

The Journey from Academic Sojourner to Humanistic EFL
Educator: Perspectives of Saudi Women

By

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**The Journey from Academic Sojourner to Humanistic EFL
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Abstract

Since 2006, the Saudi Arabian government has launched a large-scale scholarship program for Saudis to study abroad in various parts of the world, and especially in the United States, as part of an initiative to increase the qualifications of Saudi youth and act as a cultural exchange. Among those Saudis who study abroad, there are many educators who return to teach in Saudi classrooms. Framed in language teacher identity and Transformative learning theory, this dissertation explores the narratives of Saudi women who completed an academic sojourn in the United States and return to teach English in Saudi higher education classes for young women. Employing a mixed-method design, the current study finds that the Saudi women's sojourn to the United States was a transformative experience. Aspects of being in a new and unfamiliar context, interacting with various cultures, adjusting to new social gender roles, having access to professional opportunities, and facing challenges on their own, all contribute to major changes in the women's lives. They report their experiences allowing them to redefine and rediscover themselves, gain independence, build resilience, increase their cultural awareness, enhance their agency as professionals, and re-define their roles as language instructors upon their return. In addition, their experiences living abroad prompted them to take on a humanistic approach to teaching. Their recent experiences as students and as sojourners in a foreign country allowed for them to realize the importance human relationships and how they influence learning. They display features of humanistic education that emphasizes the acknowledgment of the student as a "whole person" and legitimizes the accommodation of emotions, flexibility, and building strong teacher-student relationships. Finally, the study finds that the Saudi women in this study utilize the knowledge and experiences they have of Saudi and American cultures to create a hybrid classroom culture. In that "Third Space," they employ teaching methods and techniques from

both cultures in a way that introduces the students to new student-centered learning but maintains familiarity with the local learning context. They also use that Third Space to connect the local language and culture to the global ones in a way that is relevant to their students and respectful of local values. The study has implications for graduates of U.S. institutions who return to an educational profession in Saudi Arabia. There are also implications for U.S.-TESOL programs and educators within those programs to provide more meaningful experiences for international students within those programs.

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Dedication

To my beloved husband, supportive parents, and precious children: I dedicate this work to you. I could never have done it without you all. I am forever indebted.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increased influx of Saudis studying abroad, especially in the United States (U.S.) since Saudi Arabia launched the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) in 2005 in response to an agreement of educational and cultural exchange between the two countries (Taylor & Albasri, 2014). The United States alone is currently host to over 45,337 Saudi students enrolled in U.S. universities and colleges (Ministry of Education, 2019). In addition, the 2019 *Open Doors Report* shows that the number of Saudi students to be the fourth largest international student group at U.S. universities and colleges (Institute of International Education, 2019). Hence, it is increasingly important to understand the influence that U.S.-based higher education (HE) has on Saudis after completing their degrees and returning to their country to pursue their professional careers.

Need for the Study

Several studies report the perceived advantages for Saudis, who have had the opportunity to study abroad, upon their return, including greater career opportunities, higher income and social status (Hall, 2013), global competence, higher standards of living (Hilal, Scott & Maadad, 2015), in addition to increased intercultural awareness (Hilal & Denman, 2013). Along similar lines, Taylor and Albasri (2014) reviewed the KASP and stated that the program “has made a lasting impact on the future of Saudi Arabian education. Alumni from the program have studied in the world’s top universities and they’re bringing this knowledge home to help transform their educational system” (p. 117). However, to date, there have been no studies to explore the nature of this predicted educational transformation, what it looks like, and how it is achieved. Specifically, it is unclear how U.S. education programs translate to Saudi university classrooms and the educational practices of Saudis who graduate from these programs. In addition, there is a

lack of descriptive research on Saudi Arabia's HE, especially those that are qualitative and provide insights that make international comparisons possible (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Thus, increasing the need for such a study.

On the other hand, studies of academic sojourns have demonstrated their transformative potential seeing as individuals within those programs gain a great sense of personal growth and development. Several studies with various participant backgrounds show how international study abroad programs are a path for self-discovery, reshaped identities, and changed perspectives on life (Brown & Brown, 2009; Brown & Graham, 2009). The participants in such programs also show increased cultural awareness and tolerance (Marx & Moss, 2011), and especially those with longer durations (cf. Medina-López-Portillo, 2004). Assuming that these experiences are indeed transformative, it is not known, however, how the experiences of Saudi women—perceived as contested identities in most Western literature (e.g. Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015; Song, 2018)—shape their self-transformations, and how their transformations traverse when they return to their home country and culture.

Also, seeing as English is considered the language of globalization (Crystal, 2012), it is important to consider the roles of English teachers who are prepared for their teaching roles in the U.S., which is considered by many as the target culture of the language (Jahan & Roger, 2017). Therefore, particularly for those majoring in U.S. language education programs, it is unknown what role their transformative experiences abroad play in shaping their English teaching practices in K.S.A. classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

This study is designed to explore (through interviews, observations, and surveys) the influence that U.S. language education programs and the experiences of Saudi women within

those programs have on their teaching practices and experiences after returning to teach at a HE institution in Saudi Arabia. I aim to understand the realities of female Saudi instructors of English as a foreign language (EFL) who are U.S. TESOL alumni, as they are *in situ*, not altered or manipulated in order to see results, or to compare them to find out what is best, nor to make any future predictions. The goal is to consider how their lived experiences in their U.S. programs transform their teaching identities and current teaching practices.

This study helps illuminate the ways in which many of the U.S. sojourn returnees make sense of their U.S. educational experiences within their Saudi classrooms. It provides both a micro-level as well as a macro-level “big picture” of the phenomenon of U.S. study abroad for Saudi English teachers. The micro-level is gained through the emic perspectives of Saudi women in their U.S. programs and their perceptions of how their past lived experiences transformed their realities and practices in EFL classrooms. The macro-level insights are gained through trying to understand how other Saudi female returnees interpret their experiences, thus shedding light on the broader implications of study-abroad programs.

My personal interest in the topic of the study is my experience as a Saudi scholarship recipient in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at a U.S. university, who will return to teach at an institution of higher education in Saudi Arabia. Throughout my studies, I have found that many of the theories in learning English come from research conducted in English-speaking countries, in which cultures, social structures, and educational contexts differ significantly from those in Saudi Arabia and its educational institutes. One of the main differences is that in K.S.A., students are learning English as foreign language (i.e. EFL), of which the language development has been proven to be different from the development of English as a second language (ESL) (Taguchi, 2008). In EFL contexts, English

is taught as a subject in the classroom, but is rarely used beyond that setting, unless it is needed for travel or work within direct contact with speakers of the language. Whereas an ESL setting is where students learn English as a second language, preparing them to use the language in their everyday lives outside the classroom. Therefore, the content of U.S. TESOL courses focus on issues pertaining the ESL context, such as immigrant issues, U.S. K-12 settings, bilingualism, and using English for everyday life matters (Ramanathan, 2002). This content does not match the needs of the learners of EFL in K.S.A. classrooms that rely on building adequate linguistic competency for intercultural communication. In addition, even with globalization providing more access to English language content, cultural differences and pedagogical traditions create obstacles that are not easily overcome. Differences in language, religion, traditions, values, and even classroom cultures can make it seem like there is a great “dissimilarity between the two cultures in contact” (Berry, 1997, p. 23), causing what is perceived as “cultural distance” between the language being taught and the local applications. In fact, some research has shown that the more distance between learners’ culture and the target culture, the lower the development of comprehension rate of learners (Rafieyan et al., 2014). These findings have important implications for how the Saudi EFL instructors who have been educated in U.S. classrooms can draw on their learning experiences in their teaching of English in Saudi Arabia.

Given those differences I have observed between the use of ESL and EFL in their contexts, as well as cultural and pedagogical differences, I have often found myself wondering how I might apply or adapt a teaching method or technique – that I either experienced as a student in a U.S. classroom or that I have learned from my education courses – to my future teaching in Saudi Arabia. In the current study, I explore the experiences of Saudi EFL teachers in Saudi classrooms who have completed their studies in an ESL setting in the United States, to

observe how their U.S. education programs, specifically language education programs (such as TESOL, TEFL, or TESL) influence their teaching identities and beliefs. I also examine how their experiences shape their teaching practices; how the Saudi EFL instructors reconcile the potential cognitive dissonance between the experiences they had in U.S. classrooms and the current expectations of their Saudi classrooms, and what that looks like in practice

Research Questions

In the context of Saudi Arabian higher education EFL classrooms, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the accounts of U.S.-educated Saudi EFL teachers at a K.S.A. institution of HE, on their study-abroad experiences that transform their teaching of English in Saudi Arabia?
2. How have the lived cultural, linguistic, and academic experiences of these individuals shaped their teaching and professional identities?
3. What is the relevance and application of those experiences in K.S.A. classrooms?

These research questions were designed to be flexible and reflexive, not fixed and controlling, because this study is intended to be inductive and process-oriented in nature. That is, it is responsive to the data collected and insights throughout the process and duration of the study (Maxwell, 2013). Since my goal is understanding experiences as they are in the real world, I approached the setting with an open mind, allowing the phenomena to unfold naturally throughout the exploration process by eliciting the narratives the participants that highlight critical incidents and periods of cognitive dissonance.

It is also important to note that these questions assume that the teachers in question were/are *influenced*, in some way, by their experiences studying at a U.S. TESOL/TEFL program, which, in turn, *shape* and *transform* their teaching practices and professional identities. These assumptions that are based on what is known about how previous teaching and learning experiences shape teaching practices (Flores & Day, 2006; Hutterli & Prusse, 2012) and practical teaching knowledge (Shulman, 1987; Elsheikh, 2016).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its utilization of a multiple method approach to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the way many of the Saudi women returning from their U.S. academic sojourn are using their experiences in teaching English in the K.S.A. classrooms. Employing in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and a larger scale survey, the study helps shed light on how teachers apply their knowledge and experiences in an educational context that differs from the one in which they earned a college degree. The findings from this study helps clarify four issues: 1. How study-abroad experiences shape and transform sojourners identities, 2. How their teaching identities, shaped by their lived experiences abroad, influence their approach to teaching as humanistic educators, 3. How the participants reconcile the differences in the learning contexts and cultures between U.S. and K.S.A. classrooms. and 4. How other instructors of similar backgrounds and experiences make relevance of their U.S. experiences in their teaching of English in Saudi Arabia.

Definition of Terms

The term *EFL* in this context refers to the teaching or learning of English in a country where it is not an official language, and where access to the language outside the classroom setting is often scarce, unless there are deliberate efforts on the part of the learner to access the

language. Such is the case in Saudi Arabia, where the official language of the country is Arabic. It is the language of all public schooling, government and official documents, as well as the media and all street signs. This is in contrast to *ESL* contexts (e.g. the U.S., Britain, Australia, and Canada) where the language that is learned and taught is an official language of the country and can be accessed readily and effortlessly outside the classroom setting.

On the other hand, *Transformative experience* is used to refer to experiences in an adult's life that allow for a paradigm shift in one's knowledge and perception. Derived from Mezirow's transformative learning theory, a transformative experience is one that differs significantly from what an individual has previously known or experienced, causing one to re-evaluate their knowledge and understanding, and come up with a new or revised interpretation for the experience. The result is a shift in one's approach to the experience and understand of the world.

Finally, the terms *sojourn* and *study-abroad* are used interchangeably throughout the study to refer to the temporary residence in another country for the purpose of attending an academic program and obtaining a degree before returning to the home country. Accordingly, the term *sojourner* is used to refer to the person who participates in a sojourn or study-abroad program.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To better understand how Saudi teachers' study abroad experiences in the field of TESOL have influenced their EFL teaching practices in Saudi higher education classrooms, I ground this study in four areas of literature: (a) the nature of teaching English in Saudi Arabia and changes that have affected English language teaching and learning, especially in higher education; (b) study abroad programs, and more specifically the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP); (c) language teacher identity and influences teacher practices and understandings of teaching, with a focus on those teaching in EFL settings; and (d) the role of experiences in learning to become a teacher, including the transformative experiences of studying abroad. In the following literature review, I aim to discuss each of those aspects and how, combined, they comprise a conceptual framework to guide the study.

Saudi EFL Context

Since its introduction in 1925, the role of English language education in Saudi Arabia has often been accompanied by a sense of uncertainty. The Saudi society, holding strong traditional and cultural values, had expressed resistance to English language education, especially for children at a young age (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). That is because an important characteristic of the educational system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A.) is that it is established on religion and the question of how education can make its citizens better understand and spread their faith (ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). While English language education was no exception to this, the main motive for introducing English as a foreign language (EFL) to the country was for economic reasons, primarily backed by the Saudi oil industry and its dependence on

international trade. The significant value of English in the context of the oil trade even resulted in the study of the language being dubbed as “petro-linguistics” (Karmani, 2005). Thus, the general objectives of teaching English in Saudi Arabia reflect its desire to participate globally, advance its economy, and, at the same time, preserve the religious and national identity of the young population. A more instrumental view of language is adopted that “consists of communicative and information gathering skills,” rather than a constitutive view, in which the language “represents what we are, think, and reveal about ourselves” (Magnan et al., 2014, p. 246).

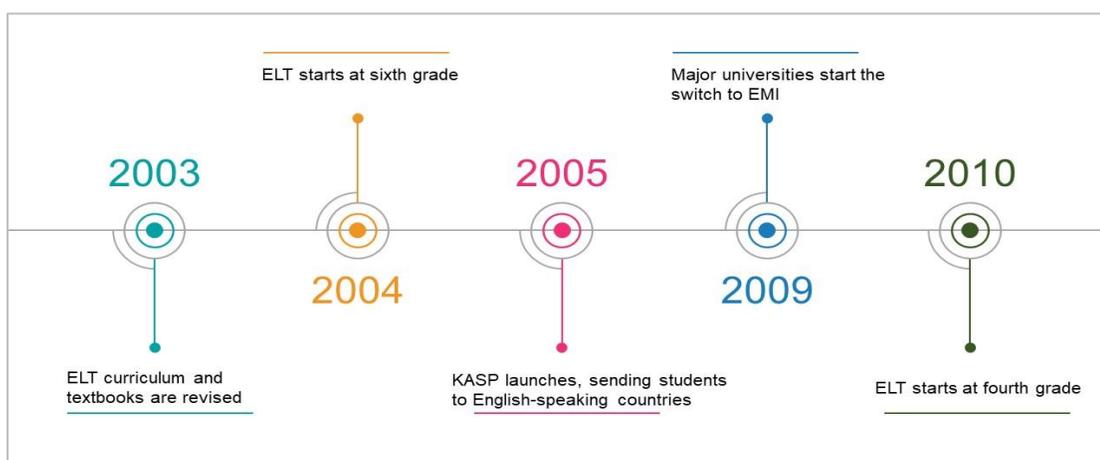
Nonetheless, the scene of English language education in Saudi Arabia has undergone dramatic changes since it was introduced to Saudi education (Khalid Al-Seghayer, 2014). Historically, the issue of English language education was often a topic of heated debate, with some seeing the language as key to modernity and economic prosperity, while others seeing it as threat to the Arabic language and cultural identity that is strictly attached to it (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). However, views about the language began to change post 9/11 and the English language would play a vital role in this change (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Despite the recognizable tension regarding the role of language in Saudi Arabia due it being “loaded with political, religious, social, and economic overtones” (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014, p. 128), it quickly became recognized as a tool for connecting Saudi Arabia with the rest of the world for political, economic, and educational reasons. That led to widespread reforms to increase the presence of English in the region, especially in educational contexts. Elyas and Picard (2010) argue that the increased attention to the existence of English in Saudi education was intended to increase intercultural awareness and produce competent English-speaking Saudis, so that Saudi Arabia could better compete globally.

The reforms included introducing English language learning at a younger age in public schools. Since 1958, English has been taught as a foreign language starting at seventh grade and continued into twelfth grade. However, in 2004, English was introduced in sixth grade (11 years old), and since 2010 English language curriculum has been mandated to all Saudi students beginning in fourth grade (9 years old), with two 45-minute lessons a week (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). This earlier introduction of English was accompanied by a change in the existing curriculum and textbook materials. Beginning in 2003, English textbooks were gradually revised to include more diversity of views that purposefully and carefully portrayed a model of coexistence between Islamic and Saudi cultural and social practices and the use of the English language and Western characters in order to reinforce the idea that the English language is not intended to replace the traditional values and beliefs, but can be used to communicate those values across cultures (Elyas, 2008; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). For example, Mahboob and Elyas's (2014) analysis of Saudi textbooks found that English textbooks included images of men with traditional Saudi *thobe* (i.e. long white clothing for men), alongside images of "foreigners" dressed in suits or jeans. These illustrations are intended to drive home the message for students and their teachers "to consider diverse practices and believes in relation to local practices" (p. 141).

In addition, beginning in 2009, Saudi universities began switching to English as the medium of instruction (EMI). For that reason, most public universities adopted intensive English programs in what they call "foundation year" (i.e. first year), in which students are expected to develop their English skills needed throughout their studies in different fields (Rauf, 2015). This area will be discussed in more detail below, as it is the context of the study. Finally, as part of this reform, Saudi Arabia launched a massive study abroad program in 2005 called the King

Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), sending thousands of Saudis for scholarship abroad, mostly in English speaking countries (i.e. the U.S., U.K., and Australia). See figure 1 for a timeline of the English language reform in K.S.A.

Figure 1. *The Increase of the Presence of English in KSA.*



This timeline demonstrates how English language teaching and learning has increased in its presence and vitality in KSA

There is no denying that Saudi Arabia recognizes the importance of the English language to be able to participate globally (Daif-Allah, 2012). For not only is English the most important language for globalization, but it is also worth the most economically, as it is the language for global corporations and finance (Zughoul, 2003). However, the value of English in K.S.A. is not only economic; it also opens a window of access to the most recent advancements in medicine, science, and technology (Liton, 2013). The global hegemony of English makes it “the language of science. That is the language we have to use if we wish to prepare our students for an international career in a globalizing world” (Kruseman 2003, as cited in Coleman, 2006, p.4).

