective since it is natural medium for Arabic students to express themselves. L1 is always present in the learner's mind (Cook 2001), so it is inappropriate to expect that learning English can be attained by banning Arabic from the classroom.

The findings presented in this chapter are consistent with those from various research studies confirming the positive roles that L1 can play when it is applied judiciously and systematically. Arabic is capable of supporting the learning of English and its exclusion from the English classroom has a range of cognitive, affective and pedagogical consequences. Therefore, the potential roles of Arabic need to be acknowledged in English language policy and adopted in course books and teachers' guide books.

Most importantly, this chapter has demonstrated how the inclusion of L1 in EL classrooms contributes to power sharing, appreciation of students' native language and culture and, consequently, to student empowerment. The implementation of the monolingual approach, on the other hand, sustains marginalisation, stigmatisation and power inequality.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

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#### 9.1 Overview of the Chapter

This research examined the ways in which ideologies, language use, and power practices interacted in the Saudi tertiary English classroom. This concluding chapter summarises the significant findings and considers the limitations, implications, recommendations and contributions of the study

#### 9.2 Summary of Key Findings

As stated in Chapter 1, this study had several broad aims. First, it was designed to examine the ideologies that underpin English language policy and practices in KSA that discourage the use of L1 in English classes. Second, it aimed to explore power practices through language use in the Saudi English classroom, and to shed light on the tensions, contradictions and resistance that resulted from such policies and practices. It further aimed to explore the functions of L1 in English classes and to make recommendations for improving the teaching of EFL in the contemporary Saudi tertiary context.

These aims were addressed through three research questions that focused on: (1) the language ideologies that underpin the perceptions of teachers and Saudi university students' regarding the use of Arabic in the Saudi tertiary EL classroom; (2) the exercise of power through language choice in Saudi tertiary EL classrooms: and (3) the different roles of Arabic in Saudi tertiary EL classrooms. The research questions were addressed through a qualitative case study design involving interviews with teachers, focus groups with students, and classroom observations.

Until recently, the common assumption about ELT was that the monolingual approach, which excludes L1 from English classes, was the best way of teaching (Auerbach 1993; Forman 2016; Hall & Cook 2012). This approach has been challenged by a number of scholars from a pedagogical perspective (e.g. Butzkamm 2003; Cook 2001; Cook 1992; Hall & Cook 2012; Kerr 2015; Swain, Kirkpatrick & Cummins 2011), and these critiques led to research investigating the roles of L1 in different contexts and exploring the teachers' and students' attitudes towards the use of L1 (e.g. Bozorgian & Fallahpour 2015; Brooks-Lewis 2009; Canagarajah 1995; Ford 2009; Forman 2007;

Karimian & Mohammadi 2015; Macaro & Lee 2013; McMillan & Rivers 2011; Sa'd & Qadermazi 2015; Tajgozari 2017; Thongwichit 2013; Yaqubi & Pouromid 2013). A few studies explored the roles of and attitudes towards the use of Arabic language in English classes (e.g. Al-balawi 2016; Al-nofaie 2010; Gulzar & Al Asmari 2014; Halasa & Manaseer 2012; Khresheh 2012; Machaal 2012).

A review of these studies led me to identify an important gap in this area of research, namely, the neglect of the ideological and power dimensions of this phenomenon. What was missing was an exploration of the underlying ideologies that drive attitudes and teaching practices and the exercise of power through language choice. A critical perspective was needed to understand why the English-only approach continues to be favoured by decision-makers at the Saudi tertiary level despite the evidence from these wide-ranging studies. In addition to the pedagogical aspects of the use of L1, this study was informed by literature that adopts a socio-political stance (Auerbach 1993, 1995; Forman 2016; Phillipson 1992; Weschler 1997). The ongoing debate around bilingual and monolingual teaching demonstrates the importance of examining this issue holistically, from both pedagogical and critical perspectives.

The study was informed by a number of theoretical frameworks. First, Foucault's (1977, 1980) theory of power provided useful concepts such as disciplinary power, productive power, power and knowledge, and power and resistance. These concepts guided the analysis of how power was exercised in the Saudi English classroom through disciplinary pedagogies that have been normalised in everyday teaching practices. Fairclough (1989) analysis of language ideologies and the ways in which power can be exercised in discourse or behind discourse informed my examination of the ideologies influencing the avoidance of Arabic in Saudi English classes and the exercise of power through language use. On a practical level, Forman's (2016) framework facilitated the analysis and categorisation of the different roles of L1 in the classroom.

The study adopted a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through interviews with teachers, interviews, focus groups with students, and classroom observations. The data were analysed thematically in light of the research questions. This methodology yielded rich, comprehensive data and facilitated in-depth analysis.