Trends and Present State of EFL in Saudi Arabia

EFL teaching methods in most K.S.A. K-12 classrooms consist of a combination of features of the audio-lingual method and, to a greater extent, the grammar translation method

(Al-Seghayer, 2005). Studies in other EFL contexts have also cited the prevalent use of these methods (c.f. in China: Hu, 2005; in Japan: Duff & Uchida, 1997; in Taiwan: Lin, 2011). The audio-lingual method involves repetition and drills that are thought to help students form language habits, whereas the Grammar-Translation Method involves exhaustive explanation of grammar rules, often translated to the native language, in addition to the rote learning of grammar rules and vocabulary. In both cases, textbooks are the main source of written input and students are not exposed to much authentic language use inside the classroom (Al-Seghayer, 2005).

The intense focus on grammar and translation reinforces the idea that grammar is at the essence of language learning, not communication or meaning making. Most Saudi EFL teachers strongly believe in the grammar-translation method and consider grammar as the most crucial aspect of the language to master (Fareh, 2010; Khan, 2011; Liton, 2013). As a result of this emphasis, students have also inherited those beliefs about being a successful language learner in the Saudi Arabian school context. For instance, in a questionnaire about language learning beliefs, Daif-Allah (2004) finds that 79% of university students indicate that grammar rules are the most important aspect about language learning, and that 59% viewed translation as a useful tool for “fostering English language acquisition” (p. 24). Similarly, the study also reveals the participants valued accuracy over fluency in language use. Although the structured learning of grammar and the conscious focus-on-form has proven to be beneficial as a component of adult’s second language acquisition, the benefits usually apply to the use of rules in grammar-specific situations (DeKeyser, 1997) – as in testing situations and grammar exercises. Others maintain that the focus-on-form must be within a meaningful context to show its benefits in language

acquisition (de la Fuente, 2014). Translation and grammar rules on their own do not provide adequate practice to promote communicative competence.

The heavy use of Arabic to teach EFL is also prominent in K.S.A. K-12 classrooms, regardless of proficiency level (Alkatheery, 2014; Alshammari, 2011; Storch & Aldosari, 2010), although it is not necessarily viewed as problematic by teachers and students in those classrooms (Al-Nofaie, 2010). Ebrahim and Awan (2015) found that many Saudi EFL teachers and their students *prefer* to use Arabic in the classroom. The authors argue that this has contributed to the problem of insufficient exposure to input in the target language. While the use of Arabic could be associated with the adoption of the Grammar-Translation Method in most classrooms, Alrashidi and Phan (2015) claim that using Arabic in classroom instruction could be attributed to the teachers' lack of confidence in their language abilities or that its use makes instruction less laborious. In another study that followed Saudi EFL teachers' vocabulary use for two years after they graduated from Saudi teacher education programs, it was found that EFL teachers showed attrition in their English vocabulary production (Alharthi, 2014), which has implications for the students' exposure in EFL classrooms.

The previously described methods are usually referred to as “traditional” teaching methods that have been used since the introduction of English language education in the 20th century and consists of students being able to recite phrases and recognize grammatical patterns without necessarily understanding the meaning. This is in contrast to what would be considered “modern” teaching methods consisting of communicative language use, where students are expected to make meaning orally and in writing, communicate relevant terms in authentic situations, and use authentic texts produced naturally by both students or other English speakers.

Motivation for learning is another great obstacle for Saudi EFL learners. One study found that seventh-grade students showed a decline in motivation for learning English after only one year of school instruction, given that their excitement of learning a new language was faced with the reality of the high demands of language learning and their low proficiency rates (AlMaiman, 2005). Other characteristics of EFL classrooms include teaching via teacher-centered lecturing methods (Fareh, 2010), teaching “by the book” or regarding the textbook as “an end in itself” and not including any extra activities or practice (Alfahadi, 2012), large class numbers (Liton & Ali, 2011), foreign language anxiety (Aljafen, 2013; Al-Saraj, 2014), and learners’ unquestioning memorization of content from vocabulary to entire passages without understanding of the substance (Almutairi, 2007; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). In the following section, I will discuss changes in Saudi HE and how it has contributed to changes in the teaching, learning, and expectations of EFL in Saudi Arabia.

The Role of English in Saudi Higher Education

Saudi higher education has recently undergone (and is still undergoing) a renaissance that can be observed through moves to have large university programs internationalized and the wide-ranging switch to English as a medium for instruction (EMI). In their book entitled *Higher Education in Saudi Arabia: Reforms, Challenges and Priorities* (which is the first of its kind published in English), Smith and Abouammoh (2013) examine the higher education (HE) sector in Saudi Arabia since its inception up to the publication of the book. They note that HE in Saudi Arabia has been given increased attention over the past few years. One reason this sector is vital for the country is that 60% of the country’s population is under the age of 15 (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Therefore, HE is considered “a major driver of transformation” (p. V) that will gradually relieve the country from its dependence on oil as a primary source of income and

allow for human capital to be a part in economic growth. However, the challenge is that Saudi HE systems are “at risk for trying to do too much too quickly” (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013, p. 4). Some of the changes are occurring faster than students and faculty can keep up with.

Although higher education as a sector in Saudi Arabia has only been around since 1975 (Ministry of Education, 2017), their high standards and ambitions, along with the support of the Saudi government, has led to a great advancement in their international standings. An interesting position that HE in K.S.A. holds is the delicate balance between their global academic identity as well as their local cultural identity, or “the capacity to aspire” for global excellence as well as “the capacity to remember” their values and beliefs (Pavan, 2014).

One of the ways Saudi universities aspire towards high international standards is by implementing the trend of internationalization in HE. The internationalization of HE is “the integration of research, the use of English as the lingua franca for scientific communication, the growing international labor market for scholars and scientists, the growth of communications firms and of multinational and technology publishing, and the use of information technology” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 291). Like other universities worldwide, the movement of HE in Saudi Arabia towards internationalization has resulted in a greater profile for learning the English language in university settings and beyond.

Since 2009, major K.S.A. universities going through the process of internationalization have also been transitioning to English as a medium of instruction (EMI). In this type of instruction, similar to a language “immersion” experience, students are taught the content of their courses in a foreign language (Coleman, 2006). In the past, EMI at the university level in Saudi Arabia was more notably offered in scientific and medical fields (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

However, more recently, all major universities in K.S.A. have been implementing changes to switch to EMI in many of their courses in various areas of study.

A concerning issue with the implementation of EMI in countries that do not speak the language is that it frames English “as a natural and neutral language of academic excellence” (Piller & Cho, 2013, p. 24), and that knowledge production cannot occur in the local language (Barnawi & Le Ha, 2015). There are also other concerns about implementing EMI in Saudi HE. One of the critiques has been that the universities are underprepared for implementing EMI and that may influence the quality of instruction that students receive, since “[b]oth pedagogically and philosophically the use of English as the medium of instruction requires a great deal more consideration and careful development” (Onsman, 2011, p. 530). Furthermore, Alnassar and Dow (2013) claim that the decision on what language the course will be taught in is not systemized. If the course contains specialized terminology in English, especially in the sciences, then the course is taught in English. The problem is further exacerbated when many of the instructors are not proficient in English. Onsman (2011) observed that, “Even though many of the senior academics completed their post-graduate work in the USA, UK, Australia or other English-speaking countries, the general level of communication capacity in English is worryingly low” (p. 522). However, the academics he was referring to are not specifically EFL or language instructors, thus there is no evidence as to whether EFL instructors who were educated in the United States would also fall into this category of inadequate English proficiency for successful EMI.

The broader implementation of EMI has increased the need for English language instruction that produces higher proficiency English users than previously expected in order to succeed in their university studies. To respond to the growing needs of English at the university

level, students are being prepared for using the language in an intensive English course during their first year. The most notable feature of the program is the intensive English courses that try to respond to the inadequacy of high-school English for the communicative needs of English in HE (Al-Shehri, 2017). In what is sometimes called “college English,” students take up to 15 hours a week of English instruction in an attempt to increase students’ proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Liton, 2013). Students must reach an intermediate level of English before exiting the first-year program. However, as described above, issues of student motivation, and the dependence on memorization and translation in learning make it challenging for the students to adapt to the communicative requirements of the first-year program. Students who previously relied on memorizing discrete chunks of language, are now being asked to produce meaningful linguistic strings that they come up with (Alhawsawi, 2013). Nevertheless, the truth remains that the English language courses within the program are essential for university success in the following years.

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP)

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), one of the world’s largest sponsored study abroad program (Bukhari & Denman, 2013), began as an agreement between King Abdullah and then president George W. Bush as part of an initiative of educational, cultural, and economic exchange between the two countries. In a review of international scholarship programs, Mawer (2017) finds that these programs generally either serve to preserve diplomatic relationships or as “Overseas Development Assistance” programs, or a mixture of both. In the case of Saudi scholarship programs, it is a combination of keeping diplomatic ties alive and thriving, as well as assisting with the development of the Saudi youth in programs and fields that are not available in their home country.

Since the program's inception in 2005, hundreds of thousands of Saudis have graduated with international degrees from 31 countries worldwide, with the vast majority having studied in the United States, followed by Britain, Canada, and Australia successively (Saudi Ministry of Education Planning and Development, 2020). Saudis who are studying abroad cite quality education, language learning, expanded worldview, enhanced job opportunities, and the prestige of a foreign degree as reasons for their study abroad (Hilal et al., 2015). However, not all scholarships are optional. In fact, 13% of Saudis studying abroad are sent by their employers to learn specialized and job-specific skills (Taylor & Albasri, 2014). For some Saudis, especially females, this is not always an ideal choice, as some studies have found that not all females are encouraged by their families to study abroad (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015) or face circumstances that make it difficult for them, their spouses, and children to pack up and move to another country. Therefore, it is relevant to discuss and develop an understanding of the effects of international study abroad experiences, especially for future teachers. Because most Saudi university academics study abroad and obtain their graduate degrees at Western universities, it is important to investigate how their experiences related to studying abroad manifest themselves in their everyday teaching of EFL.

Identity and Experience

According to poststructuralist views, identities are dynamic, complex and multifaceted, as opposed to static and fixed. A person is not born with his or her identity, nor does a person inherit their identity from parents. In other words, identity is not a biological trait. Instead, identities are continuously changing and being negotiated and renegotiated in relation to the contexts they are in (Block, 2007; Norton, 2013). Norton (2013) defines identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across

time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 45). The understanding of identity also consists of “the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation in the world” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). The previous definitions share a common theme for understanding identity: that they do not occur in vacuum, but are formed in “relation to the world.” Every context has a different set of rules and relationships that govern them, and it is within those rules and relationships that one forms their identity. As Norton (2013) points out, “a person’s identity must always be understood in relational terms: one is often subject of a set of relationships ... or subject to a set of relationships” (p. 4). It is constantly responding in relation to the surrounding contexts, as well as people and power within those contexts. Thus, identities are defined and redefined by the experiences faced by an individual. Experiences in the present or the past (e.g. study-abroad experiences) influence the practice and performance of identities in other situations (e.g. teaching in language classrooms).

Furthermore, identity and practice are integrated in the making of who the person is (Norton, 2013) because one’s identity informs their practice; at the same time, practices shape a person’s identity. Therefore, in the context of language teaching it is relevant to consider the connection between teachers’ identities and practices.

In the following section, I discuss language teachers’ identities and experience, with an emphasis on transformative experience that have the most capacity for identity transformation. These concepts will inform the understanding of how the U.S. experiences of Saudi EFL teachers shape their teaching practices in the Saudi EFL classroom.

Language Teacher Identity

Teacher identities are complex and multifaceted because they incorporate aspects of the individual's personal, social and professional identities, and the combination of contextual issues related to each of those identities. Lin (2011) defines teacher identity as “a negotiated positioning in relation to the institutional and interpersonal contexts of teaching and the enacting and performance of the teacher's role through discourses employed in particular contexts” (p.15). Who they are and what they know as professionals, who they teach, and where they teach are all interwoven in teachers' identities. Research on teacher identity recognizes the importance of the various experiences and identities that teachers bring with them to the classroom, as well as how these experiences and identities are understood in relation to the social, cultural, and political contexts in which they occur. In a study on how new teachers' identities are shaped, Flores and Day (2006) find three main influences on new teacher's identities: teachers' past experiences, teacher training and practice, and the context of teaching. Therefore, teachers with experience studying and being trained abroad will undoubtedly have the influence of those experiences on their teacher identity and current teaching practices.

Adding another layer of complexity to teacher identity is the understanding of *language* teacher identity and the role that language, and language-related issues, play in shaping those identities. In recent years, more attention has been given to the influence of contexts (e.g. social political, and professional) where language teachers learn and teach (Crandall & Christison, 2016). In an influential paper in the area of language teacher identity, Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) argue the need to understand language teachers by examining “the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them” (p. 22). They find that social constructions of identity around race, class, and gender seep into the classroom and come to be of “the utmost importance in the language classroom” (p.

24). In fact, teachers' identities and experiences play a big role in influencing how language teachers teach (Varghese, et al., 2005; Crandall & Christison, 2016; Duff & Uchida, 1997).

Varghese et al. (2005) explored different theories to investigate issues related to language teacher identities. They argue that there is no single theory that is sufficient to understanding the complex and intricate nature of teacher identity, but that teachers' identities should be viewed in-practice and in-discourse. "Identity-in-practice" focuses on the "concrete practices and tasks in relation to a group" (p. 39), whereas "identity-in-discourse" focuses on the discursive language of critical reflexivity. In other words, in order to understand teacher identity, it important to evaluate teacher practices in the communities they participate in, as well as the critical reflection and awareness of how their experiences and identities both shape and are being shaped.

The Saudi female EFL instructors in this study bring with them learning experiences from their K.S.A. and U.S. classrooms and teaching experience within those two contexts, both interacting with the local context of teaching in K.S.A. classrooms. The two contexts differ, and sometimes conflict, in how the educational institutions view their approach to teaching (teacher-centered vs. student-centered) in addition to student-teacher relationships (authoritative vs. egalitarian). These positions, both shaping the teachers' identities, are negotiated through the Saudi women's identity-in-practice, demonstrated in their teaching and interactions with students in the classroom.

NNESTs

The literature on language teacher identity dedicates a special discussion on the identities of Non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) because of their positions as both language learners and language teachers at the same time. This unique position offers them an exclusive insight on the learning experiences of their students. That is especially true when they share the

same culture and first language as their students, enabling them to relate to them culturally and linguistically.

Amin (2001) reports that female immigrant ESL teachers in Canada embraced their NNEST identities and felt empowered as effective teachers who were able to build “effective pedagogies on their ascribed nonnative status” (p. 95). They felt that they were able to connect with and build a community with their students because they share many similar experiences on different topics of culture, linguistic backgrounds, immigration, and non-nativeness. NNESTs having shared experiences with their students was found to be a powerful tool for building rapport with students. They were also found to empathize with their language learner students because of their own language learning experiences (Amin, 2001; Au & Blake, 2003).

In addition, NNESTs cultural identities and experience across cultures also influence their teaching of language and cultural aspects within it. When NNESTs have had the experience of living in the culture of the target language they are teaching, it provides them with insider’s understanding of that culture. These NNESTs, now considered insiders to both cultures have what is considered a ‘hybrid’ identity (Kramsch, 2013). They interweave their enactment of knowledge and experience from both cultures throughout the lesson seamlessly. For example, Menard-Warwick (2013) reports on how local and global identities are negotiated through online chats between ELLs and tutors who were either NESTs (i.e. native English-speaking teachers) or NNESTs. The results indicated that the focus and scope of the interactions differed between those who were NNESTs and NESTs. Eugenia, who is a NNEST was able to shift the focus in many of the discussions to an international level, bringing in her own cultural experiences and relating them to other parts of the world. On the other hand, Dionne, who is a NEST, focused a great deal on local experiences, relating her local experiences to those of her students in their

local context. The results exemplify how teachers' identities influence how they teach and how their students perceive them. The NNESTs, having the hybridity to their identities, were able to shift between local and global context during the course of their instruction and interactions

Along the same lines, the gendered identities of the women in the study and related experiences across contexts may also influence their identities as teachers and allow for shared experiences. As females abroad, they were exposed to socializations of gender that were different from their own experiences back home. They may have also experienced othering and discrimination for wearing a *Hijab* (i.e. a headscarf or veil to cover the hair) (Lee & Rice, 2007). Whereas in Saudi Arabia they may choose to work on “Resolving the tension between the traditional cultural place of women in Saudi society and the significant contribution that women can and should make to the social and economic future of the Kingdom” (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013, p.8). Being the same gender as their students, these women are in the position of using their knowledge from both cultures to empower them, while at the same time respecting the local values and traditions.

Agency and Identity

Agency is a term widely used, yet hardly ever defined, in the literature of social identity. One reason could be that post-structuralists have differing views about what agency is and how it relates to identity (Ahearn, 2001). Coldron and Smith (1999) suggest that “The problems in defining the relationship between agency and the imposition of social forms is a key element in the theorization of social being” (p.713). In their view, it is the subjectivity of understanding ‘social beings’ that is essential when considering the meaning of agency. Regardless, Ahearn (2001) asserts that all definitions of agency revolve around social theory, and provides a basic

definition of agency, which is “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (p. 112). This is the definition I employ in the following discussion of agency.

This understanding of agency allows the discussion of the individual’s capacity to negotiate his/her identity and how they position themselves by or against the structures that exist in different contexts (Ahearn, 2001; Kinginger, 2004; Norton, 2013). Not only does it allow the varying and integrated sociocultural contexts over space and time to be taken into account, but also allows the distinction between *assigned identities* and *claimed identities* (Varghese et al., 2005). Assigned identity is that which is assigned by contexts and how society and people within those contexts perceive and label, and thus, impose an assigned identity on the individual. However, these assigned identities do not necessarily have to be the identity one is defined by because identities can also be claimed. Claimed identity is that which “one acknowledges or claims for oneself” (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 23). An individual can reject the assigned identities and use their agency to carve out the identities they desire, which then becomes their claimed identity. The example of Alice (Kinging, 2004) demonstrates how she managed to claim her identity as “the Queen of France” (p.236), a cultured and sophisticated speaker of French, in spite of the assigned identities of gender and social class that did not fit the identity she envisaged for herself.

This understanding of agency is relevant to how Saudi teachers are shaped by their past learning experiences and enact their agency to accommodate their new teaching contexts, shaping their identities as multilingual professionals. The Saudi female EFL teachers in this study are undoubtedly “endowed with human agency; they consciously and actively contribute to shaping their own learning experiences in which they may accept, accommodate, resist, or reject

the communities and practices they encounter” (Kingtoner, 2009, p.156). The choices they make in the classroom as teachers are ways in which they enact their agency, or “capacity to act”.

The following section is a discussion of experience and how they may also influence identities of EFL teachers and their classroom practices. Their study-abroad experiences are framed as transformative experiences that promote growth and self-change. Other possible influences on the participants’ experiences in the United States are discussed as well, such as being a Saudi student in U.S. institutions and U.S.-TESOL preparation programs.

Transformative Experiences

John Dewey, otherwise known as The Modern Father of Experiential Education, emphasized the need for experience in education, maintaining that experiences are essential for an individual’s ability to learn. He argues that meaningful experiences do not end at one single point in time. Rather, they connect past experience to the present, and present experience to the future, giving it the aspect of ‘continuity’. In his book, *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey states:

As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts. He does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue. (p. 44)

This aspect of experience is germane to considering the experiences of the Saudi women in the study and how their experiences as students in the U.S. define their identities as language instructors in Saudi Arabia.

Considering those characteristics of experience, I now turn to the theory of transformative experience for two reasons. First, it is a theory specific to adult learners, such as the participants in this study, because it assumes that one has constructed a certain view of the world before encountering an experience that redefines that understanding. Second, it adequately explains the transformations that the participants underwent abroad in their perspectives and identities.

Originally put forth by educational sociologist Jack Mezirow, Transformative Learning Theory is specific to adult learning. It states that, “learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 162). The fact that the theory is representative of adult learners is because by adulthood, the self has already been made, as well as opinions and perspectives about the world have been formed. However, it does not assume the “already-made” self and its opinions and perspectives are fixed. Instead, transformative learning occurs when these prior understandings are revised, either partially or completely. It allows adults to rethink what they know about the world or who they see themselves as. Thus, the theory captures the paradigm shifts that sometimes occur in adult learners (Taylor, 2007).

The following review of study-abroad literature is framed within the theory of transformative experience to explain the development of students and their identities within those programs, in addition to how those experiences promote shifting paradigms and gaining new understanding.

Studying Abroad as Transformative Experiences

It is well known that major life experiences can be transformative. L. A. Paul's (2014) book on *Transformative Experience* explains that certain life experiences can be both epistemically (or cognitively) and personally transformative. It is epistemically transformative because it offers new knowledge that was not available before, and personally transformative because it changes one's perspective and how a person views oneself. In the case of academic sojourners, the experience of living abroad offers the kinds of situations that they would not normally encounter in their home country, allowing them to create changes that constitute Transformative Experiences (Dunn et al., 2014; Taylor, 2007). For example, their encounters with other cultures offer them new knowledge about cultures that was not available to them before the experience (i.e. epistemic transformation). It also offers the possibility to change their view on other culture and become more interculturally aware (i.e. personal transformation). Furthermore, Perry, Stoner and Tarrant (2012) argue that "exposure to new places, cultures, and learning environments where a student's preconceived and established notions and beliefs are tested may act as the catalyst or impetus for bringing forth a transformative experience" (p.682). The fact that study abroad students or academic sojourners are exposed to new places, cultures and learning environments make that time auspicious for such transformations.

Several studies reveal that an academic sojourn has been proven to have a transformative effect on the sojourner. In a study about international students at a UK university, Brown (2009) found that they were able to benefit from being distanced from their home cultures by exhibiting self-discovery, increased independence, and a changed perspective on life. In regard to future teachers, Cho and Peter (2016) have found that TESOL preservice teachers who conducted their teaching practicum abroad showed growth both personally and professionally, as well as an

increased critical awareness to global issues related to English language teaching. These changes or transformations in awareness and identity are facilitated by the new and unfamiliar situations faced in the new culture that were not possible were they in their home country.

Moreover, for learners studying abroad, the context itself may provide a transformative potential for increasing one's cultural awareness. Several studies on teacher experiences abroad show that they gain increased cultural competence and intercultural skills (Dunn et al., 2014), especially when immersed in a different culture, which is the case with Saudi EFL teachers studying at U.S. universities. Marx and Moss (2011) propose that future teachers who are members of the dominant cultural (i.e. the cultural majority) in their home culture learn to have more empathy for diversity from their experiences being immersed in a different culture as an outsider. That is the case for many Saudis who are members of the majority group in their home country and may not have many opportunities to interact with diversity in its different forms. Many of them may encounter those experiences for the first time when coming to the United States. In Hall's (2013) dissertation on male Saudi students at an American university, the students admitted that it was the first time they had interacted with people from different religious beliefs as well as members of the opposite gender, and because of that, they have cultural awareness and experiences that they did not have before. Many of the participants in Hall's study expressed that these experiences changed their opinions from what they had before coming to the United States. As only one of the many examples in the study, one respondent says, "We are lucky for this program [KASP] that shows us the fact that okay we have a difference in religion but we are the same" (p.73). This comment demonstrates that the study abroad program offered Saudi students the opportunity not only to interact with others who differ in religion and culture, but to appreciate the similarities, as well. These studies suggest that for

Saudi EFL teachers who come from a mostly monolingual and monocultural society, being exposed to a global community promotes raising cultural and global awareness among Saudi youth. In fact, this is stated as one of the main objectives for learning English by K.S.A.'s Ministry of Education to allow for collaborations between countries.

In addition, the duration of the study abroad program influences how much personal change and intercultural awareness a person can gain from the experience (Gudykunst, 1979; Medina-López-Portillo, 2004). In a study comparing a seven-week and a sixteen-week study abroad program, Medina-López-Portillo (2004) finds that the program with the shorter duration was not enough for the participants to show intercultural competence. On the other hand, the group with the longer duration abroad were able to display “significant development of intercultural sensitivity” (p.191) in addition to a broader, deeper, and more critical understanding of culture. Yet, it remains that the previous studies in the field of study abroad programs have focused on short term or sojourn study abroad experiences, as opposed to Saudi scholarship students who spend the entire length of their degree studies abroad acquiring knowledge of education in a context different from that they will teach in. The fact that students in the KASP spend several years abroad for the duration of their studies, which can last anywhere from 2 to 8 years, suggests that they will have more opportunities that foster intercultural awareness and sensitivity.

These studies taken together also suggest that the KASP students' experiences as learners abroad and being immersed in a new culture and a second language environment offers them opportunities for personal and professional growth, greater intercultural awareness, critical awareness of global issues, increased empathy for language learners, and a changed perspective

on life. In the next section, I discuss literature on the experiences of Saudi students in the United States and implications to the study.

Saudis as International Students in the United States

According to Wenger (1998), the act of learning is a social practice through which identities are continually shaped and constructed. Therefore, the experiences of Saudi students in U.S. TESOL programs not only influence their knowledge in the field, but also their professional teacher identities are shaped by the transnational, transcultural, and translinguistic experience of shifting between the sociocultural contexts of the two countries. Barnawi (2009) notes that “there are remarkable linguistic and cultural diversities between the Saudi and American educational systems, so these diversities may have negative and /or positive impacts on Saudi students learning L2” (p. 63) making it worthwhile to investigate the effects those differences may have on participants’ identity development. This may be especially true for those who study in education programs and return to teach in Saudi educational contexts.

For Saudi women, there are several issues that are likely to influence their experiences during their time in the United States. As Hall notes, “Saudi students, like all other international students, find themselves suddenly in a minority group when studying in the United States, which is often a jarring experience, particularly for those in the majority group in their home country” (2013, p. 39). Besides the unpleasant experience of suddenly becoming a minority after being part of the majority, they are likely to endure more discrimination and othering than other international students who are from European backgrounds, due to their cultural Middle Eastern/Muslim heritage (Lee & Rice, 2007).

In a 2014 case study on Saudi international students in an adult ESL program at an American university, Giroir found that these students had to negotiate their identities through a

discourse of Islamophobia. In her study, she examined how the experiences of two male Saudi L2 learners were shaped by structures of marginalization and the ways that they negotiate these structures in their new communities. Giroir found that in the U.S. culture the onus was on the second language learners to get acquainted with the U.S. norms, language, and culture, but only when given a chance to do so. The issue with the learners in the study is that they were not always offered opportunities to be able to acquire the linguistic and cultural knowledge because they were often denied access to the native-speaker community due to “local biases around categories of gender, race, and linguistic ability” (2014, p. 36). Furthermore, the author finds the difficulty of negotiating participation in the second language community increased when the learners are laden with highly racialized backgrounds.

In addition, there are linguistic, cultural, social difficulties they endure. For example, there are issues of being language learners (Varghese et al., 2005), cultural differences and culture shock (Hall, 2013; Liu, 2001), difficulty with academic socialization (Barnawi, 2009), and being ascribed a racialized identity of someone to be fearful or weary of post 9/11 (Giroir, 2014; Rich & Troudi, 2006).

Experiences in U.S. TESOL Preparation Programs

TESOL programs, and particularly those in the United States, are often interdisciplinary and lack standardization, perhaps purposefully to serve diverse learners’ needs, but also potentially affecting the learning outcomes and quality of these programs. They come in a variety of packages: offering different degrees, tracks, formats, requirements, durations, and practicum options. In a book chapter titled *Diversity within TESOL Programs*, Selvi and Peercy (2016) do not intend the word “diversity” to describe the students, as it usually does, but the programs and their features in the field. The U.S. masters (MA) in TESOL programs offer a

variety of degrees (MA, MED, or MAT), from a variety of university departments (linguistics, English, or education), provide different tracks (K-12, certification, or non-certification), formats (in-person, online, or hybrid), durations (between 2 to 6 semesters), and practicum options. Yet, the name of the program, TESOL, does not capture all this diversity. Any combination of these features will result in a *TESOL* degree, regardless of the considerable differences within the programs.

In addition, most second language teacher education programs are found to draw heavily on methods from sociocultural theory (Burns & Richards, 2009) and are highly influenced by the surrounding contexts. Ramanathan (2002) argues that TESOL programs do not have set standards for teacher preparation, and their graduates exit the program with a set of skills not only influenced by the surrounding local community, but also by the department it is housed in. For example, in his study comparing two U.S. MA-*TESOL* programs, one on either coast, Ramanathan (2002) found that the local culture and department ideologies greatly influenced each program, the courses they offer, and the skills students graduate with. One university was more oriented towards educational issues, since it was situated within an education department, and it was found to focus heavily on immigrant issues, bilingualism, and K-12 settings, as they were dominant issues in the local area. At the other university, the courses focused heavily on rhetoric and composition because the program was housed in the department in charge of the ESL and English program, but because of the large international students/scholars in the area, there was also an emphasis on preparation for EFL teaching and higher education contexts. The knowledge, skills, and experiences of graduates from both MA-*TESOL* programs differ considerably, as “both programs face a significant challenge in providing appropriate preparation for the wide range of contexts in which their graduates will teach” (p.62). This means that

students enrolled in these programs – including Saudi students – receive an education that is relevant to the local community and environment, not necessarily the ones in which they will be working.

Seeing as more than 40% of students in U.S. TESOL programs are categorized as “international” or “nonnative English speakers” (Selvi & Peercy, 2016), it is important to consider the implications of the diversity and lack of systematicity within these programs. Taken together, these studies suggest that Saudi TESOL graduates will find themselves in new teaching contexts differing drastically from the ones they encountered and were prepared for during their studies, and without the knowledge and skills that are relevant to their Saudi EFL classrooms. Due to the change in the global trends in TESOL education and the increasing numbers of nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) worldwide, there is a great need for studies “concerning their participation in graduate TESOL programs in English-dominant countries as well as the impact their experiences in such programs have when they return to their home countries” (Crandall & Christison, 2016, p. 5).

For Saudi EFL teachers who graduate from U.S. TESOL preparation programs, the most obvious difference they face is that between ESL and EFL contexts. Kinginger (2004) summarizes the differences by describing the learner in those contexts:

Second language learners are people who are learning the language of the communities where they live, and are assumed to have both stronger motivations and more access to the language than foreign language learners. Foreign language learners are assumed to be people who are studying a language outside of the communities where it is used. Such learners are further assumed to have little access to the language and to harbor

instrumental motivations more closely related to school success than to changes in social identity or lived experience. (p. 221)

The methods that most TESOL preparation programs in second language contexts prepare teachers to teach in those contexts, while not giving enough attention to foreign language contexts.

However, given the previous discussion and understanding of teacher identity and agency, as well as the extent of certain experiences to be transformative, TESOL preparation programs do not account for all teaching practices. Regardless of the relevance and coherence of the knowledge learned through TESOL preparation program and the enthusiasm for applying that knowledge, formal knowledge is not the only source from which EFL teachers inform their practice because there is more to teaching than meets the eye. The profession of teaching “is an intensely human and hugely complex activity that cannot be reduced to a matter of ‘skills and strategies’” (Nah, 2016, p. 151). Especially in the field of language teaching, where there are issues of culture, context, politics, and power in addition to the issues of learners and teachers themselves, such as who they are and what they believe (Varghese et al., 2005), language teachers cannot be viewed as “technicians who needed merely to “apply” the right methodology in order for the learners to acquire the target language” (p. 24). Accordingly, teachers themselves— their identities and experiences— have a great influence on how they teach, as they cannot remove their subjectivity from their teaching.

Summary

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, it is evident that Saudi EFL HE instructors who are U.S.-TESOL alumni may have been influenced by: (a) their own learning of the English language either locally or abroad; (b) their experiences living in the United States; (c) their

identities as individuals and as teachers; (d) their experiences being international students and second language learners in U.S. classrooms; and (e) their experiences in their respective U.S.-TESOL programs. As all of these factors combined interact with local Saudi EFL teaching contexts, it is imperative to examine in what ways these experiences and influences interplay with the contexts in which they occur.

In addition, it is important to consider how U.S.-TESOL educated EFL instructors might influence the scene of English language education in Saudi Arabia. Now with more globally educated EFL teachers, they are faced with a question of not only *what to teach* but also *how to teach it*. During their time studying abroad, they have encountered multiple teaching styles and modes of communication and have learned about several theories and language teaching methods in a multicultural, and sometimes multilingual, environment. The question remains: How do Saudi EFL instructors synthesize these global and local experiences in their everyday teaching?

In one of the few studies that explored this issue, Barnawi and Le Ha (2015) investigate two Saudi college EFL instructors who received their graduate degrees abroad in the United States and the United Kingdom. The instructors in the study described their Western graduate education experiences as a “one size fits all” experience that wasn’t culturally relevant to their teaching back home. These authors take on a critical perspective in their examination and explore implicit notions of power in knowledge making, criticizing Western TESOL programs of dominating the scene and prioritizing Western knowledges over local ones. Their concern is that “international students may unintentionally transfer those ethnocentric-oriented pedagogic practices to their contexts” (p. 263) contributing to their own “self-marginalization” without questioning the assumptions behind those pedagogic practices. Still, there is an absence of

research on the experiences and identities of Saudis who study abroad and return to work in the field of language education.

On the other hand, perhaps the question is better answered by Kramsch (2014) who states that, “FL [foreign language] educators seem to be confronted now with the task of having to teach two kinds of culture: a global culture of communication for the sake of communication and local cultures of shared values” (p. 302). This observation suggests the appropriateness of a *glocal* or *hybrid* cultural model that incorporates global and local cultures to fit the values and practices of the context (Alfahadi, 2012). Furthermore, with the move of HE institutes around the world towards internationalization, it is necessary to consider how the international HE culture influences the local HE in Saudi Arabia, which manifests itself in the curriculum and teaching taking place, including EFL.

Overall, the implications from the previously mentioned studies suggest that Saudis who graduate from U.S. TESOL programs will return to their home country’s EFL teaching contexts with cultural and educational experiences that will enrich and inform their teaching and classroom experiences, regardless of whether the “knowledge” itself is relevant to the context. Thus, the current study investigate these questions of how their current teaching practices and teacher identities are influenced by their experiences that resulted from a U.S.-TESOL degree.

Chapter 3: METHODS

Introduction

The main research question informing this study is: How do Saudi female EFL instructors perceive the outcomes of their study abroad experiences and how these experiences inform their teaching of English in Saudi Arabia? Other questions that guide the study are: How have the lived cultural, linguistic, and academic experiences of these individuals transformed their teaching and professional identities? And what is the relevance and application of those experiences in K.S.A. classrooms? In this chapter, I will discuss the research methods I used in this study. It includes a detailed description of the research design, participants, data collection tools, data analysis methods, research ethics, and trustworthiness.

Research Design

To address these questions, this study is designed as a sequential exploratory mixed-methods study, beginning with a qualitative in-depth exploration of the experiences via interviews and observations, which then informs a survey to understand the phenomenon's prevalence among individuals with similar experiences and to perform constant comparative analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The reason for choosing this mixed-methods design for my study is that it is valuable for building knowledge; that is, a mixed-methods design is especially useful when the area of interest has not been well-researched because it aims to “gain information about different *aspects* of the phenomena” (Maxwell, 2013, p.102). A mixed-method design allows the data from all sources, qualitative and quantitative, to be complementary and expansive (Maxwell, 2013). That is, the observation and interviews will help generate meaning and create understanding of the experiences that the participants undergo, and the survey will

complement those findings by expanding the scope for a broader understanding of the pervasiveness of the themes extracted by the qualitative inquiry.

In addition, the problem addressed in this study is multi-layered. At the individual level, I aim to explore and understand the extent to which female Saudi EFL instructors perceive that their experiences living and learning abroad have been transformational to their current teaching practices and identities. Whereas, at the broader level of curriculum and practice, I aspire to shed light on the transferability and application of U.S. TESOL and TEFL programs in the Saudi EFL context. Thus, the “multi-layered and multi-dimensional conceptualizations of the research problem, [...] leads to collecting and analysing data related to different aspects or dimensions of the research problem,” which is best achieved by a multiple methods design that can produce “more integrative inferences” (Riazi, 2016, p. 34).

The first stage of the study is a qualitative exploration in which I seek to understand the experiences of Saudi female instructors who teach EFL in a first-year program at a large Saudi Arabian University. While almost all of the public university campuses are segregated by gender, with males and females having separate buildings and learning spaces, 63% of university students are female (Onsman, 2011). The main data source in this phase are the participant interviews, supplemented by observations and classroom artifacts. The data from the first part of the study will be analyzed for patterns and reoccurring themes that will be used to inform the second phase.