The findings have been presented and discussed in relation to the research questions. The analysis of participants' perceptions towards the use of L1 in the English

classroom identified a variety of ideological stances. The evidence provided in Chapter 5 showed that two of the participant teachers and the students from the Science Stream welcomed the use of L1, considering it to be helpful for English learning. The teachers' positive perceptions stemmed from an ideology that perceived Arabic and English as having equal status and that the two languages can interact in English classes in a productive way. These teachers also put themselves in their students' shoes when they evaluated the role of L1; that is, they reflected on their personal experiences in learning another language and concluded that students would not be able to learn L2 without some assistance from their L1. This perception implies that the teachers perceived students as equals with the same right as their teachers to make use of their L1. The teachers also took into consideration the socio-cultural context of their students, which required some use of L1 to avoid negative psychological consequences (see Chapter 8). They recognised the power inequality that might result from the avoidance of L1. Interestingly, these teachers did not refer to any teaching theory or language policy to support their positive attitudes; rather, they based their views on real everyday situations and experiences. Similarly, the Science Stream students viewed the use of L1 as important and appropriate for their English proficiency level. They associated the use of English only with unequal power relations, poor communication, marginalisation, and disengagement.

The monolingual ideology was adopted by two of the participant teachers and the Health Stream students. These participants embraced some normalised monolingual assumptions, such as language interference, maximum exposure and nativespeakerism, to argue against the use of L1 in English classes. These perceptions were in alignment with the informal language policy adopted by the English Language Centre at Future University, which discouraged the use of Arabic in English classes. It was evident in Chapter 5 that such an ideology involved a stigmatisation and de-valuing of the Arabic language and of the local teachers who used L1. The English language and native English speaking teachers (NESTs), on the other hand, were lauded by this monolingual ideology. Because of their dominant position in the ELT industry, NESTs were idealised by the decision-makers and were assigned to teach medicine and pharmacy majors, while the Arabic teachers were assigned to teach the less academically demanding majors. Such a policy, which implies that NESTs are more highly qualified than Arabic teachers, also impacted on students, who perceived the Arab teachers as less effective because of their use of Arabic. The adoption of the EMI for medical, scientific and technological

specialisations positions English as the language of science, technology and modernisation. Consequently, Arabic is accorded a lower status. This policy reflects the unequal power relations in the ELT industry more broadly between NESTs and NNESTs and assists the NESTs to maintain their dominant position while marginalising L1 Arabic teachers.

Students' acceptance of EMI shows how certain practices have been normalised in their belief system. They did not question the way the languages are positioned, perceiving it as normal. This demonstrates the way language ideologies work and how their impact is entrenched from the highest levels down. This ideology and its associated assumptions are invisibly embedded and taken for granted in the Saudi tertiary context. As (Fairclough 1989) observed, the danger of a particular ideology lies in its invisibility to those concerned.

I argue that the informal EO policy adopted by the Centre is associated with top-down power practices because it was imposed on the teachers, and then some teachers imposed it on their students. As a result, it generated contradictions, tensions and resistance. Some teachers felt guilty whenever they used Arabic, even when they believed in the benefits of L1 use. Some other teachers and students experienced inconsistency between their beliefs and practices. For example, the Health Stream students were strongly opposed to the use of L1 in their focus group, but class observations and the interview with their teacher revealed that they used L1 to explain to one another and to discuss various tasks.

In relation to tensions, the focus group data showed that students' evaluation of the use of Arabic in English classes varied according to their level of English proficiency. Students who had a low or intermediate level of proficiency viewed the use of Arabic favourably and associated it with various positive functions. They associated the EOA with feelings of being marginalised, silenced, disengaged, and deprived of power through language choice. Advanced-level students, on the other hand, were equally strongly of the view that the use of Arabic was disadvantageous and the EOA was the most effective way of teaching English. This ideological struggle over language (Fairclough 1989) among students derived from "differences in position, experience and interest between social groupings" (p. 88). The view expressed by highly proficient students ignored the fact that some students' English proficiency level did not allow them to learn solely in

English. This finding suggests that the English-only approach was only of benefit to high-proficiency learners.

As indicated in Chapter 2, the teacher enjoys a historical, spiritual and ideological status in the Saudi educational context that allows her/him to dominate classroom practices, while students are positioned as relatively powerless, passive and obedient. The findings showed that contemporary Saudi classroom pedagogies enhanced pre-existing power relations and allowed the teacher to discipline, control and marginalise students. The contemporary Saudi classroom is characterised by a number of normalised disciplinary pedagogical strategies that resemble the practices in the *halagah*, the traditional site of Saudi teaching. For example, the traditional physical organisation and teaching process in the classroom, with the teacher at the centre, have their roots in this traditional Saudi educational system, which sustains the teacher's powerful status. These practices were supported by other pedagogies, such as grouping, speaking exams and punishment, which allowed teachers to control, observe and discipline students. I argue that the ban on Arabic enhances these power relations and marginalises students.