The second stage of the study is a larger scale follow-up survey investigating the themes and patterns extracted from the results of the qualitative data analysis in the first phase. The purpose is to explore the phenomena further on a broader level. The findings from this broad scale survey will expand the understanding of this topic and inform the literature in teacher

preparation and education, specifically in TESOL and TEFL, about how teachers use experiences gained from U.S. educational contexts may be applied to other Saudi classrooms and contexts.

Phase One: Qualitative Exploration

Research Context

For the purpose of studying the influence of U.S.-TESOL education programs on Saudi EFL teachers, it is more productive to turn to HE settings, rather than K-12 settings, for two reasons. First, most of the faculty employed at Saudi public universities are offered scholarships to study abroad, usually in the U.S. or U.K. Second, many of the Saudis who study abroad in the KASP return to pursue jobs at Saudi universities, for which quality applicants who graduated from top-ranking international universities are sought. Thus, there are more opportunities to investigate this issue in HE than in K-12 general education classrooms. In addition, the first year of most universities in Saudi Arabia consists of an intensive English program in which the students spend between 12 and 15 hours per week learning English for communicative purposes to simulate a temporary immersion in the English language, an immersion that instructors who have studied abroad would be familiar with and that would enable them to later apply their knowledge and experiences to.

Participants

The type of study calls for a purposive sampling approach to recruit participants in order to address the research questions. The participants include individuals who met the following criteria: 1. Saudi female, 2. Holds a graduate level degree in TESOL or TEFL from the United States, and 3. Teaches English as a foreign language (EFL) at a Saudi university. The recruitment of participants was carried out through convenience sampling and snowball sampling. I first

reached out to the people immediately available to me through my social networks who fit this description. I asked them if they would like to take part in my study and assured them that it would not affect our relationship if they decided not to participate. I then asked them to forward the invitation along with my contact information to other Saudi EFL instructors who fit the description and who might be interested. I was then contacted by more participants who volunteered to take part in the study.

Ultimately, the interview and observation data derive from ten female Saudi instructors of English in K.S.A. higher education (HE) institutions who have sojourned to the United States to obtain a master's degree in a major related to the teaching of English. Their sojourn abroad lasted between 1.5 to 6 years in which most of them practiced teaching English to international students in the U.S. Only half of the participants had some experience teaching before joining the scholarship program, whereas the other half joined soon after graduating from an undergraduate program or high school in Saudi Arabia. At the time of the study, all the participants were working as English as foreign language (EFL) instructors at a public HE in Saudi Arabia, where they have been teaching in the first-year program between 1 to 8 years. I decided to exclude an eleventh participant's data in the analysis because she had not experienced any schooling in Saudi Arabia before teaching there and had no point of reference for comparing before and after studying abroad. However, her interview offered information about the context and the curriculum that proved to be valuable for my understanding. This resulted in a total of 10 participants whose data were used in the analysis.

All the participants completed a master's degree program in TESOL or English Language Education from different universities in the U.S. In addition, 8 out of the 10 participants studied in an ESL program in the U.S., either as part of their program requirements or to prepare for

graduate school. One participant also earned her bachelor's degree from the U.S. They lived between 1.5 and 6 years, with an average of 3.5 years, in varying states, often moving from one state to another to pursue a certain program or university. These participants are bilingual speakers of Arabic as their first language and English as their second language. They are highly proficient in English due to their profession as English language instructors, as well as their residence in the U.S. during the time of their studies. An overview of the participants' profiles is provided with the results in the following chapter (Table 1).

It is worth mentioning that participants in both the qualitative and quantitative components of the study will be referred to as instructors, not teachers, because of the distinction between the two terms in the Saudi contexts. Those who teach in schools are teachers and those who teach at universities are instructors (for lack of a better English translation for the Arabic term used) if they hold a bachelor's or master's degree, doctors if they hold a doctorate degree, and professors if they have achieved full professorship.

Furthermore, measures were taken to protect the participants' confidentiality. Seeing as the participants are part of a relatively small community of TESOL instructors in higher education who are alumni of U.S. graduate programs, I de-identified all the data used in the study. I retracted any references to the names of universities and cities abroad, their workplace, any proper names mentioned, or any mention of a situation that can be led back to them. I also will not be using the participants' initials. Instead, I will be referring to them in pseudonyms that are completely random based on some the most common Arabic names.

Data Collection

For the qualitative inquiry, data from multiple sources were used to gain a holistic perspective into the participants' lived experiences and ensure that the answers to the research

questions are grounded in the experiences of the participants inside and outside the classroom. I received expert reviews from my five faculty committee members and the members of the University's Internal Review Board (IRB) on my design and interview questions prior to initiating data collection. As a main source of data, I conducted interviews in the form of narrative inquiry to understand participants' experiences, both in the past and present, in relation to social contexts in which they have occurred (Clandinin, 2006). Then, data from observations and documents were collected to supplement the interviews in order to understand the experience and gain more perspective.

Interviews

For exploring and understanding the participants' experiences, I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews that lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Because the interview questions were semi-structured, they allowed for the probing of issues the study is concerned with, while at the same time allowing the freedom to follow up on new insights that arose during the conversation. All the participants agreed to have the interviews audio recorded.

Interview procedures. The interviews took place in a setting suggested by the participant, which were mainly at their workplace or at a quiet café. I began by sharing my background with the participants, which they did in turn. After becoming familiar and more comfortable with each other, I began the interview by going over the oral consent and answering any questions the participants had. After they agreed, I began the interview, asking the participant's permission for audio-recording. Although the participants were free to reply in Arabic or English, most participants chose to speak in English and insert Arabic phrases sporadically throughout the interview.

The interview was guided by a protocol intended to build good rapport with participants as well as explore variability and achieve deep insights. To achieve this, I avoided asking dichotomous questions, and instead begin my questions with “how” and “to what extent,” in order to elicit more nuanced responses (Maxwell, 2013; Mackey & Gass, 2016). The questions in the protocol probed participants’ prior learning and work experiences, learning abroad and cultural experiences, teaching practices influenced by U.S.-TESOL programs, and how their learning and living abroad influenced their teaching and is reflected in their present classroom interactions (See interview guide in appendix A). These questions focused on understanding how teachers’ past learning and living-abroad experiences influence their current teaching and how their understanding of EFL teaching has changed due these experiences. They also probed Saudi EFL teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which their learning and knowledge in U.S. ESL contexts transfer to Saudi EFL contexts. After concluding the interview, I thanked the participants and asked them to contact me if they had any further questions or thought of something they wanted to add.

Observations

Observations were extremely valuable to this study, as they helped capture the context and critical interactions within those contexts (Patton, 2015). For this study, I conducted four classroom observations that shed light on how participants’ prior experiences unfold and are drawn upon in the classroom. This was vital to understanding the participants as a whole, not as separate from their communities, because “They are always in relation, always in a social context” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2).

Observation Procedures. Following the interview, I asked the participants if I could visit their classroom to observe some of the points they talked about in their interviews. They

were assured that the observation was only to understand their experiences better, not to evaluate their teaching skills; however, they did not have to consent to still be included in the study. Four participants agreed to my visit. Due to cultural sensitivity, the observations were not audio- or video- recorded, as it is considered inappropriate in the Saudi context. Therefore, I relied on extensive observation notes, in which I described the detailed progression of the lesson. In addition, I used an observation protocol (Mackey & Gass, 2016) containing a list of items to be vigilant about while taking notes (See observation scheme in appendix B).

The items in the observation scheme are derived from the literature above about prevalent characteristics of Saudi EFL classrooms, U.S. TESOL curriculum, U.S. educational contexts, and the sharing of personal experiences during instruction. The protocol was divided into three main areas: a. Methods and teaching style (e.g., using Arabic, focusing on grammar, student discussion, etc.), b. Cultural components (e.g. examples from U.S. or K.S.A. cultures, authentic materials, attitudes towards culture, etc.), and c. personal experience (experiences as learners, experiences abroad, sharing stories, etc.). It is neither simply a checklist nor does it make any assumptions about whether the observed practices are effective or ineffective. Rather, each item on the list is accompanied by a comment section where I recorded notes of activities related to the highlighted areas, thus reducing the chances of lost opportunities.

Collection of Artifacts

The artifacts collected were copies of classroom activities prepared by the instructors and given to the students during my observation visits. These documents were shared with me during observations and enriched my understanding of the activities that took place during the classroom visits.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis was a continuous and reflective process throughout the entire study, in which I constantly revised themes and research questions as new information emerged. To begin, all the interview data were transcribed verbatim in the language that was used by the participants. I took extensive notes throughout the transcription and recorded any insights and connections that arose as I was initially transcribing. In addition, to maintain the authorship and authenticity of the language, codeswitching, linguistic errors, pauses, laughter, and discourse markers (e.g. like, I mean, and you know) were preserved in the transcription, as they add to the meaning conveyed by the participants.

Transcription and Translation

An important consideration in the context of this study is the language used in the interviews. Cross-cultural interviews may pose a challenge when the researcher and the participants speak different languages. Because I share the same cultural and linguistic backgrounds as the participants, they were comfortable switching between Arabic and English during the interviews in ways they could express themselves best, which served the purpose of gaining a deep understanding of their experiences. In transcribing, I was faced with the need to represent the participants' own language and capture the nuances in meaning in which they assign their experiences. As Temple and Young (2014) point out, translation risks potential semantic loss, as well as the loss of embedded cultural meaning. However, they acknowledge that there no best solution, except for the researcher being transparent about the translation and transition issues. Therefore, the language used by the participants was preserved in the transcription. Even though the interviews were mostly in English, most participants codeswitched to Arabic whenever it was relevant to the meaning or the experiences. The transcripts were originally written in two languages, English and Arabic. However, during the

coding process, the data management software, NVIVO, did not work well for coding in two languages. Therefore, I revised the transcripts to transliterate the Arabic words into English characters and translated them into their English meanings in brackets to show that it is my own insertion (Patton, 2015). For example, the phrase (ان شاء الله) was transliterated as (inshallah) and the English translation was inserted in brackets immediately following the transliteration [God willing]. That said, one interview took place almost completely in Arabic. I followed the guidance provided by Regmi, Naidoo, and Pilkington (2010), who summarize best practices in translating qualitative data. They suggest that interviews are transcribed verbatim, translated into the target language, and sent to two independent bilinguals to compare both texts until the inconsistencies are resolved. Thus, I first transcribed the interview in Arabic, then translated it to English. However, I kept words that have no English equivalent in its Arabic transliteration, as explained above. An example of such is the word *mashallah*, which when translated literally means “God wills”, but in context indicates praise. Both Arabic and English transcripts (de-identified) were sent to be reviewed by two female Saudi professional colleagues who are Ph.D. candidates in the United States and fluent speakers of Arabic and English. After reaching a consensus on the accuracy of the translation, the English version was coded to be consistent with the coding of the rest of the interviews.

Coding

After completing the interviews and their transcriptions, I uploaded the data onto the program NVIVO 12 to help manage the data and organize the themes. I inductively coded the interview data using the open coding method, which suggests that the researcher be open to the findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I approached the transcripts without a preconceived hypothesis or looking to find information to fit my predictions. I began the analysis process by

listening to each interview again while reading the raw data on the transcript so that the participants' emotions and reactions were not left out of the analysis. Each line was coded according to the topics or themes discussed. Many times, more than one theme was coded for each sentence. I created categories for what seemed to be most prominent, and compared them within, as well as between, categories to extract themes that emerged from the data. As patterns began to become clearer in the interview data, I compared the themes and patterns to the observation notes, trying to recognize how they appeared in their natural contexts. Thus, the analyses slowly moved from *discovery* to *verification* (Guba, 1978) as themes begin to emerge in the recursive analysis of the data.

To further establish the validity and reliability of the coding, after I completed the initial coding of the data, I returned to the first documents that I coded to ensure that they were consistent with the codes in the later documents when more themes emerged. For example, in the earlier coding of the data, the strong relationship between participants and their students were all coded as 'rapport'. However, as the analysis progressed, aspects of the relationship were coded into more specific distinguishing characteristics of the relationship, such as 'empathy' when the participants felt like they could relate to the students, or as 'humor' when they talked about making the students laugh and telling jokes. Throughout this process, I regularly revisited the literature and academic experts to confirm my findings and help explain the emerged themes.

Phase Two: Quantitative Survey

Survey

After completing the qualitative data collection and analysis, I created a survey with items that resulted from themes and patterns extracted from the interviews and observation data

related to teaching practices and approaches. The survey was distributed to female Saudi EFL instructors at HE institutions who also completed their graduate education in the United States. Its purpose was to measure perceptions and attitudes towards the themes extracted in the interviews and observations to understand the extent and pervasiveness of the issues and investigate broader implications of the phenomena under investigation. The survey was distributed electronically and contained 21 items, with the perceptions and attitudes measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It also included two open-ended questions for the participants to add their input in their own words. See Appendix C.

Survey Procedures

In creating the items on my survey, I followed the advice of Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), who maintain that the items on the questionnaire achieve construct validity when they are based on previous research, exploratory interviews, and personal experience, all of which I included in building the survey. In addition, the survey was piloted and tested with five colleagues who are in the field of TESOL: two native speakers of English, and three who are from the target population. Feedback on the readability and intended outcome of each item was taken into consideration in the revision of the survey. The pilot test informed the changes in survey design and rewording of a couple of items to make them clearer to the participants.

Survey Recruitment and Distribution

The survey was distributed electronically using Qualtrics, a web-based software, that allows the distribution of the survey anonymously and to many participants. The link to the survey was distributed via email, social media platforms (e.g. WhatsApp and Facebook), and personal networks, all of which either Saudi scholarship students or Saudi EFL instructors held membership. In addition, those who took the survey were asked to forward the link to a potential

participant who may be interested in taking the survey. The total number of survey responses were 87. However, after the removing the data of those who do not fit the participant criteria as well as the missing and incomplete responses, the final number of completed surveys was 35. The data was analyzed using SPSS 26 data analysis software. Single survey items were analyzed for frequencies, mean scores and percentages.

Survey Respondents

The respondents to the survey who fit the description of the population described in this study (i.e. female EFL instructors in HE who have completed U.S. language education program). The respondents who did not fit the description (e.g. male, non-U.S. sojourn, or not in HE) were removed from the data analysis, so as to have the quantitative dataset comparable to the qualitative dataset. The participants represented in the survey data ($N=35$) spent between 1 to 8 years in the U.S. ($M=3.46$ years), earning master's ($N=32$) and doctoral ($N=5$) degrees in varying English language education fields (TESOL= 21, TESL=2, Applied Linguistics= 8, Linguistics= 6, English Language education=2, Literacy, Culture & Language=1, and TESOL & Linguistics). Furthermore, several of the participants were enrolled in an ESL language program prior to commencing their graduate studies ($N=9$). Their total years teaching experience ranges from 2 to 15 years ($M = 7.97$ years), with 0 to 8 years ($M = 2.97$ years) prior to their academic sojourn, and 1 to 11 years ($M = 5.0$ years) after their return. The results of the survey are descriptive in nature and correspond to trends in attitudes towards statements that capture the themes derived from the results of the qualitative interviews and observations. The results are used to supplement the qualitative data and are discussed within the themes in the following chapter.

Research Ethics

This study comprises largely qualitative methods that rely on human interactions in the form of interviews and observations. In dealing with human subjects who are shaped by different factors in relation to others in the context of place and time, ethics becomes not about claiming neutrality, but about “negotiation, respect, mutuality and openness to multiple voices” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 52). In the following sections, I will discuss my positionality as well as the steps I undertook to reduce reactivity and bias.

Researcher Positionality

My positionality as a Saudi female graduate student in a U.S. TESOL program provides me with both an emic and etic perspective. An emic perspective provides an insiders’ view for understanding the realities and perceptions of what the experiences mean to those involved and how they interpret them. An etic perspective, on the other hand, represents the outsiders’ view, such as when the researcher applies her own knowledge and experience in order to try to understand the realities of her participants. My emic perspective comes from being a Saudi female member of the same community of EFL instructors, speaking their native language, and having similar experiences studying abroad and working at a Saudi higher education institution, whereas my etic perspective comes from being a researcher and current graduate student in the United States, as well as possibly being an unfamiliar observer.

Maxwell (2013) stresses the importance of the relationships between the researcher and the participants, referring to them as *gatekeepers* that can either “facilitate or interfere with” a study (p. 90). These relationships help the researcher gain access to the participants and the research setting. In addition, building good rapport between the researcher and participants is conducive to participants speaking more honestly and personally about their experiences. I believe that both my positionality and relationship with the participants were valuable and

essential for carrying out the qualitative aspects (i.e. observations and interviews) in the study, providing me with access to the participants through shared social networks and allowing participants to open up to me and speak candidly about their experiences because I understand many of the things that they have been through. Nonetheless, I took extra measures to ensure that my positionality and relationship with participants did not result in reactivity and bias.

Reactivity

Reactivity refers to how the participants react to or are influenced by the presence of the researcher. That means that my role as the researcher in this qualitative inquiry is extremely important because I am not only *conducting* research, but also am *part* of the research because of how my presence influences the participants and settings, in addition to my understanding and interpretation of situations (Maxwell, 2013). To minimize the effects of reactivity, I stated before each interview and observation that I am not looking for a specific way of teaching, that my research is not interested in right, wrong, or best practices in teaching, and that there is no right or wrong way to answer interview questions. I also emphasized that I am interested in learning about their experiences and what their daily lives in the classroom are like in a descriptive, not prescriptive, way. These steps were in effort to reduce the *halo effect*, whereby participants act or respond in ways they believe the researcher wants them to. In addition, I built a good rapport with the participants, which helped the participants feel less intimidated and more comfortable around me.

Researcher Bias. Researcher bias is “the selection of data that fit the researcher’s existing theory or preconceptions and the selection of data that ‘stand out’ to the researcher” (Maxwell, 2013, p.124). To avoid biasing the study, I entered the research site holding no a priori theories and preconceptions. Although I had some background knowledge based on the

literature and my own experiences, I remained open to the participants' voices and actual experiences they were communicating. One way I demonstrated my openness was by using open-ended questions in my interviews, as opposed to leading questions or questions that carry assumptions within them. For example, I asked "how has studying in the U.S. influenced your teaching?" instead of asking "how has studying in the U.S. benefited your teaching?". The first question allows for exploration of more options that could be positive or negative, whereas the second question is steering the conversation in a certain direction to describe the positive aspects only. Thus, I tried to allow participants to voice their experiences without using language that led them in a certain direction. In turn, I was responsive to the data (Huber & Clandinin, as cited in Clandinin, 2006), meaning that I responded to their narratives and experiences with follow-up questions that helped me understand them more fully.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, validity and reliability measures differ from those used in quantitative studies and are addressed through the corresponding concept of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), established in credibility (vs. internal validity), transferability (vs. generalizability), dependability (vs. reliability), and confirmability (vs. objectivity). Since the study employs multiple qualitative collection methods, I attended to the following guidelines to achieve the highest level of truthfulness possible.