The evidence presented in Chapter 6 showed that the teachers used different techniques to discipline students and keep them under continuous observation (Foucault 1977). Some teachers organised their classrooms in a way that allowed them to watch and walk around students in order to assist them, which illustrates a productive use of power (Foucault 1977) because it allowed teachers to check that students were on track. This physical arrangement was more apparent in the non-Arab teachers' classrooms than in the Arab teachers' classrooms. Interestingly, the participant Arab teachers relied on the Arabic language to discipline their students. They recognised the power of Arabic as the language that students understood and consequently responded to, so they intentionally used it for disciplinary purposes

Dividing students into groups was another disciplinary technique used by some teachers to facilitate control. This technique had many pedagogical benefits, as indicated in Chapter 8. However, it involved a multidimensional exercise of power by teachers and students alike. It facilitated the teacher's hierarchal surveillance of students because the group leader was responsible for observing the group members and reporting to the teacher. Some teachers delegated some of their authority to the group leader, who dominated the other group members and constrained their participation.

One of the most interesting findings was the exercise of power during speaking examinations. Some teachers utilised the normalised rituals of speaking exams to objectify, punish and maximise the visibility of students (Foucault 1977). Some teachers practised *power in discourse* during speaking exams by using their *subject position* to control the content of discourse and constrain the students' linguistic contribution (Fairclough 1989).

Punishment was another form of disciplinary power practised by some teachers. Punishment took different forms, such as forcing a student to leave her seat and move to the front where she would be under the teacher's direct observation, or forcing her to write an answer on the board. Threatening loss of marks or cancelling the students' break were other power techniques that accompanied punishment. Some teachers called students by name to show that they were under observation, and the observational data confirmed that this technique allowed some teachers to control their large classes. Most of these punishment techniques were used by the same teacher whenever her students spoke to each other in Arabic, which conveyed the impression that the use of their L1 was a crime that would be punished.

Teacher-centred teaching was found to sustain power relations in the Saudi English classroom. This normalised pedagogy was used by the majority of the participant teachers. The analysis indicated that teachers' adherence to this way of teaching was associated with their understanding of the roles of teachers and students. One teacher believed that her role as a teacher was to control students' behaviour. Another perceived herself as a knowledge transmitter, and the students' role was to receive and memorise such knowledge. These limited views align with Freire's (1970) concept of 'banking', where teachers play most roles in the classroom and allow only limited roles for students. I argue that these perceptions and practices reproduce and sustain power relations in the Saudi English classroom. This is what Fairclough (1989) refers to as the 'hidden agenda' of education (p. 40).

Overall, I argue that the English-only project in the Saudi context is associated with a hierarchical exercise of power. It was first imposed on teachers by the Centre's informal policy, as indicated earlier in this chapter. In turn, some teachers imposed this approach in their classroom through a variety of power practices. The teachers who adopted this approach reported that they enforced the expectation that students speak

English only and, when students used Arabic, they were immediately told to stop. The data showed that some teachers used this approach not for pedagogical aims but for disciplinary purposes. One teacher reported that her insistence on the EOA guaranteed a quiet classroom (Auerbach 2016) because she knew that it was beyond their proficiency level in English to do so. Therefore, this approach contributed to students' marginalisation and disengagement.

The findings revealed the link between power and knowledge identified by Foucault (1980). The EOA and the ban on Arabic in the classroom sustained the teachers' status as powerful and knowledgeable. Some teachers perceived their English proficiency skills as a source of power that students lacked. They therefore used English to embarrass, criticise and constrain students' contributions. The students mostly responded to such power practices by remaining silent and smiling shyly. I argue that the EOA involves a marginalisation of students' culture and sustains the authoritarian position of the teacher.

One of the most important findings concerned the use of resistance strategies. In Foucault's (1980) conceptualisation of power, individuals are active subjects: "individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (p. 98). This research showed that power circulated in the classroom because the participant teachers and students were not passive but, rather, demonstrated resistance to the exercise of power. Not all teachers accepted the informal EO policy imposed on them because they found it neither clear nor convincing, and it contradicted their personal education experiences. It was evident in Chapter 7 that some teachers resisted the policy either by teaching bilingually or by allowing students to use Arabic freely among themselves. Students demonstrated different forms of resistance to the English-only approach and to power practices in general. This is consistent with Foucault's (1980) argument that "like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies" (p. 142). Some students explicitly rejected their teacher's power and verbally told her that they did not accept particular punishments. Interestingly, the data showed that, when the teachers shared L1 with students and allowed them to use it, students mostly expressed their resistance to power practices verbally, using Arabic as a language of resistance. The Arabic teachers reported that students sometimes resisted the imposition of the EOA by speaking in Arabic instead of English. On the other hand, when the teacher did not share L1 with students or when they were prevented from using it, they sometimes used English to show resistance; in most cases, however, they used nonverbal forms of resistance. For example,

some students responded to the EOA by resorting to silence, not participating or sitting at the back. Others misbehaved during English classes to challenge the classroom regime and the over-use of power by some teachers.

Another significant finding was that the very techniques used by teachers to exercise power were also used by students to show resistance. Some teachers disciplined students through language, grouping, and the arrangement of classroom space, but the same techniques were used by students to reject or complain about teachers' practice of power. Students chose when they used English or Arabic, they mostly complained in groups, and chose to sit at the very back of the classroom to protect themselves from the teacher's surveillance. Such resistance practices were more apparent in classrooms where the English-only approach was strictly applied and students were prevented from speaking L1. These practices reflected students' disengagement and indicated a tension in the teacher-student relationship.

With regard to the different roles of Arabic in the Saudi EFL tertiary classroom, it was argued in Chapter 8 that Arabic served various cognitive, affective and pedagogical functions (Forman 2016). Arabic helped those teachers who used it to successfully teach vocabulary and grammar, enhance students' comprehension, clarify exam instructions and save time and effort.

The affective functions of Arabic were emphasised by some participant teachers and students and were observed in classrooms where Arabic was allowed. The participants reported that Arabic increased students' self-confidence in their use of the target language, enhanced their motivation and improved the teacher-student relationship. These positive effects were observed in Maha's and Judy's classrooms. The general classroom atmosphere was comfortable, friendly and productive. Students were active and interested in learning. They were enthusiastic about asking questions, discussing tasks and interacting with the teacher. These benefits were largely absent in the other two classrooms where Arabic was not allowed.

The findings showed that the some teachers' insistence on the EOA created challenges for them and resulted in inadequate teaching. For instance, not being able to explain abstract words put them under time pressure to achieve all their teaching goals. I argue that the use of students' L1 empowers the teacher and provides her with opportunities to teach in a more meaningful way. Rita's comment, 'Girls! Do not

translate; otherwise your teacher won't understand', shows how the lack of knowledge of students' L1 could marginalise the teacher herself and reduce opportunities for interaction with students. It also led to wasted time and effort as, for example, when Rita tried unsuccessfully to teach the word *bay* relying on the EOA. This incident shows how the EOA approach disempowered both teacher and students. The teacher was unable to accomplish her teaching goal, and the students were unable to understand what she was talking about.

Arabic played various roles in the Saudi EFL tertiary classroom that empowered students and allowed them to share knowledge with the teacher. When Maha, for example, employed Arabic to teach new vocabulary, she was able to share her knowledge with her students, which enhanced their comprehension and allowed them to play more roles in the classroom. They were able to answer questions, participate and interact with the teacher. Arabic also facilitated collaborative learning among students, which gave students more roles and reduced the traditional authoritative role of the teacher because the teacher was not the only source of knowledge in the classroom; students were able to discuss, share knowledge and help each other to understand. This function of Arabic was clearly evident in Judy's classroom.

The inclusivity aspect of L1 (Forman 2016) and its potential to empower students, especially those with low or intermediate proficiency levels, was also apparent. This group of learners comprised the majority of students in this research, as the participant teachers indicated. The use of Arabic had a significant impact on them because it enabled them to participate in class activities and interact with their peers. The data presented in Chapter 8 showed how the English-only approach rendered students powerless and unable to share knowledge with the teacher. The adherence to the EOA by some teachers disadvantaged students and limited their comprehension, especially of new vocabulary. Therefore, this approach marginalised students and reduced their engagement in English classes since few of them were able to participate in the classroom. The observational data showed higher levels of interaction in classrooms where Arabic was present and visible than in classrooms where the use of Arabic was not encouraged or totally forbidden.

The data presented in Chapter 8 showed how the language ideologies adopted by the teachers around the use of L1 and L2 were translated into practice. For example, Maha

supported bilingual teaching because she perceived Arabic and English as equal. This ideology was clearly reflected in her teaching. By drawing comparisons between the grammar of Arabic and English, she demonstrated appreciation of students' L1 and used it as a valuable teaching resource. This technique empowered students since they were able to understand the lesson content and to share their knowledge with the teacher. Thus, the findings from this study indicate that bilingual teaching has the ability to empower students, while monolingual teaching marginalises them and allows teachers to exert more power.