Credibility in this study was asserted by collecting enough data in multiple contexts (i.e. interviews, observations, and survey responses), as suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (2003), to ensure that the findings are not specific to teaching one group of students or teaching situation. This former approach could also be referred to triangulation, more specifically methodological triangulation in which multiple methods and measures are used in the investigation of a

phenomenon (Mackey & Gass, 2016). Triangulation of methods increases the probability of reducing researcher bias and provides adequate evidence to support the study's conclusions (Johnson, 1991).

Dependability and confirmability of the study lies in confirming that the interpretations are not misconstrued, in addition to the findings being consistent with and supported by the data collected. I strived in my efforts to confirm that my interpretations of the data were not misconstrued and that the findings are consistent with and supported by evidence in the data collected. Therefore, I verified my interpretations with my academic advisors throughout the analysis process. In addition, the results present rich data to support the interpretations. I provide detailed excerpts of the participants' own words to allow them to tell their stories. I also present thick description of classroom scenes from observation data that enable the reader to get a clear picture of the experiences and ground the conclusions (Maxwell, 2013).

Finally, Transferability of the study refers to the capacity of its findings to be transferred to similar contexts. This is determined by providing a thick description of the research context and detailed conclusions, so that others may decide on its transferability to other contexts. Thus, the thick and detailed description of the research context and results, as discussed above, in addition to the detailed methodology, allow for others in similar situations to determine its transferability to their research contexts.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This study explores the experiences of Saudi female instructors who have lived and studied in the United States (U.S.) before returning to teach English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A), aiming to understand how their lived experiences in the U.S. transformed their language teaching identities and their approach to teaching young Saudi women in K.S.A. What I mean by the term “lived experience” in the context of the study is the participants’ active participation in those experiences; their thoughts, emotions, actions, and reflections both during and after their occurrences.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the narratives of these participants in relation to the research questions. That is: (a) the accounts of U.S.-educated Saudi EFL teachers at a K.S.A. institution of HE on their study-abroad experiences; (b) how their lived cultural, linguistic, and academic experiences transformed their teaching and professional identities; and (c) the relevance and application of those experiences in K.S.A. classrooms. It will also examine the narratives of each participant in relation to one another for areas in which they converge, as well as areas in which they diverge and how these similarities and differences may be accounted for in the literature. Furthermore, the results of the survey are provided to support the areas related specifically to teaching, as those relating to experiences are best understood through their personal stories explored through interviews. As a result, three central narratives were identified and discussed below.

Overview of Participants

Table 1. *Participant Profiles*

Name	Undergraduate Studies	Teaching Experience Before U.S.	Years in the U.S.	Graduate Program	Teaching Experience in U.S.	Teaching Experience After U.S.
Halah	K.S.A.- English language	No	4 years	MA- TESOL	Yes, K-12 ESL practicum	4 years
Mona	K.S.A.- English literature and linguistics	No	Approx. 4 years	MA- TESOL	Yes, K-12 ESL practicum	3 years
Joud	U.S.- BA in English	No	6 years	MA - Language Studies in Education	Yes, volunteer at ESL Program	3 years
Bayan	K.S.A.- English language and literature	No	Approx. 3 years	MA- TESOL	Yes, K-12 ESL practicum	8 years
Shahad	K.S.A.- English language	No	Approx. 4 years	MA- TESOL	Yes, ESL practicum	3 years
Rawan	K.S.A.- Language Arts and Literature	Yes, 1 year	1.5 years	MA- TESOL	Yes, ESL practicum	4 years
Ghadah	K.S.A.- English language, literature, and linguistics	Yes, 2 years	3 years	MA- TESOL	Yes, ESL practicum	4 years
Lailah	K.S.A.- English Literature	Yes, 4 years	2 years	MA- TESOL	Yes, ESL practicum, volunteering	4 years

Farah	K.S.A.- English language	Yes, 1 semester	3 years	MA- TESOL	No	4 years
Jumana	K.S.A.- English language	Yes, 3 years	5 years	MA- TESOL	Yes, GTA with professor	1 year

Note. All the names in the study are pseudonyms.

Themes and Patterns

The following sections delineate the findings according to overarching themes and the patterns most prevalent in the Saudi women's narratives. Each of the themes and patterns will be discussed separately and evidenced by excerpts from the participants' interviews. The analysis resulted in three broad themes and fifteen patterns underlying those themes:

- 1. Theme 1 – Transformative Experiences:** Being a Saudi woman living and studying in the United States provided the participants with experiences that were transformative for them.

Pattern 1.1– New and unfamiliar situations created opportunities for the participants to redefine and discover themselves.

Pattern 1.2– Intercultural contact led the participants to increased intercultural awareness and open-mindedness.

Pattern 1.3 – U.S. values of autonomy and different gender expectations developed a newfound independence in the participants.

Pattern 1.4 – Facing challenges allowed the participants to gain resilience and empowerment.

Pattern 1.5 – Professional opportunities offered to the participants in the United States increased their agency as professionals.

Pattern 1.6 – Interactions with U.S. Professors provided occasions for the participants to re-evaluate their roles as language instructors.

- 2. Theme 2 – Humanizing Education:** the U.S.-sojourn experiences and new understandings of the world shift the Saudi women towards a more “humanistic” approach in their classroom teaching and their relationship with students in Saudi Arabia.

Pattern 2.1 – Participants prioritize building a relationship with their students.

Pattern 2.2 – Participants show empathy and compassion towards their students.

Pattern 2.3 – Participants use humor in their classrooms.

Pattern 2.4 – Participants show their students kindness and humility.

Pattern 2.5 – Participants encourage their students’ personal growth.

Pattern 2.6 – Participants consciously take on the role of learning facilitators with their students.

Pattern 2.7 – Participants redefine their roles in the classroom as mothers, sisters, and friends.

- 3. Theme 3 – Creating a Third Space: The Practice of English Teaching in Saudi**

Arabia: Using their international experiences and new-gained perspectives, as well as their local K.S.A. knowledge, the Saudi women created a hybrid “third space” in their EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia.

Pattern 3.1 – Participants use a hybrid of local and U.S. teaching approach.

Pattern 3.2 – Participants become a bridge to link the cultural gap between local and global cultures and languages.

“Transformative” Experiences

Paul’s (2014) Transformative Experience theory states that when faced with a new and different situation, the individual will learn something that he/she could not have learned otherwise, causing a transformation in what a person knows (i.e. epistemic transformation) and who the person is as an individual, including beliefs, values, and perspectives he/she has (i.e. personal transformation). Thus, the term *transformative experience* discussed throughout this chapter is operationalized as situations and events where participants were faced with new and unfamiliar experiences that challenged their previous knowledge and experience of the world and resulted in a paradigm shift for the participants, related to their knowledge and perspectives, as well as their identities.

Given that the Saudi women were immersed in a new country, culture, and learning environment, their “preconceived and established notions and beliefs are tested, [and] may act as the catalyst or impetus for bringing forth a transformative experience” (Perry, Stoner, & Tarrant, 2012, p. 682). Participants indicate that such transformational experiences led to sustained change in how these women view their identity as a female Saudi teacher of English. They imply discovering who they truly are abroad, becoming and feeling more empowered, independent, resilient, openminded and confident in their abilities as a result of their experiences. They also

report having changed their perspective on life. Furthermore, those changes were attributed to the experiences they lived through, not the studies or degree they attained.

Redefining Identities and Self-discovery

Being in a new country, not only as a visitor or a tourist, but as someone who is living their everyday life means that one will be exposed to novel experiences that they would not encounter in their home country. Among the new experiences brought up most often during the interviews were experiencing new cultures, a new academic system, and co-education.

Joud and Shahad spoke about their beginnings, comparing the experience to American movies: something familiar that they have seen on TV, yet foreign and distant like it is being lived by someone else. Joud says, “We don’t travel because we’re a big family... When I went there, it was something just like a movie...It was a shock to me. I loved it; it was a good shock. I enjoyed everything.” Shahad also describes her early days at a language program in the United States as “A totally new experience” and adds:

You have different cultures. It wasn't so shocking for me because I went to the States. I used to watch American movies, read about cultures. I'm totally open to cultures. So, it wasn't like *wow* or something strange to me. No, I was fine with a little bit of culture shock. Things you're not used to seeing, like, you know, different things.

The various first-time experiences the participants went through during their time studying and living in the United States played a considerable role in the participants redefining their identity and reshaping their personalities. All the participants in the study reported changes in who they are and how they saw themselves as individuals and professionals after their studies in the U.S. Brown and Graham (2009) attribute changes in identity to “difference brought by the

multicultural setting and of the geographical and emotional distance from the home environment” (p.90).

For example, Rawan depicts how the experience changed her “as a mother, and as a wife, and as a teacher and as a human.” She associates the changes with being away from home saying, “When I got further away, I was able to see things in a different perspective.” Along similar lines, Mona talked about how the experience had transformed her:

Honestly, I keep telling my mom until now: I went to America not to study masters, not to earn a degree. I went to America to reshape my personality, reshape my emotions, my wishes, reshape my everything, my dreams, my way of thinking. You can’t imagine even the way I’m talking to my kids, there is a radical change in my personality. Different Mona.

Rawan shares her perspective, saying:

The experiences there [in the U.S.] — it’s a multicultural environment. I learned a lot on the personal level and of course career-wise; educational level, experience; I met a lot of people. So, of course it’s added a lot to me. It changed me a lot as a teacher and as a person and as a friend. It made me stronger.

Mona’s personality, in her view, was “radically” changed, a transformation brought on by her exposure to different cultures. Similarly, Shahad says, “I’m totally changed. Even my personality. I’m not me. I went there [to the U.S.] a shy little girl, who doesn’t know anything, and now I would say I could do a lot of things, to be honest.” She adds, “it’s a new me in everything, in every area. Professionally, teaching at a University, and personally, how to deal

with others and everything. It changed me in all the areas. I wouldn't say one area or another, no."

Another way the experiences abroad were transformative is that the novel context brought along with it challenges and opportunities, and even a different worldview that created a space for the participants to learn things about themselves that they were not aware of previously. The process of self-discovery is a common part of study-abroad experiences in which the sojourner discovers "the unconscious component of self that can only become conscious through experience, dialogue, and reflection" (Brown & Graham, 2009, p.90). On this, Halah explains more:

The things that I experienced when I lived there [in the U.S.] I discovered a different personality. I discovered a different personality that I have never seen in myself. I discovered my weaknesses and my strengths. They showed me all the things I can do. I'm able to create, to invent, to..— I felt in which areas I can belong. This thing is what I'm also working on with my kids: "Don't say no I can't do this. Try. Don't say you can't, just try."

Being in new situations and away from what she was familiar with allowed her to discover her abilities in ways she was not aware of before. She adds, "I got to know myself much, much better. I respect myself, what I can do and what I cannot do." This gave her a new appreciation for herself and her abilities. This also happened with Mona, who believed that her state of solitude in the United States contributed to that self-understanding, saying, "I returned to myself in America and I had chances to meditate and stay with myself. To let it go through writing, and this gives you chance to understand yourself deeper than before."

Increased Intercultural Awareness and Open-mindedness

Although all of the participants mentioned having knowledge about different cultures before traveling abroad, whether from the media, travel, or their undergraduate studies in English, the direct exposure to the wide range of different cultures inherent in University TESOL programs in the United States challenged the participants' intercultural awareness in ways beyond what they imagined. As Halah explains, "You mix with people all over the world. I mean, America doesn't have people from specific places, clans, or religions—The whole world!" For Joud, that was one of the reasons she wanted to study in the U.S., as she puts it:

That was my focus: to be with friends that have different cultures; different backgrounds. I wanted to experience the college experience that I see on TV. Not like the parties, but I mean the experience, like different people, different religions. I had friends from all over the world and they still speak to me until now.

Sharing classes with other international students who have similar interests in language teaching allowed them to have authentic multicultural interactions, and to participate broadly in globally intercultural dialogues.

Naturally, learning about cultures was reciprocal, as the participants also had the opportunity to share their culture with others. For Joud, that happened by sharing stories in the classroom:

She [the teacher] wanted to hear my story and share it with everyone and I love sharing it with my friends. They're from Sweden and France. English 101 was international, but some of them were American, so it was a community. And I love sharing my stories.

For Ghadah that happened by sharing food:

In one of the classes, the professor suggested that we have a potluck and it happened that I made them *roz Bukhari* [a rice dish] and I had the salad that was with cucumbers, tomatoes and parsley and the dressing was lemon seasoned with salt. One of our friends who is from ...a Latin background. She was kind of trying to see the resemblance between our salad and the salsa in a way or another. Because there's another salad that is served with the rice that has tomatoes and onions, so she was like "this is similar to our salsa." She even commented on how similar our foods are. For example, dumplings you can find it in all cultures with different fillings, different techniques, but the dough, the steaming, the filling, it's all there. Food is one of the greatest topics to start a conversation with anyone, so it was always there.

These experiences of intercultural sharing allowed them to see commonalities past the differences that they initially perceived. What is transformative about the experiences described above is how the women in the study were able to recognize that they had gained invaluable lessons beyond anything they would have learned by staying at home, thereby widening their worldview and making them more culturally aware of other cultures. In fact, nine out of the ten participants discuss becoming more open-minded and showing greater understanding toward others after studying abroad. The word 'open' was used nineteen times throughout the interviews to describe being "open-minded;" "open to change," "to others," "to cultures," "to opinions," "to accepting," "to change," etc. The premise is that by living and interacting among other cultures, they became willing to consider new ideas and more tolerant of differences than they were before their experience.

For instance, after studying and living in the United States, Farah says, "You become open to things that you had no idea about." Being around different cultures and "customs and

values of people who are different than [her],” allowed Farah to become more open-minded to differences in opinions and beliefs. She enjoyed having classes with multicultural students because it gave her the opportunity to “just sit there and listen to all the different ideas that are present.”

Mona also finds that her experience in a multicultural setting contributed to her open-mindedness. “Honestly, I became open-minded to others,” she discloses, describing how her experience abroad shaped her. She explains:

Especially in TESOL... in [a large multicultural U.S. city] because there are a lot of immigrants. So, there were Americans, but there were a lot of international students. I became more open to other cultures, you know. When I came back to Saudi Arabia ... I believe that everyone is equal.

Mona believes that being in the TESOL program, specifically, developed in her a sense of social equality, largely because of the great number of international students and the immigrants in the big city where she studied.

Lailah, on the other hand, believes that the act of travel, in and of itself, has a positive effect that ripples through the whole Saudi Arabian society, saying:

I mean even travel, and if they travel only for leisure, it changes their personalities, Reem. I believe because the [Saudi] society has opened up. A little bit of changes of that opening up are clearly visible even in our education system. It reflects on you becoming a happier person and you become a better teacher.

A somewhat surprising finding is that, in addition to learning about other cultures, studying in the United States allowed these participants to come into contact with individuals

from Saudi cultures that they did not typically mingle with back home. That is especially true for those come from smaller villages, remote areas, or regions that are considered culturally different from the dominant culture of the country. Ghadah believes studying abroad has allowed Saudi students to be more open to differences in cultures, including differences in subcultures within Saudi Arabia, saying:

I think part of that is also the scholarship program, it's opened people towards learning about different cultures, people from different backgrounds, even within Saudi Arabia itself. Because before we had minorities and majorities; certain groups from certain parts of the Kingdom who think they are more superior to others, or who treat other people from different parts of the Kingdom in a very inferior or unacceptable way just because they give themselves the freedom to do so. However, nowadays it is completely different. We're getting to know people from the same country, but of different parts and regions of the country.

Back in Saudi Arabia, they might not have the chance or need to interact closely with people from other regions, clans, or religious sects. So, the opportunity to meet other Saudis abroad, who back home may seem from very different cultures, allowed them to better appreciate other cultures from their home country.

Independence and Gender Roles

Sojourners typically gain independence during their time away from home as part of their adaptation process (Brown & Brown, 2009; Brown & Graham, 2009). However, this is even more significant for Saudi women who, regardless of age, in their home culture are usually dependent on their families, husbands, or other male relatives. Interestingly, 8 out of the 10 women in this study named independence as being one of the biggest personal gains that resulted

from their sojourn in the United States. Before going to the U.S., their families, parents, and/or husbands took care of most of the responsibilities outside the house, such as paying the bills, grocery shopping, running errands, taking them or their kids to places they needed to go, etc. However, those gender dynamics were not available to them when they moved to the U.S., allowing them to become more independent. As Ghadah illustrates, “it was a one-of-a-kind experience because it was the first time for me to depend on myself and be away from my family. I’m a very family-oriented person.”

Even when most of the participants were accompanied by husbands and brothers (Lailah and Farah were not), many times those family members were themselves students who were equally engaged in their studies and not able to take on as many responsibilities as they had back home. There were also times when the brothers and husbands had to travel home for various reasons. These circumstances redefined the participants’ roles in ways that were conducive to them becoming more autonomous. Their newly gained independence resulted in these young Saudi women feeling more empowered because they realized what they were able to achieve and overcome on their own.

Halah says jokingly that during her time abroad, she was “a mother, wife, student, cook, and driver [laughs],” referring to the many responsibilities she was obligated to take on. She explains the shift in roles, saying:

I used to— like any other women or female or wife, everything would be on my husband. He goes, he brings stuff, he takes the kids. I learned how to do it myself. I look for the bills, run and do things. The heater goes off, I figure it out. You have to depend on yourself because there’s no one to remind you. That’s independence.

She added that before going to the United States., she did not have “as much opportunities to depend on [her]self,” but that her life in Saudi Arabia has changed since then and she is able to do more on her own.

In the same way, Mona’s experience resembles that of Halah in relying on her husband for many things before they moved to the U.S. She says:

Look, I used to be a typical Saudi woman. You know? Everything on my husband; everything on my family. EVERY [emphasized] single thing, like buying a bottle of water, okay. Go buy it for me, bring it for me, grab it for me. I was lazy. I was energetic in things that I like only, but to be responsible? I wasn’t responsible enough, honestly.