### **9.3 Limitations of the Study**

Like all research, this study had some limitations. First, socio-cultural constraints meant that all the participants, teachers and students, were female. In an all-male setting, the power dynamics around language use might take different forms, and male teachers and students might resist power practices in different ways.

Second, time was a constraint. Had there been more time for this study, I would have included participants from different departments and majors to explore a wider range of attitudes regarding the use of L1 in English classrooms. All the participant students belonged to the PYP. The inclusion of students who were actually studying medicine, science or humanities might reveal other ideologies about the roles of Arabic and English in their studies.

Third, the observational data were collected using only audio-recording and note-taking. It was not possible, for cultural reasons, to use video-recording. Video recording could provide another dimension of the data and generate additional insight into practices of power - for example, by analysing body language.

### **9.4 Implications for Policy**

The outcomes of this research have important implications for language policy in the KSA. Although the EO policy was informally adopted by the English Language Centre at the Future University, the findings showed that Arabic was being used by all the participating students and by some teachers because it functioned as a natural means of communication between teacher and students and among students and served various cognitive, affective and pedagogical functions. These findings are consistent with those from numerous other studies in different contexts that confirm the positive roles of L1 in

teaching and learning English. This indicates a gap between language policy and classroom practice and raises some important questions. Why does the language policy in EFL contexts and in the KSA in particular ignore the results of all these studies and insist on the EOA when it does not suit EFL learners' needs? Can future language policies be more responsive to contemporary research which shows how L1 supports the learning of L2?

The findings showed that the EOA sustained power relations in the Saudi tertiary classroom. It allowed teachers to exert more power over students, and this widened the teacher-student gap and reduced students' chances of learning English effectively. This resulted in more tension, marginalisation, and resistance in English classrooms.

The policy also had an impact on teachers. English teachers were not involved in the decision-making process regarding how English should be taught, which had the effect of disempowering them. English teachers should be empowered by participating in policy-making or at least by having more autonomy in the selection of the teaching method they believe is most helpful for their students. Some teachers were not convinced of the benefits of EOA, and experienced contradictions and feelings of guilt for having to impose it.

If the imposition of the EO policy negatively impacted on teachers and students alike, whose interests are being served by its continuation? It is essential to re-examine the EO policy and practices in the KSA context, taking into consideration the attitudes of teachers and students and the socio-cultural context of learners.

## **9.5 Recommendations**

The findings suggest a number of recommendations for policy, teaching methodology and future research. These recommendations can help to improve the contemporary situation of ELT in EFL contexts, particularly in the KSA.

### **9.5.1 Policy**

In light of the findings of this study, which showed various benefits of the use of L1, it is recommended that language policies in the KSA be re-examined and the advantages of bilingual teaching be acknowledged. Practical steps should be taken to legitimise the inclusion of a judicious amount of L1 in English classes. In order to reduce the power inequalities that result from the informal EO policy, it is recommended that English

teachers and students be involved in the decision-making process. The attitudes of teachers and student must be considered in any decision relevant to teaching and learning policies. This involvement will empower teachers and students alike and reduce power inequalities and resistance practices.

Recruitment policy should consider the teacher's ability to speak students' L1 as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Having at least a basic knowledge of students' L1 should be among the employment criteria, especially for teachers who will teach low-level learners. The findings indicated that teachers' lack of L1 knowledge was responsible for their failure to teach effectively and to communicate well with students. Some knowledge of L1 could help the teacher avoid embarrassment and to be more aware of what is going on in the class, and would facilitate communication in the English classroom. It will allow those teachers to benefit from the tremendous advantages of students' L1. It would also be a way of empowering non-Arabic teachers who are concerned that the use of L1 by students might affect their classroom management. In this study, for example, Rita stopped students from using L1, even though they were trying to discuss the tasks, because she feared loss of control. Not knowing Arabic could be one of the reasons behind Rita's over-use of power in her classes. The acknowledgement of L1 in recruitment policy would also improve the stigmatised status of the Arabic language and of local teachers.

### **9.5.2 L1/L2 Teaching Methodology**

The findings indicate that the EOA is not suitable for the Saudi EFL context. Therefore, it is recommended that teaching methodologies that acknowledge the learner's first language and perceive it as a valuable learning resource rather than a hindrance – for example, bilingual teaching – be adopted. The use of students' L1 should be acknowledged in teachers' training programs and text books. This would help teachers to view the use of L1 positively and to recognise the advantages of its judicious use. The implementation of such methods would help to restrict the rapid spread of the native speaker fallacy and locate local teachers appropriately as bilingual teachers.

The study also showed that teachers were not aware of what their students thought about the use of L1 in English classes. Therefore, teachers are recommended to consider students' attitudes when selecting their teaching method. The teacher needs to be aware of what her students believe about language teaching and learning and what they perceive

as their learning needs. This will reduce the gap between teachers and students and consequently diminish power inequalities in the English classroom.