Living in America shaped me this way.

She continues to clarify:

After America, that was the true experience. [My independence] showed. Before my husband would do everything. Now I know the bills, the water, you go out on snowy days to buy from the supermarket yourself. There is no driver, there is no brother, there’s no husband. Sometimes my husband would not be home.

When Farah, who lived on her own in the United States for 3 years, was asked about what that experience was like for her, she replied, “You become self-reliant in everything. That’s the most important thing— becoming independent for me was the main point. If you don’t do your work on your own, no one will do it for you. That’s it.” Becoming self-reliant was something that she was proud of bringing back with her to Saudi Arabia. Farah elaborates on this point, saying:

I came back with the feeling that I don't need to depend on anyone in my life. Until now, I say I don't need anyone. I can live my own life... I know how to do everything in my life, so I'm not waiting for anyone to do it for me.

Similarly, when asked about how these experiences changed her, Rawan answered:

My sister says that now I'm a real person. I'm more confident in myself; I'm independent. If I want something done, I do it myself. I learned to depend on myself to the extent that my husband asked me why I don't ask things from him anymore.

Independence was not attained effortlessly, as demonstrated in Jumana's comment, "I wanted to be an independent Saudi girl who lives there," but adds humorously, "Sometimes I regret it [laughs]" because she did not realize how challenging it would be. Many of the participants discuss going through obstacles while transitioning into their new autonomous roles. For example, Shahad tells about her life before moving to the U.S. and even during her early days there:

I was 23 when I graduated from my bachelor [in K.S.A.]. Until then, I was extremely shy. I'm always afraid... always afraid of every single thing. I can't walk if there are men there, I can't. I don't go out by myself. I was 23 or 24. I wasn't that young. *Wallah alazeem* [I swear] I was afraid of every single thing. When I went there [the U.S.], in the beginning, I didn't know what to do. I was like "Oh my God!" My brother went with me, but he was dependent on me. He was younger than me. So, I was like, "What to do? What to do?"

She recalls the first time she realized she had to pay bills after her initial month in the U.S.:

I went home and there was no electricity. I didn't know we had a bill. I swear to God, I didn't know we had to pay a bill... We don't hear about it because we don't do it [in K.S.A.] ... I called the receptionist office, and she said, "Did you pay the bill?" "What bill?! What do you mean?!" I found tons of mail. You have to pay this, and you have to pay that, water, whatever.

She goes on to describe how she has changed since then:

From then on, I pay attention to bills and everything. I couldn't go to supermarkets alone. Now, I can go. I can talk to men. I don't care, even if they're Saudis, I'm not shy or afraid. This is the thing that I brought back from the States. Now, here in [The City], I'm living by myself because my family is in [Another City], so I'm living here. They don't worry about me. I can manage. Now I can pay bills. I can pay water, I can manage, I can go here and there.

Having to deal with these issues in the United States allowed her to be able to face them when she returned home. The part where she mentions "even if they're Saudis" refers to the traditional Saudi cultural expectations that men and women do not communicate due to conservative views on gender segregation that are now slowly changing.

That raises another aspect of the participants' experiences: different gender norms in the United States and having to deal with Saudi men for the first time in their co-education classrooms. The situation was made challenging for the participants when they were student teaching in their university's intensive English language programs and found themselves teaching Saudi men, making it the first time they held an authoritative role over men from their country. This usually caused a sense of awkwardness because of the expectation that they should

adhere to Saudi's cultural norms abroad. However, because of the co-education classroom settings at U.S. universities, these women did not have a choice but to follow through. Shahad recalls her first encounter with Saudi males as their language teacher in her teaching practicum:

I remember my first group with two guys— Saudi guys. Inside of me I was like, “Aaaaah, shoot me!” *Wallahi Alazeem* [I swear to God] inside of me I was, “shoot me, shoot me.” But you know, I talked to them and told them that they have to do this, and you have to do that. But *alhamdulillah* [thank God], you have to deal with it. You went there [the U.S.] and you know where you're going, you should be open.

This unfamiliar dynamic was very uncomfortable at first, but she quickly overcame the complexity of the situation by the reality of having to confront it. Joud, who found herself in a similar dilemma, explains:

My first conversation class, they were all Saudi guys [laughs]. Some of them were really old and I felt really shy. That was a shock to me, teaching older men. I felt really shy about it and I knew them from Eid trips and stuff like that. Yeah, I felt shy about that because it's the first time, “I'm your teacher now” ... They were all Saudis. It was a shock to me *and* to them, I think, because some of them dropped the class. I went with it. We had the curriculum and I had the syllabus and my advisor gave us some pointers to start with... I thought “yeah, I can do it.”

The discomfort sensed by Saudi male students was familiar to Ghadah, who understood why her students felt awkward having her as their teacher, saying “I don't blame them in a way or another because here [in K.S.A.] we have always had a segregated community where women are completely in a separate place than men.” Thus, the situation was new to everyone. Ghadah's

solution was to suppress those feeling of unease and continue teaching as she would teach any student: “I tried to act as if there is nothing—as if they’re not even Saudis. They’re regular students from an X country and that’s it. And it went okay. We kind of formulated even a really good relationship towards the end of the session.” For Ghadah, it was easier to deal with those students as though they were from any other country than it was to think of them as Saudis and constantly face those barriers.

All the participants featured above confronted situations that defy cultural gender norms and forced them outside their comfort zone. And yet, these women did not shy away from dealing with those uncomfortable situations and came out feeling like Joud felt: “Yeah, I can do it.”

Resilience and Empowerment

Building resilience was another way the participants indicated their experiences in the US had empowered them, especially when they encountered hardships yet did not give up on their goals. Some studies suggest that women who face challenges living up to the expectations of their multiple roles build resilience (Younes & Asay, 1998; Perkins, 2011), specifically during their academic sojourn experience (Alhajjuj, 2016).

The participants in this study discuss how their U.S. sojourn was not always easy or enjoyable. The transition to the new setting was in itself a challenge. There were so many things to learn about and adjust to. In addition to that, they encountered feelings of homesickness and personal hardships that they had to face alone in a foreign country, without the support of family and friends. Ultimately, however, these sorts of challenges not only built their resilience, but also empowered the participants to know that they accomplished their goals in spite of the adversity. This is shown in the following example by Jumana: “It was a rewarding experience. I enjoyed

every moment of it, even the bad ones where I felt down and wanted to go back to Saudi Arabia. I didn't want to do it anymore." For her, persevering through tough times was rewarding because she came out of the experience stronger.

Mona tells one of the most moving stories about the hardships she had to face alone while living in the United States:

One time, I miscarried one of my babies there, and I *needed* to pick up my daughter from school. I had no one. My husband traveled; he was out of the state. I was the only one at home. Can you imagine: I miscarried at 2:30 pm and at 3:00 pm I'm in my daughter's school?

She continues:

When I went to pick up my daughter, I wore sunglasses because I was crying. I wasn't crying in pain; I was crying about the situation I'm in. My husband's not here and I can't call my mom and tell her that I just had a miscarriage. I can't!

In spite of the traumatic situation of, not only dealing with a miscarriage, but having no one to talk to about it, Mona discovered a newfound strength, saying, "These difficulties made me a person who thinks nothing is difficult. I can do everything." Her resilience continues with her even three years after returning from her U.S. sojourn, adding, "Difficulties are nothing. And after staying in America, until now, I hate finding excuses for any single issue."

Rawan also mentions becoming more resilient as a result of the difficulties she had to overcome. She tells about how she was before her sojourn:

Before I was so soft [sensitive] and I'd cry all the time. If someone did anything to me, like we say in Arabic, *ma a'arif akhod haggi* [I don't know how to take what is mine, an Arabic idiom showing the inability to stand up for oneself]; I stay quiet. And even if I knew how to stand up for myself, I would be shy and I would say "no, I will not do anything." But now, no...

Like Mona, Rawan faced incredible challenges on her own while abroad, including being pregnant during her studies, going to all her classes up until her delivery date and immediately returning to her studies after giving birth. She describes the sense of alienation she experienced during those difficult times for her: "When you're far away from home, even as a student, *inti moghtariba* [you're alienated]. You don't have friends, you know?" Despite it being arduous at times, she was not willing to give up and return without completing her studies. She says, "I think it made me a better person. Some people say that I'm now tougher...before I was weak" and many of the people who knew her from before having also noticed this new strength in her personality.

Conversely, Halah found resilience by observing someone she respected and admired go through a difficult time. Her well-respected professor had lost her house and all her possessions in a natural disaster and had become homeless as a result. Yet, she never missed a class. Halah expresses her awe of her professor's strength saying:

[The professor] didn't give herself any excuse; she came to class. Can you imagine?

These are the things that I think about now. I don't have an excuse if I have a cold. I'm sorry; I still go. Someone lost their house and still went to class.

So, one did not need necessarily to go through the hardship on her own to find inner strength—women who were observed dealing successfully with life’s hard blows were inspirational models of empowerment.

Another challenge mentioned often by the participants as a source of resilience and empowerment was the pressure they felt to represent their country, specifically the women of their country. Due to Saudi women being such an underrepresented population, many of the participants in the study were often the first Saudi women in their programs, or that their professors or classmates had interactions with. The participants thus felt the need to take on the responsibility of representing their country and culture as a form of collective identity. This representation was also problematic for the participants because oftentimes they were faced with stereotypes and prejudices surrounding Saudi and Muslim women (Lee & Rice, 2007), and the onus of disproving those misconceptions lay on the participants. In other words, the negative stereotypes were identities that were “assigned” to them by others (Varghese et al., 2005). The participants reported regularly pushing back against the stereotypes by working even harder to claim identities that oppose the ones assigned to them, which was yet one more challenge for them to face and overcome. Rawan mentions how proving herself on behalf of all Saudi women put a lot of pressure on her:

I always had this feeling that I had a responsibility to reflect the image of Saudi girls and Saudi students to the professors and teachers because I didn’t know what their idea is, so I wanted to show them that we are progressed, that we are educated, that we are interesting people, I want to show them that we have good ideas and we are good students, which I was always ... I was so scared to show the opposite. I wanted to show that yeah, we are as good as you. I’ve always felt like, “did I do well?” If I ever said

anything... Even when I was pregnant, during the nine months of pregnancy, it was so difficult for me to go [to class], but I always wanted to go because I don't want them to say, "Oh, Saudi students are very spoiled, they're lazy." I wanted to show them that we are as good as you and as good as any other student. We are normal; we're normal people, because they always had this idea that we're behind and we're not educated well.

Mona also talked about the pressure she felt to represent Saudi woman and how hard she worked to reflect a positive image in hopes of reversing the negative stereotypes:

I wanted to give her [my teacher] a different stereotype about Saudi women, because she thinks that generally Muslim students have a lot of barriers in their life and they're easy to give up. I tried to give her a different idea about us, yeah. You know, you're representing your country, so you need to be a good role model. Keep the bad things to yourself at home between your close friends, but for those who are trying to find black spots in your culture, try to give them a reverse opinion about you, the opposite.

On the other hand, in addition to the pressure to disprove negative and inaccurate stereotypes, Jumana worked hard for other reasons. She wanted to show her family that she is strong enough to go through the experience of studying abroad and can succeed on her own. She explains:

As you know, I'm a Saudi girl whose family will really care about. They will fear and they will think that I cannot do anything by myself. So, at the beginning, it's a challenge. I will prove I can do it. And you know how the challenge goes when you go with your brother. They trust your brother even though they are younger than you, but they don't trust you. You are doing your masters and they don't see that. They see you as a girl who needs to be taken care of...But with the girls, we want to prove something; that we are

strong enough to do these things... because we have a lot of pressure from the society; from our families. We don't want to fail. We want to prove them something.

Confidence and Agency as English Language Professionals

All the participants describe academic and professional opportunities they had in the United States as preparing them as professionals in the field of English instruction in HE settings. Some of those experiences include participating in class discussions, performing research, presenting at conferences, student teaching in intensive English programs, creating materials for ESL/EFL students, as well as immersion in the language they will teach and its culture. Many of these experiences were new to them or carried out in a novel way. As they succeed in these experiences, their accomplishments gave them confidence as professionals and more agency in their teaching after returning to Saudi Arabia. Six of the participants talked about how they now doubt themselves less, have become less afraid of making mistakes, and less shy to speak up. Moreover, the results of the survey indicate similar results. Compared to before their U.S. degree, 71% of the participants report a change in how they perceive themselves as teachers now. Eighty percent of them believe their U.S. studies prepared them for teaching in their Saudi classrooms. They maintain that they can now teach the language better (88.6%) as well as feel more confident in their teaching skills after studying in the U.S. (88.6%). In addition, 60% of the survey respondents indicate that the ideas that they bring in from the United States are respected by their colleagues and superiors. Similar to building resilience, enduring academic challenges and succeeding at professional opportunities built a sense of confidence in themselves and their professional abilities and developed their agency as teachers.

Lailah, who taught English for 4 years before her U.S. sojourn, talks about gaining new confidence in her teaching abilities after returning from her U.S. studies:

I guess I became more confident. Maybe previously, I was worried all the time of what the others would think of me. What would the students think of me? And my boss and my superiors and everything. But after coming back from the States, I know I should do whatever I'm entitled to do with good quality, and I know that I should do it in the best way possible. Other than that, if I can't meet the expectations of someone, it's not me to blame.

In another example, Rawan discusses her previous experience in teaching before going to the United States feeling like an automatic thing because of the inflexible curriculum she was told to follow. She states, "Everything is given top down. I felt like if I were a robot, a robot can do my job. Just install the information and it will do my job." However, since returning with her U.S. degree, she has found ways to be more creative, even with the curriculum being fixed, and she is more attentive to how the students are feeling during the lesson. She illustrates:

I used to start the unit from the beginning, but now I know where to start—whether my class is in the afternoon or morning — I start with the grammar, then vocabulary, then reading and listening because I know at the end of the day students are tired.

She is able to show her agency in her choices of how to order the lesson according to what she sees best fits her students' energy and attention levels.

In addition, one of the notable outcomes of living and studying in the United States for some of the women was the opportunity to improve their English language skills that are vital for teaching English at the tertiary level. Although all but one of the participants graduated with a bachelor's degree in an English language major, not all of them were confident in speaking English. For example, when asked about what it was like to study in America, Farah responded:

I studied English [in K.S.A.], but I graduated and I didn't speak English. Never at all. I taught in a high school for one term, then I went to the U.S. on a scholarship. But the difference I sensed was in my language: how I was here [in K.S.A.] and how I became there [in the U.S.]. Over here it was okay, just okay, but over there I *learned* the language.

For Halah, the U.S. sojourn has also allowed her to overcome the language anxiety she experienced in public speaking. She recalls:

Every time it was time for a presentation, [the teacher would ask] "who would like to start the presentation?" You would find me acting busy. He would say [my name], but I would say, "Sorry, no. I can't be the first one."

She was forced to confront her fear of speaking because it was part of the course requirements to give presentations in class. Eventually, she managed her anxiety: "From that time, I started to love it [presenting in front of the class]. The fear I had is gone. I became more confident." This sense of accomplishment she arrived at after confronting her fear and succeeding allowed her to love presenting instead of loathing it.

Mona reveals that she is now "more confident and fearless." She is also not as afraid of making mistakes as she used to be in the past. When she first arrived in the United States, she used to feel "shy to go outside and talk to others, especially when there are activities and stuff like that." One of the reasons was because she was afraid of making language errors. She explains, "When you don't have enough vocabulary, you feel like you don't want to make mistakes. But when you think about it, mistakes will let you learn." She had to keep reminding

herself that it is okay to make mistakes because in the end, “it will pay off,” a valuable lesson for her to pass on to her students.

Likewise, Joud became more confident and conquered her fear of making mistakes and asking questions. She realized that making errors was not consequential. She explains:

My classes [in the U.S.] were so big, even if I got something wrong, no one’s going to notice. And I sat in the front, so even the ones in the back wouldn’t hear me. If I say something wrong, *khalas* [that’s it]. It’s okay. And there’s laughs and stuff, so they’re more open to asking questions. In high school [in K.S.A.], they weren’t.

She also mentions that she used to be afraid of being ridiculed if she asked a question. However, she was able to get over that fear by knowing that the people she studied with were open to questions and realizing that the other university students shared many of the same questions she had. She recalls, “When I was in chemistry class, ... when they [American classmates] asked a question, I had the same question. So, I felt comfortable, like I was okay.” Seeing that speakers of English had the same inquiries validated her questions and she was to overcome her worries.

Language Instructor Roles Re-Evaluated

The participants genuinely sense that their experiences in the United States changed the way they think about teaching English. The ones who had experience teaching before their U.S. studies felt the change in their own teaching before and after their studies abroad. On the other hand, the participants who did not have teaching experience prior to earning their U.S. degree contrast their teaching to how their teachers in high school and undergraduate professors in Saudi Arabia had taught them. In addition to the transformations mentioned above that have influenced

their teaching and professional identities. the difference in their teaching comes from positive experiences with professors in the United States.

The professors and instructors that the participants had encountered, interacted with, or studied under in the United States changed the participants' perspectives on what it means to be a teacher. It offered them new possibilities in the way they think about teaching and a new model of teaching and interacting with students. Many times, the participants would contrast their experiences with professors in the U.S. to those in K.S.A., with the former being more positive than the latter. It is important to mention that not necessarily all their interactions with professors in the U.S. were positive, and not all of their interaction with professors in K.S.A. were negative. However, observing different styles of teaching, sometimes drastically different, allowed them to have various examples of what it looks like to be a teacher or professor. Additionally, experiencing what they considered excellent teaching firsthand as students gave them something to emulate in their own teaching. In fact, the majority of survey respondents (85%) indicate reflecting on how they were taught by their U.S. professors when teaching their students in Saudi Arabia. Most of them (80%) also indicate that they do not teach English the same way that they were taught in K.S.A. This further supports the findings that participants were inspired by their professors and teachers in the U.S.

Rawan completed her bachelor's degree in Saudi Arabia and her master's degree in the United States and noticed the markedly different interactions she had with professors in each setting. About this, she says:

Let's just admit that when we were in school or university [in K.S.A.] —it might be different now; I don't know—but the professors treated us with superiority. Over there [in the U.S.], never. They would reply to your emails, even if they're on vacation. One

time, I sent my professor an email during spring break and I was expecting him to reply after spring break. I just sent it, so I don't forget. He replied within hours, not only his opinion about my work, he was telling me about his spring break, that he was spending it with his son out in a country farm, and he was telling me about how the weather was.

What touched her even more is that he advised her to enjoy her spring break with her family and not worry about schoolwork during that time. This encounter and the professor's words had a great effect on her and made her realize that being a professor does not have to resemble the experiences she had during her bachelor's studies. She explains:

I felt like [the professor] took time out of his vacation to tell me about himself and he replied to me? And not only that, he was also giving me advice! [showing surprise and awe]. My bachelor professors—I couldn't even find them in their office hours.

She contemplated the two situations and concluded that she wanted to be more like her professor in the U.S. in how she deals with her students. She also had another encounter with a professor which she took as a learning experience for dealing with her students:

I got sick for two weeks and I couldn't make it to class. So, I sent a copy in of the medical report from the hospital, and the professor said, "Don't send anything as proof, I believe you. You're a grown-up and why would you lie about something like that." So, I started to think that maybe I have to believe people without proof. Maybe if we give them [the students] this trust—so if you make the person feel like you trust them, they would act more responsibly.

Inspired by what she experienced with her professors in the United States, Rawan tries to find ways to employ what she has learned from them but realizes that she also has to find ways to

make it work in her K.S.A. classroom. “I learned that because I’m a teacher, I can balance between being the students’ friend and being tough,” Rawan adds.

Ghadah was also influenced and inspired by her experiences with her master’s professors in the United States. One experience, in particular, left a lasting impression on her:

I was touched by the professor who insisted on us learning from our assignments rather than getting a grade. So, every time I turn in my assignment on time, but it has for example a slight or a major mistake. He would bring me in, he would show me the exercise, he would ask me, and most of the times, it turns out that I knew the answer, but I did not know how to translate that into wording. So, he would ask me to do it again until I get an A. For one of the assignments, I had three times to redo my assignment, but what I learned towards the end of the course by this professor is that he was keen towards having students learn rather than gaining a mark or a certain grade in that course.

Ghadah was touched by the experience; when things were hard for her, she was faced with an understanding professor who also showed kindness and gave her the opportunity to learn from her mistakes. That kindness stuck with her and she tries to show it to her own students in Saudi Arabia, saying “It always touches me and I always have it in mind because I would never know if the student is actually in need of more one-to-one, or if she doesn’t understand the whole language.”

Jumana also talks about having positive learning experiences that were influenced by her professors in the United States. which she tries to implement with her students in Saudi Arabia. In particular, she enjoyed the experience of having class discussions and taking on an active role in the classroom:

The one thing that surprised me compared to studying here in Saudi Arabia—but nowadays I think it might be totally different, I don't know—but when I was studying doing my bachelor's [in K.S.A.] we did not have that kind [of learning] where we express our opinions in classrooms. It's all lectures. We can't engage in any real activities. But when I did my masters [in the U.S.], no. It was totally different. It's all student-oriented things. The Professor would give us stuff to read. We need to do a lot of stuff and then we can prepare for the class and we discuss.

The experience of being allowed to discuss the classroom materials and assume an active role in learn changed Jumana's attitude toward learning. She says that she “enjoyed studying [in the U.S.] more than here in Saudi Arabia,” and continues by saying that, “when I did my bachelors I used to sit there, listen to my professor all the time, and if you ask me what do you remember, I will say I don't remember anything.” As a result, she tries to encourage her students to become more active in their learning. She says, “I'm not just giving them everything. I don't want them to be a passive receiver to what I'm saying to them.” This attitude is also shared by many of the survey respondents. Sixty-eight percent of the participants believe in having their students participate in class discussions in English. Taking part in discussions as students in U.S. classrooms provided a model which they can implement in their own teaching.

Likewise, Halah feels like her professors in the United States helped her learn better because of their attitude and teaching styles. She says about before she went on her sojourn, “I went to a lot of Language schools here [in K.S.A.]. My dad did a good job with that.” However, when she began studying English in the U.S., she realized that she was able to learn more, even though she was studying the same language courses because of the “techniques, and the good spirit.” She adds, “To be honest, the good spirit that I saw there [in the U.S.] helped me learn

more. And it stuck.” Now, Halah applies many of the activities with her students that she had experienced as a student in the ESL program. For example, she says uses “games [she] learned about in the States,” especially the ones she had enjoyed, in hopes of helping her students better acquire the language.

Other participants expressed how their professors in the United States showed them how to use humor in class. For example, Farah told about two professors who would share stories with the class and make the students laugh. She depicts:

There was one professor and his wife, both of them teach me. They both teach different subjects. What I liked was that him and his wife we’re competing against each other [laughs]. It was a good kind of competitiveness, but they still were competing. They’re both professors and all the research that they do, they work on together. But each one of them is trying to prove their point of view, you know? So, it was fun for me. He would tell the stories and she would tell stories. They would show us how each one of them is doing a different thing, but that does not prevent us from being together. They’re amazing, to be honest. They’re the ones who encouraged me to continue in this field.

Seeing her two professors share real stories in a casual and friendly manner was something new for Farah because that is not how her K.S.A. teachers interacted with her. “The way teaching was done [in K.S.A.] a long time ago, you couldn’t talk to a teacher, right? You feel terrified to go talk to a professor,” she explains. However, she observes that, “Over there, [in the U.S.], it was different. The teachers have to listen to students.” It demonstrated the practice of being open-minded and listening to others despite differences in opinions. Farah also mentions that seeing her professors interact in that positive manner, despite their different interests in research, ignited her interest in research and inspired her to enter the field of TESOL because before that she did

not see herself teaching “at all.” The way she teaches her students now is a result of her observations of and interactions with her professors in the United States.

Along similar lines, Joud, who obtained her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the United States, mentions how she was not accustomed to how informal some of her professors in the U.S. were, especially those in her undergraduate classes. It caused a feeling of dissonance at first, but it was something she became acclimated to because she realized “the relationship was different” with her U.S. professors and she “had to get over that.” She says:

Some of [the professors] want us to laugh when he comes into the class, wearing butterfly wings [laughs]. I wasn’t used to that because my teacher you are my mentor and I respect you. So, when they first came in that way, I wasn’t used to it.

That was the first time Joud had been exposed to a different style of teaching that is less formal and traditional. She was not used to teachers acting silly and trying to be funny, and at the time, it conflicted with her idea of respect and mentorship. Now, with her students in Saudi Arabia, she says “I laugh with them and I make jokes.” She also shares some of her stories with her students but does not like to go into personal details, in respect for the boundaries in K.S.A. classrooms.

“More Human with my Students”: The Practice of Humanistic Educators

Perhaps one of the most compelling findings in the study was that these EFL instructors describe their philosophy of teaching, as well as how they interact with their students, as being ‘human.’ Consistent with the changes in their identities after completing their sojourn in the United States, the Saudi women shifted towards a more “humanistic” approach in their classroom teaching and their relationship with students in Saudi Arabia. Although half the

respondents did not have experience teaching before their U.S. sojourn, humanistic features were indicated by all the participants, both with and without teaching experience prior to the sojourn.

The term “humanistic education” has several connotations. However, when I use the term and its cognates, I am referring to the participants’ description of their teaching as being more focused on the human relationship aspect of teaching, as opposed to the authoritative approach to teaching that is more common in traditional classroom settings. Consistent with these findings, O’Reilly (2006), finds that a common theme among long-term travelers is “The development of a feeling of common humanity, often expressed in stories about the ‘kindness of strangers’ or the similarities between people all over the world” (p. 999). This can be explained through Nussbaum’s (1997) notion of *Cultivating Humanity*. She argues that becoming a “world citizen,” encountering cultural diversity in its different forms (i.e. language, religion, race, gender, etc.), allows them to recognize themselves as “human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern” (p. 10), thus cultivating humanity. The participants’ experiences with various forms of diversity, including their own within the U.S. culture, developed a sense of common humanity in the participants.

In fact, the word “human” was used ten times across all interviews. For example, Lailah is one of the instructors with the most teaching experience among the participants (four years) before traveling abroad to study for 2 years. After her return to teaching, she felt like she had to “loosen up” with her students and allow herself to express more emotion in the classroom:

To some extent, I allowed myself to laugh more with my students; to let them feel that I am human, rather than someone who will come and give them the lesson in a perfect way and have great results in their exams. I used to be more like a machine probably, but with experience and after coming from the States, I learned how to be more human; more human with my students.

She uses the word ‘human’ to describe the humor, commonality, and inherent imperfection of humanity that she is not afraid to show her students. She also uses the word ‘machine’ to contrast to her previous teaching style in which she was only focused on delivering the lesson but did not permit herself to show her feelings in class. After studying in the United States, she says, “I try to let them know that I’m here [in front of you]. Sometimes I become happy, sometimes I’m sad, sometimes I’m a little bit under the weather. So, they know I am someone who feels what they feel.” She shares her own humanity with her students by showing them how she, too, is a person who identifies with how they feel. This vulnerability she shows her students is also one of the ways she can move beyond the image of the teacher as the ‘all-knowing’ (Song, 2016), towards building a stronger and more empathetic relationship with students (Lasky, 2005).

Similar to Lailah, Ghadah believes that the biggest lesson from her study-abroad experience is to prioritize humanity in her teaching and relationship with students:

On a professional level, I think it [studying abroad] made me think in a more creative way and to have the human part of me always before the professional part of me because each one of us has a human part of them.

She continues, relating to her position as a student abroad and how much of a difference it made to her when she was offered a human touch or a kind gesture, saying:

We were there [in the U.S.] in a position where we just needed a pat on the shoulder just to make us feel included or something, and for me to have that and provide that to my students is such a big thing to do to them. Not all of them were even offered that in any previous interaction with their teachers, or maybe even at their homes. So, this is maybe the most point that I wanted to highlight out all of the experience.

She emphasizes that it is important to provide that “human part” to her students because it will matter to them as much as it mattered to her as a student. She also realizes that her students may not have the opportunity to experience that same kind of relationship with their other instructors, which motivates her even more to provide that kind of experience to students.

Correspondingly, Mona gives emphasis to the human relationship she has with her students. This was particularly important for her to communicate when she was teaching students from a minoritized religious sect. She conveys, “There were Sunnis and Shiites. So, I would say to the students, even if you are atheists, I don’t care. Since you’re a human, and you treat me with respect, I don’t care about [your religion].” I asked her what she meant by using the word ‘human’ with her students, and Mona answered:

Human? To respect, to be kind, to have empathy and sympathy towards others, to not be selfish. These I feel are the basics that everyone should have. I feel like if everybody has it, everything will be fine, you know?

The characteristics she describes as part of being human (i.e. respect, kindness, empathy, sympathy, and selflessness) are consistent with the essential features of humanistic education and building strong teacher-student rapport (Lei, 2007; Lasky, 2005). She adds, “When it comes to everyday life, if we understand the main concept of life, *wallah* [I swear], is to be human.”

In addition to using the term “human” to describe their teaching, the participants also implied humanity using different analogies contrasting themselves to robots and machines. In those analogies, humanity was associated with the ability to create things and show creativity in teaching, as illustrated in the excerpt above by Ghadah learning to “think in a more creative way and to have the human part” more evident in her teaching. The creative aspect of humanity is

used by participants to show flexibility and room for including the teacher's judgement on what and how to teach, which is also consistent with the humanistic approach to teaching (Zhang & Atkin, 2010).

In one instance, Bayan used the term 'robot' to reject the rigid curricular format that she was asked to conform to, and to show her ability to create. Bayan did not have any previous experience teaching in Saudi Arabia, but her program in the United States allowed her to gain a great deal of experience through student-teaching. When she returned and began teaching in her K.S.A. classrooms, she recalls, "I felt like, oh my God, this is for a robot. I'm the teacher; I can create materials. I took classes where I created a whole curriculum... I have the ability and the knowledge to do that." She was ultimately able to show her creativity by being more "flexible in the classroom" and to follow the flow of the students when possible. She says, "I always give them the choice, as much as I can. I'm not going to say always, but as much as I can I give them the choice." She gives her students more choice and freedom in their learning, which is another feature of humanistic education (Schunk, 2012).

Finally, when the participants were not using the word "human" specifically or indirectly through analogies, they were indicating ways of humanizing education that reflect affect and emotions in teaching and include "attitudinal qualities that foster a positive interpersonal relationship between the teacher and her students" (Legutke & Dittfurth, 2009, p. 210) as shown in Figure 2. To be clear, the participants did describe themselves as humanists, but the patterns and features shown in their teaching practice and approach are consistent with features in humanistic education. Among those features, the most prominent ones are highlighted in the following themes and discussed separate sections of this chapter: (a) having good teacher-student

rapport, (b) showing empathy and compassion, (c) humor, in addition to (d) kindness and humility (e) providing opportunities for personal growth, and (f) facilitating learning.

Figure 2. *Humanistic Features Displayed by Participants*



Teacher-Student Rapport

All the participants in the study reported having good relationships with their students and consciously working to achieve that. It was demonstrated in the stories they told about their students and the events that occur in the classroom. In addition, I was able to witness the strong connection that the participants had with their students during classroom observations. Bayan explains the importance of her relationship with students, saying:

Teacher-student relationship is everything. And I can relate a lot to that *wallah* [I swear].

It's like, yeah, it is important. I feel like sometimes you're trying to be a perfect teacher

and you're trying to apply a lot of methods and strategies and you have a long list, but it's not there.

Consistent with the views of humanistic educators, she believes that her teaching cannot be effective without having that connection. She learned that from an experience during her first year of teaching in Saudi Arabia, when she was only in the classroom less than half the time because of other obligations. She was not able to build a strong bond with her students, and therefore her efforts in trying to implement certain activities were unsuccessful. She recalls:

I used to come with a whole plan with gaming and, "Let's play some games"; gamification, and all of these things. But the connection was lost, like I was the only one excited in the classroom, and I felt it.

Joud also believes that her rapport with students is essential for teaching and likes to build it through sharing stories, pointing out:

Your relationship with the students, it's the number one. If they [students] don't like me, they're not going to like my teaching. So, I have to do that—build the relationship at first through the background stories. I share my story, they share theirs.

As the connection is mutual, the sharing of stories is reciprocal as well, starting with herself as a teacher to set the expectations, "I share my story, they share theirs." This is something she took part in as a student in the United States and decided to try it with her own students in Saudi Arabia. "I applied it. It really helps; hearing their stories. The background stories; their experiences; their expectations."

Like Joud, Mona and Ghadah stress the idea of their students sharing their backgrounds with them to help build rapport and learn more about their individual needs. They both make it part of the class assignments at the beginning of the semester. Mona explains:

The first day of teaching, or the first week usually, when all the girls are there, I give them an assignment. The first assignment I do with my students, “Tell me something or a secret between you and yourself that you want to share with me and you think it affects your studies. It will be secret. I’m not going to judge you. It’s not graded, but something to help me help you become a better person, and I promise I will help you.” So, I see a lot of stories and I keep them with me... These things make me know how to deal with every students’ issues.

For Mona, knowing the issues that affect her students outside of class allows her to take them into consideration while teaching. She says, “This helped me a lot while I’m teaching; I know each student’s issues.” Likewise, Ghadah implements a similar exercise with her students for the same reasons as Mona. She demonstrates:

One of the things that is a staple in my class, at the beginning of the semester, I ask the students on an index card to write some information, their names and age, their birthday because we celebrate their birthday at least with the note on the board or whatever, and if they have any health condition.

“It gives you the privilege of getting to know students and knowing how to deal with them in a better way that serves their education process and experience,” she adds. These strategies require that the participants adopt the whole-person approach to humanistic teaching, not only addressing their intellectual needs, but their emotional needs as well (Khatib et al., 2013).

Empathy and Compassion

The quality of showing empathy was coded according the Oxford English Dictionary as having “the ability to understand and appreciate another person’s feelings, experience, etc.” (“Empathy, n.,” n.d.), whereas compassion is “the feeling or emotion, when a person is moved by the suffering or distress of another, and by the desire to relieve it.” (“Compassion, n.,” n.d.) These two qualities have been placed in the same category because of how they are closely correlated in the data showing that the participants are able to understand and appreciate their students’ experiences, as well as their strong desire to help them overcome challenges.

Much of their empathy and compassion stems from the recent feelings of facing challenges as students and the sense of alienation abroad, while at the same time being shown empathy and compassion by others during those times, mostly by their professors or advisors. Indeed, the majority of those surveyed (85%) claim that they have become more understanding of their students after studying abroad. Farah asserts that teachers should “Always put themselves in the place of the student,” because as Shahad puts forward, “You could have been in that same place once.”

Mona speaks about her empathy for her students arising from her experiences as a student abroad and as a mother of child having special needs, saying:

It [my feelings of empathy] came from two sides. One to feel empathetic with my students because I went through a lot of difficulties and I was insisting on my dream... I also became empathetic because my daughter was categorized in America as needing special education, so I started to understand that this is not their [my students’] language and in our country, in Saudi Arabia, we don’t have categorizations of people who have

learning difficulties or slow learners, everyone's together in Saudi Arabia. And the girls pay for it. You teach everyone, but you don't know what each one of them has inside her.

This empathy then leads to compassion as she continues:

This made me become very close to my students. If I see someone who is sick, I would go to them and ask them if they're okay; because I know that studying it's not just about school. The life you're living at home and the things that happen inside you affect everything.

She relates what her students are going through with the difficulties she went through as a student and recognizes that as a "whole-person," the students' life outside the classroom affects how they learn.

Correspondingly, Bayan acknowledges becoming "more sensitive to what's happening in the classroom." She became particularly aware of her students who come from other cities to attend the university after her own experiences away from home and working with immigrant children who "suffer between two worlds," as shown in the following excerpt:

I've noticed that we have students who come from [City 4 hours away] and they're staying in dorms, and they have those issues of not being with their families, feeling homesick. It's still the same country, but it's not the same city. Over the weekend, when I would tell them, "Okay girls have a nice weekend, most of you will go to your Grandma's family." They don't have that. So, I feel like I'm being more sensitive to their situations. I have this in mind.