### **9.5.3 Future Research**

The first recommendation for future research into the roles of L1 in EFL classrooms is to widen the study population by including decision-makers, such as syllabus designers or English supervisors, in order to explore their attitudes toward the EO policy in EFL contexts. Second, future investigations of power practices through language use should be conducted in other universities. In other settings, there may well be different forms of power practice and resistance and L1 might function in different ways.

Third, power relationships in the Saudi English classroom and in the higher education sector in general remain under-researched. Future studies should examine the micro and macro levels of power practices, especially in the Saudi context where the exercise of power in the classroom is culturally justified and socially legitimated, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Also, the theoretical dimensions of language ideology require further exploration in EFL contexts, where different language policies and practices are driven by hidden ideologies that are consciously or unconsciously adopted by decision-makers, English teachers and students. These ideologies affect ELT in the region in that unsuitable teaching methods are applied and particular language fallacies persist. Researchers are encouraged to expose these ideologies and re-examine the normalised teaching methods and practices that go along with them. Finally, a similar study including male and female participants could generate important insights into gender differences in relation to L1 use, language ideologies and power practices.

## **9.6 Contributions**

This study can offer several contributions to the field of ELT and language policy in KSA. First, to the best of my knowledge, very little previous research has explored power relations in the Saudi EFL classroom. By linking this research field with that of L1 usage, the study has enriched knowledge of both. L1 use has been widely examined, but this study added a novel dimension by examining how the use of L1 influences the exercise of power in the English classroom. It has also made an original contribution by exploring the ideological, as opposed to pedagogical, dimensions of the use of L1.

Another major contribution of this research is the involvement of groups of participants who have largely been neglected in previous studies. Female students, in particular, have received little research attention in the KSA. As well, the inclusion of high-English proficiency students represents a significant contribution, since most previous research has focused on the benefits of L1 for low or intermediate level students. The findings showed that L1 was also beneficial for advanced learners, who were influenced by the normalised assumptions about the learning of English. Most importantly, this study revealed the tensions and power inequality between advanced and other learners when the English-only approach was implemented. The English-only approach served the interest of advanced learners, who are a minority in the Saudi education context, and marginalised the majority of learners whose English proficiency levels ranged between low and intermediate.

Finally, this study not only included different participants, but also adopted different data collection methods. Data from the teachers' interviews, the focus groups with students and class observations generated comprehensive, holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Each data collection instrument made an individual contribution to the findings - sometimes supportive, sometimes contradictory. In combination, they added depth and generated interpretive insights that would not have been possible using one method alone.

## **9.7 Conclusion**

The present study sought to contribute to the ongoing debate between monolingual and bilingual English teaching methods. It built on previous empirical and theoretical work to examine how power is manifested in the Saudi EFL classroom through language use. The findings are expected to inform educational policy makers, especially in the EFL context, to reconsider the role of learners' L1 in learning a foreign language based on understanding the perceptions of the key stakeholders - teachers and students - in their decisions about English language teaching and learning. The small scale of this qualitative study does not allow its findings to be generalised. However, its results are highly relevant to ELT policy and practice. The findings support the judicious use of learner's L1, which not only serves various positive teaching and learning functions, but also allows students to negotiate power with teachers.

## Appendixes

### Appendix A: Teachers' Interview Questions

1. There is a big debate in the field of EFL about the use of mother tongue language in classroom. What is your opinion about the use of Arabic as a teaching technique in the EFL classroom?
2. In what cases you feel that you need to use Arabic? Can you give me some examples?
3. How can the use of Arabic affect learning English?
4. How often do you feel guilty when you use Arabic in your teaching?
5. What is the attitude of the decision-makers at the Centre regarding the use of Arabic in the English classroom?
6. How can you describe your students' level of English proficiency?
7. What are your expectations about your students' use of Arabic?
8. What is your impression about your students' preference to use either Arabic or English in class?
9. In what situations do you think that students need to use Arabic or English in class?
10. What do you do when your students speak Arabic during the class?
11. How often do you enforce your students to speak English only?
12. How do your students feel about the English-only approach?
13. Do your students show any resistance to English-only approaches? How do they demonstrate their resistance?
14. Can you explain whether your classroom is a teacher-centred or student-centred classroom?
15. How do you manage your classroom? What language do you use to do so?
16. In your opinion, what are the roles of English teacher?
17. How about the roles of students in the English classroom?
18. What do you think about the students' right to reject any item in the content or any teaching technique?
19. To what extent do your students reject the content or any teaching technique?
20. Which language do they use when they reject?
21. How often do you consult your students before you decide the subject content or your teaching methods?

## Appendix B: Students' Focus Group Questions

1. What is your opinion about the use of Arabic in the EFL classroom?
2. Are there any times you feel that you need to use Arabic during the English class? Can you give me some examples?
3. Does the use of Arabic affect your learning of English? In what ways?
4. What is the attitude of your teacher regarding the use of Arabic in the English classroom?
5. How can you describe your level of English proficiency?
6. How often are you required to speak English only?
7. How do you feel when you are required to speak English only?
7. How do you feel when you are able to use Arabic in the classroom?
8. How do you feel when your teacher uses Arabic during her teaching?
9. How do you feel when your teacher uses English only during her teaching?
10. Which language do you prefer for better communication with your teacher in the classroom?
11. Which language do you use with your teacher outside the classroom?
12. Do you use any strategies to avoid using English?

### Arabic version

ماهو رأيك حول استخدام اللغة العربية في فصل اللغة الإنجليزية؟  
متى تشعرين أنك بحاجة إلى استخدام اللغة العربية اثناء درس اللغة الإنجليزية؟ هل يمكنك أن تضربي بعض الأمثلة؟  
هل استخدام اللغة العربية يؤثر على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية؟ كيف؟  
ماهو رأي معلمتك حول استخدام اللغة العربية في فصل اللغة الإنجليزية ؟  
ماهو مستواك في اللغة الإنجليزية؟  
إلى أي مدى انت ملزمة باستخدام اللغة الإنجليزية فقط؟  
كيف تشعرين عندما تطلب منك مدرسة اللغة الإنجليزية استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية فقط اثناء الدرس؟  
كيف تشعرين عندما تسمح لك مدرسة اللغة الإنجليزية باستخدام اللغة العربية ؟  
كيف تشعرين عندما تستخدم اللغة العربية من قبل مدرسة اللغة الإنجليزية خلال الشرح ؟  
ماهي اللغة التي تفضلينها للتواصل مع مدرسة اللغة الإنجليزية في قاعة الدراسة؟  
ماهي اللغة التي تفضلينها للتواصل مع مدرسة اللغة الإنجليزية خارج قاعة الدراسة؟  
ماهي الأساليب التي قد تتبعها الطالبات للتهرب من استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية؟

## Appendix C: Observation Checklists

### Observation Checklist 1

#### Teachers' use of power

Teacher's name:

Day:

When	Verbal/ nonverbal	Type of behavior	Situation	The language Used	Students' response	Comments
Pre -stage						
In -stage						
Post-stage						

**Observation Checklist 2**  
**Students' use of power**

Teacher's name:

Day:

When	Verbal/ nonverbal	Type of behavior	Situation	The language Used	Teacher's response	Comments
Pre -stage						
In -stage						
Post-stage						

## **Appendix D: Official Permission from the Research Site to Conduct the Research**

To Whom It May Concern

Upon her request, this is to certify that Mrs. Hanan Alotaibi, a PhD candidate at the University of Technology Sydney, has been granted a permission to conduct her PhD research at the English Language Centre, Future University during the academic year 2015/2016. With the participants' consent, this permission allows her to do the following:

1. Conducting field observations in designated EFL classrooms.
2. Working with a number of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) practitioners.

Should you have any further quires on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics  
Dean, Preparatory Year Deanship  
Director, English Language Centre

## **Appendix E: Invitation Letter for Teachers to Participate in the Research**

### **INVITATION LETTER**

L1 in the English Classroom: Language Learning and Teacher-Students Relationship

Dear English Language Centre Teachers,

My name is Hanan Alotaibi, I am a member of the English Language Centre in Future University, but currently I am a PhD student at the University of Technology, Sydney. I am conducting research into how the use of Arabic or English influences the teacher's authority, the students' ability to participate in classrooms, and the way students and teachers interact. I would welcome your assistance.

The research will involve conducting:

- a) Audio-recorded interviews with teachers
- b) Focus groups with students
- c) Audio-recorded class observations.

**(Audio recording will take place during the interviews and class observations).**

The interviews should take no more than one hour of your time, and class observations will last for four days (3 hours each day). I have asked you to participate because you are capable to enrich the data of my research with your experience and point of view regarding the main issues of this research.

If you are interested in participating, I would be glad if you would contact me by email. If you have any concerns about the research. You can contact the Teaching coordinator/ Mrs. Noura Ali.

You are under no obligation to participate in this research.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Hanan Alotaibi

NOTE:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: +61 2 9514 9772 Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au), and quote the UTS HREC reference number 2015000455. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

## Appendix F: Information Sheets

### INFORMATION SHEET- (for Teachers)

L1 in the English Classroom: Language Learning and Teacher-Students Relationship  
(UTS APPROVAL NUMBER 2015000455)

#### WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

My name is *Hanan Alotaibi* and I am PhD student at UTS. My supervisor is *Dr. Jacquie Widin*

#### WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

This research investigates how the use of Arabic or English influences the teacher's authority, the students' ability to participate in classrooms, and the way students and teachers interact.

#### IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

- 1) You will be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview, which will last for about one hour. It will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The interview will be at the time and place that are convenient to you.
- 2) I will conduct class observations in four classrooms taught by four different teachers. For each class, the observation will last for approximately 3 hours over the duration of 4 consecutive days (a total of 12 hours). The observation will be audio-recorded, and relevant parts will be transcribed.

#### ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

There are very few if any risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that you might be embarrassed or you may experience slight anxiety during the interview and the observation.

#### WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?

Your participation is expected to give me the information I need to find out about whether Arabic language is used in English classroom, and whether it has any positive roles in teaching English. It will also enrich the research with information regarding the English teacher-student relationship.

#### DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?

You don't have to say yes; your participation in the research is voluntary. Whether you participate or not has no effect on your evaluation or job-performance report.

#### WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?

Nothing. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

#### IF I SAY YES, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?

You can change your mind at any time and you don't have to say why. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

#### WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I can help you with, please feel free to contact me. If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the Teaching coordinator/ Mrs. Noura Ali. You may also contact the Research Ethics Officer at UTS via [Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au](mailto:Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au), and quote this number (2015000455).

## **INFORMATION SHEET - (For Students)**

L1 in the English Classroom: Language Learning and Teacher-Students Relationship  
(UTS APPROVAL NUMBER 2015000455)

### **WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?**

My name is *Hanan Alotaibi* and I am PhD student at UTS. My supervisor is *Dr. Jacquie Widin*

### **WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?**

This research is to find out about the different roles that Arabic and English play in the English language classroom. It investigates how the use of Arabic or English influences the teacher's authority, the students' ability to participate in classrooms, and the way students and teachers interact.

### **IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?**

I will invite you to participate in:

- 1) An audio-recorded classroom observation that will be conducted by the researcher in your English classroom for approximately 3 hours over the duration of 4 consecutive days (a total of 12 hours).
- 2) A 30-minutes semi-structured interview that will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The interview will be conducted with some students only, and it will be at the time and place that are convenient to them.

### **ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?**

There are very few if any risks because the research has been carefully designed, and your personal information will be protected. However, it is possible that you might be embarrassed or you may experience slight anxiety during the observation or the interview. Also, the completion of the questionnaire will be at the end of the class, so you are expected to be tired at that time.

### **WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?**

You are able to give me the information I need to find out about whether Arabic language is used in English classroom, and whether it has any positive roles in teaching English. You are also expected to enrich the research with your view regarding how the use of Arabic can affect the relationship between the teacher and students in the English classroom.

### **DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?**

You don't have to say yes; your participation in the research is voluntary. Whether you participate or not has no effect on your grades in the English subject.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?**

Nothing. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

### **IF I SAY YES, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?**

You can change your mind at any time and you don't have to say why. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

### **WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?**

If you have concerns about the research that you think I can help you with, please feel free to contact me.

If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the Teaching coordinator/ Mrs. Noura Ali. You may also contact the Research Ethics Officer at UTS via [Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au](mailto:Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au), and quote this number (2015000455)



*CONSENT FORM (for student's interview)*

I \_\_\_\_\_ (*participant's name*) agree to participate in the research project

L1 in the English Classroom: Language Learning and Teacher-Students Relationship

(*UTS HREC approval reference number 2015000455*) being conducted by Mrs Hanan Alotaibi (email from the University of Technology, Sydney for her PhD degree.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to investigate how the use of Arabic or English influences the teacher's authority, the students' ability to participate in classrooms, and the way students and teachers interact. I understand that I have been asked to participate in this research because I am expected to provide sufficient information about whether Arabic language is used in English classroom, and whether it has any positive roles in learning English.

My participation in this research will involve a 30-minutes semi-structured interview that will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The interview will be conducted at the time and place that are convenient to me.

I also understand that I might experience slight embarrassment or anxiety during the interview. However, recognizing that my participation is not obligatory and that I can withdraw at any time is going to minimise these risks.

I am aware that I can contact Mrs Hanan Alotaibi if I have any concerns about the research. I also can contact the Teaching coordinator/ Mrs. Noura Ali.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason. I also understand that my withdrawal from the research will not prejudice my grades.

I agree that Mrs Hanan Alotaibi has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (participant)

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (researcher or delegate)

NOTE:

This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: +61 2 9514 9772 [Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au](mailto:Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au)) and quote the UTS HREC reference number 2015000455. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

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