Interestingly, Bayan attended the same university for her undergraduate degree, but did not have the same empathy for students who come from other areas at that time because she had not undergone the experience of being away from home and family. She recalls:

I had classmates when I was doing my BA who are coming from different villages or cities, but I've never imagined how they feel and what's happening in their world, why they can't print homework. Like, I've never had this in mind.

She was able to empathize with her students because she could relate to their feelings of being separated from your home and family.

Rawan empathizes with her students' desire to learn and having a lot of questions and finds ways to support them, illustrating:

When [the students] need something, "Anytime tell me, either as a message, or in my office hours, or even break," I give them my time. I compliment them to give them motivation. I tell them they're very good students or this is a very good question. And even if they asked me something that I don't have to do, I won't say they're relying too much on me, I'll say that they want to learn, and they want to take this knowledge from me.

She relates it to her experiences as a student in the United States and how her professors handled her inquisitiveness graciously, recalling, "I remember how I felt when I was a student [in the U.S.]. How I used to ask, and nobody ever complained, no matter how much I ask. So, I feel that this has changed me."

Others, like Ghadah and Farah, developed their empathy from contrasting their experiences in their bachelor's studies in Saudi Arabia to their experiences as graduate students

in the United States. Farah says, “When someone gets an ‘F’, I know how they feel.” Therefore, she encourages her students to ask as many questions as they have and ensures to answer them because, “This is what I was missing my university years [in K.S.A.],” she says. “When I wanted to ask, I couldn’t ask the professor, for example what does this question mean. She’d say, ‘didn’t you study?’ You know? So, I never asked questions.” Having that experience inspires her to have empathy with her students and allow them to ask questions and make sure to answer them. On the other hand, Ghadah takes care to “differentiate the class according to [students’] learning styles” because she understands what it is like for students who have different ways of learning and who need different modes of input. “As a student,” Ghadah says, “I would be bored because I’m a visual person,” so she tries to incorporate different activities and to differentiate instruction out of her empathy with her students.

Humor

Humor was one of the other ways the participants were able to connect with and build a strong relationship with their students. For instance, Joud likes to share jokes with her students and makes sure that they understand why they’re funny. “I’m a funny person,” she says, “and when I laugh and you don’t get it, I like to tell you... You need to get it [laughs].” That has helped her build a bond with her students. For example, she finds that joking with her students about her height (she stands at about 5 feet) helps to break the ice, saying, “I tell my height sometimes; it helps [laughs]. They get comfortable. They say, ‘miss, you’re so cute.’ I laugh with them and I make jokes.”

Like Joud, other participants use humor to lighten the mood in the classroom and put the students at ease when they were feeling nervous or shy. Halah especially likes to use this

technique to relieve the students' tension during presentations, when the students are nervous. She tells about when her students stand in front of the room shy and anxious:

I sometimes say, "Where is hello?" "Say hi. I'm here," "you're not talking to walls" [jokingly] you know. I want them to start with a 'hi,' 'hello,' then the ideas come out. Then the ice is broken; it's gone. I learned a lot of nice things [from studying in the U.S.].

This is something she picked up during her language classes in the United States where her instructors helped her to get over her fear of presenting by making light of the situation. Now, she understands how her students feel and tries to help them the same way she was helped.

Similarly, Shahad finds that humor helps start discussions when students are feeling shy. She describes, "[The students] feel shy sometimes, so we have to encourage them indirectly. 'Come on friends, let's go; let's talk; let's discuss and have a group discussion.' We laugh and make jokes about it." It helps to get the conversation going and avoid social awkwardness the students may feel. "I like it and it's working," she exclaims.

Bayan believes her students see her as the "Funny, crazy teacher [laughs]," and takes pride in the strong relationship she has with her students. Bayan believes that the basis of her teaching is to build a relationship with her students, saying, "[Teaching] depends a lot, for me, on how you build rapport with your students." This is also supported by evidence from the observation data. Her class was engaged in a small group activity to create a poster board of a topic to present in an in-class poster session. Bayan moved around the room to support the students and answer any questions they had, and the students were very comfortable talking to her and sharing their ideas. It was obvious that there was an excellent rapport between the

instructor and her students. Therefore, being known as a “funny, crazy teacher” is a positive outcome of her efforts to build a strong relationship with her students.

Kindness and Humility

The participants discussed how their experiences abroad helped them to become humbler with others, including students, and to show intentional kindness. As opposed to the general notion of being kind, “Being intentionally kind involves planning, gathering resources, identifying recipients, scheduling, and execution” (Binfet & Enns, 2018). In most of the interviews, the participants displayed evidence of showing kindness to their students. However, five of the participants also went out of their way to show intentional kindness to their students. One example comes from Mona, who created a contest in which the winner gets a prize that is secretly filled with a gesture of intentional kindness specifically meant to help the winning student in some way. She tells about one of the winners and how she tried to show her kindness:

It happened that one of the students told me that she is excellent, but she doesn't have any self-esteem. She always thinks she's ugly and she wrote that she doesn't see herself as beautiful and whenever she looks at the mirror, she feels like a monster, *haram* [what a pity]. I felt sorry. So, I got her a book and it's small with quotes, 100 quotes in confidence. I wrote her a letter and I put it in the prize pack, and I put a blanket and a cup and coffee; I mean little things.

In the same way, Rawan makes an effort to help her students outside the classroom. “I give them my time,” she says, showing her intentional attempts to help them, “even if they ask me something that I don't have to do.” She also explains that students notice her efforts, adding, “Sometimes I do things with [the students] and they say ‘Miss you're really helping us. Thank you so much for giving us your time.’ I tell them that this is my duty, you know.” In addition,

Rawan purposefully offers compliments to encourage them and make them feel good. This kindness is also reflected with how she deals with other people in her life, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

I also really started to think about how I can help people. I do my duties if someone is sick or has a difficult situation, or someone passed away. Before [the U.S.], I used to say that I won't make a difference. Now, no. I think the small details that, yes, if I do my part it'll make a difference.

Other examples of kindness include, Bayan planning lessons based on what her students enjoy (e.g. Korean pop lesson, which not only is something they enjoy, but also promotes multiculturalism in the classroom), Ghadah celebrating her students' birthdays, and Joud exchanging letters with her students.

In addition to intentional kindness, some the participants also showed a sense of humility they attribute their experiences abroad. This is also a way of humanizing education by maintaining the equality of students and their teachers (Jarvie, 2019). For instance, Mona says, "Something that I brought with me from America is to be humble with others...When I returned from America, I felt like we are all equal. This is also something I felt with my students." She treats her students as equals and adds that her having a graduate degree from the United States does not mean she stopped learning. She continues:

Be humble; we're all learning. It's okay to have a master's degree and you're still learning. It's okay. You'll have mistakes. I have mistakes. We're learning from each other. It doesn't mean that when you have a master's or anything: "Do you know who you are talking to?"

She also tells that she demonstrates this attitude of humility in her personal and professional life.

Likewise, Rawan discussed becoming humbler after living abroad. “Now I became very simple,” she says. “Before [I went to the U.S.], it was so hard for me to apologize when I make a mistake, but now, no...No matter what the person in front of me is thinking, I’ll do my part.”

These results are also implied in the survey responses. When asked about whether the students look up to them because of their U.S. degree, 48.6% of the survey participants responded with “neutral” and 20% with “disagree.” Only 25.7% responded with “agree.” This could be understood as most of the respondents displaying humility with their students or as treating them with less of a power difference.

Encouraging Personal Growth

Humanistic educators are interested in educating the whole person in a way that helps the student realize his or her full potential and provide opportunities for students’ personal growth in a way that best fits the students’ needs (Schunk, 2012). This characteristic was displayed by most of the participants in their focus on building their students’ life-skills, rather than limiting their teaching to the English language. The participants especially believe in relaying the skills they gained through their U.S. sojourn experiences that their students may not have the opportunity to build in their conventional K.S.A. classrooms. For example, Bayan recognizes that her students have capabilities that extend beyond the classroom, which she tries to cultivate:

I have students in the class who wrote a novel. I have painters. They have interests, if you treat them to their level of intelligence, get them to their critical thinking, we’re supposed to do that, problem solving, all these. Dig deep, not only on the surface of language.

Wallah [I swear] sometimes they can amaze you with their answers and their thinking.

Some of them are philosophers by nature... Give them the chance of critical thinking and going to a certain level because I believe that we should believe in them, give them the chance, give them the time and they will amaze you with what they have in their pockets.

Mona also demonstrates her focus on building her students' character and skills:

The class is mostly spent delivering messages because this is their solid bachelor's degree, so they have to not only get a high GPA, but we need to work on the personality...So, every day it is part of my teaching to give the students tips about how to study. It's like being a life coach [laughs].

Mona's past students feel the loss of not receiving those life skills from their current instructors:

I can't tell you how much my [former] students still tell me that all the teachers that they got, maybe they're teaching them, but they're not giving them the same skills for life that I used to give them. So maybe this is one of the things I suffered from in Saudi Public Schools—to have the opportunity to learn about the art of living, to cope with problems. So, the class became a mix between to shape your personality and to teach you English.

Like, Mona, Ghadah recognizes that the ultimate goal of education is to succeed in life as well as learning:

I've wanted the students to have an experience rather than only a grade out of the course. And I've always started my classes with ice breakers where we talk about random stuff that has nothing to do with the curriculum. And I also tried to get out of the teacher's role to their sister's role and I'm trying to pull in some principles and values that they can cherish and take away from this classroom.

She intentionally navigates from her role as a teacher to the role of a metaphorical sister who tries to instill values that the students can grow from and use in their lives.

Other examples for providing students with opportunities for personal growth include training the students' critical and creative thinking skills, as well as authority in expressing opinions, all of which are helpful life skills. For example, Ghadah tries to implement activities that promote creative thinking and shift her students away from test-driven behaviors. One lesson she talked about was having her students think about different ways to create a sustainable environment. As for the reason she chose this lesson she says:

It [the activity] gave the students more power over their learning process and even it gave them the freedom to think outside the box. To give the ability to think outside the curriculum itself, not to have their main purpose of learning as "if it's covered in the exam then we're going to learn about it, if it's not then we're not doing anything about it."

She refers to her U.S. experiences demonstrating to her that the purpose of learning is not to get a grade on a test.

Similarly, Joud wants her students to shift their focus away from being fixated with the curriculum, and to be able to express their own opinions critically in class. She tells them: "[I want to hear] your opinions and these things. Sometimes, it's not in our curriculum, but critical thinking is a must. I want to hear what you have to say."

Halah's life lessons are strategies that prepare her students for public speaking, as this is the thing she struggled with the most in her sojourn years. She teaches them how to introduce themselves, make eye-contact, and use their body language to their advantage. All these

strategies help them succeed on their own and realize their potential, not only in their English class, but in many areas of life.

Facilitating Learning

Facilitating learning is another feature of humanistic education in which teachers do not lecture or spend the entire class-time teaching, but rather provide resources, instructions, and encouragement while students work in a self-directed manner to achieve the task (Schunk, 2012). This characteristic was found among many of the participants, who experienced first-hand student-centered graduate classes in the United States where the instructor or professor took on a facilitative role. However, incorporating student-centered techniques is sometimes a challenge in the Saudi context because the students are mostly familiar with a teacher-centered approach. Jumana explains how this plays out in her classroom:

I believe that I should be a facilitator and not the teacher... So always in my classroom, if you will come, it's five minutes, I will explain the task and how they're going to learn the strategy and I will give them the task and I will facilitate and then we will start discussing about the answers— why this is right why this is wrong. Yeah, this is one of the problems. When my students decide what the answer is, when I asked them, “why did you choose this answer with the reading?” They don't know. So, I told them no, you have to read, you have to look, you have to read. I'm trying to teach them how they can self-educate themselves more than being I'm the person that they took the right and wrong answer from.

Bayan also believes in the role of facilitator with her own students. When asked what the most useful thing she gained from her TESOL education, she says:

Facilitate, don't teach. This is the most important thing. Give them the space to learn. They can learn themselves. They can search. This generation they have phones- the smartphones; they can reach anything. Just facilitate and make sure they are on the right page and in the right phase. Don't use the PowerPoints to teach; you kill them with the PowerPoint... We studied all the methods, all the strategies, whatever works with different types of students, but to consider all the students' needs and I think facilitating in this era is an important thing. For me, it is everything.

According to Bayan's experience, as well as the literature, facilitating learning also means giving students more freedom to choose what is most appropriate for them (Khatib et al., 2013). Mona demonstrates this flexibility by allowing the students to use Arabic to help them learn English:

I let the students work in their comfort zones whatever the [university's] policy is. If they say you have to speak English from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. No Arabic words, I don't believe in this because they need to work where they're comfortable.

In this excerpt, she also uses her agency to decide what is best for her students, even though to do so violates the policy. Halah also provides her students with more freedom in their learning and give them a voice in the classroom:

Depending on the theme, the theme is about how to use a camera for a selfie. They [the students] have to go home and choose any topics they want to talk about. For example, a report, or PowerPoint. Then each group, let's say six groups will talk tomorrow, [I tell them] "You will come and present and ask the students. You will be the teachers." They divide their groups. I don't want them to be shy. Even when they're shy, they still go up and talk [in front of the class].

Another way the participants take on the role of facilitator is by teaching them skills and strategies for language learning, instead of only teaching the language itself, as demonstrated by

Lailah:

I also like to teach them study skills and I also like to teach them some of the knowledge that I acquired from my university learning... You see, I like teaching students the skills more than teaching just the language. Together they were like massive to me.

Lailah knows that with study skills, the students will have the ability to learn the language on their own, thus facilitating their learning.

Teachers as Mothers, Sisters, and Friends

Given the professional transformation the women in this study spoke of to a more humanistic philosophy of teaching, it is not surprising that seven of the ten participants referred to their relationship with their students as analogous to that of a mother, sister, or friend. Jarvie (2019) refers to the authoritative role of teachers as dehumanizing and sees friendship as an opportunity for “humanizing” the student-teacher relationship. When teachers are referring to their students as friends, sisters, or even daughters, it is a way of humanizing their relationship with them. Being from the same gender and not so distant in age, as they are all college students, may also facilitate this relationship. There were four references to motherhood, three to sisterhood, and three to friendship. In addition, the references to motherhood were given by participants who were already mothers, whereas the references to sisterhood and friendship were used by mothers and non-mothers alike. These references emphasize the human relationship between instructors and their students, as well as support the evidence for the strong rapport between them. The participants care about their students beyond learning the materials in class,

and at the same time, they are able still to maintain respectful boundaries between them and their students.

Mona claims that, “The teacher is a mother,” and argues that “The teacher has a greater effect than parents, especially if you don’t have a good relationship with your parents.” She sees herself as more than just her students’ teacher and believes that she can leave a great impression on them. She admits that being a mother may have influenced her to think of her students this way, saying, “Maybe my motherhood affected me, but I think [teaching]’s like motherhood.”

Similarly, Lailah believes her students look up to her as a motherly figure, saying, “I strongly feel like they are treating me like their mom,” but that it comes out of their respect to her, adding, “they respect me so much.” She also believes that time contributes to the motherly role, explaining, “We developed this kind of relationship with our students because we stayed together for a whole semester. I see them more than I see my own children at home.”

On the other hand, taking on the role of an older sister to their students was expressed by Farah, Bayan, and Ghadah. Farah says:

My students tell me that they don’t feel that I am their teacher, but that I’m their older sister, you know? That’s just with them. I feel that too; I don’t feel that there’s a difference between us. They might be 18 or 19, so there is a difference between us, but I’m also in my twenties [laughs].

Along the same lines, Bayan believes that her older sister role allows her to support the students beyond her position as their English instructor. Bayan explains, “I’m treating my students as young sisters for me, or friends. We have this [bringing both hands together as a symbol of connection] *alhamdulillah* [praise be to God]. My students can come tell me whatever

they're facing at home or anything like that." Assuming the role of an older sister or a friend means that her students approach her for guidance in the issues they face at home, which is apparently a role that she is happy to assume.

Lastly, other participants took on the role of being the students' friend, while also emphasizing the presence of healthy boundaries. One of those participants is Rawan, who had struggled in the past to find the right formula for her relationship with her students but found that a combination of toughness and being the students' friend works the best for her. She illustrates:

I learned that because I'm a teacher, I can balance between being the students' friend and being tough with them because before [I went to the U.S.] I didn't know how to. I was either tough or too easy going and they take advantage of that. Now, there is a balance. I can be tough and that can be respected by them and at the same time I can be their friend; I can be nice; I can understand their situations.

She believes that having experiences with professors in the United States, who were both nice and respected by their students, helped her understand how to maintain that balance with her own students.

A Third Space: The Practice of English Teaching in Saudi Arabia

After their sojourn in the United States, the participants returned to Saudi Arabia as members of both a global and local communities. However, their newly gained knowledge and perspectives do not go unchallenged upon their return, as shown in the following excerpt by Jumana:

The problem with TESOL [in the U.S.] is that we are learning to teach English in the English context. They are studying in a country where English is the first language. When

you come here in Saudi Arabia, it's the practice thing. How are you going to teach the student to practice if they go to the restaurant? They know what they need to say, and they are perfect in it, even the lower achievers. But with other students, they cannot practice the English that they learn. This is a problem with learning how to teach ESL and learning how to teach EFL. It's the context. How are you going to apply it in Saudi Arabia?

This dissonance justifies her need for adopting different methods that are more suitable for the context of learning and using English in Saudi Arabia, without abandoning what she learned and gained through her sojourn experience.

What Jumana and the other Saudi women have shown is that they merge their knowledge, perspectives, and experiences from both worlds to create a hybrid 'Third Space' (Kramsch & Uryu, 2010) in their EFL classrooms in K.S.A. This is demonstrated in their approach to teaching, classroom activities, in addition to their representation of cultural and linguistic knowledge from both worlds. Each of these themes will be elaborated on in the next sections, followed by three classroom scenes that provide snapshots of the participants' classrooms.

Cultural and Linguistic Bridge

The participants being now part of both cultures, the international and local cultures, act as mediators between the two cultures and two languages. Their classrooms, therefore, become a 'Third Space,' where both local and global cultures and languages mesh organically in daily lessons and conversations. They are considered experts of the global culture and language they took part in during their sojourn and return to share their expertise in U.S. and international cultures, living abroad, language learning and other life skills they have gained through their

experiences, representing the language teacher's socio-cultural identity (Duff & Uchida, 1997). I also found that the participants feel a sense of social responsibility toward their young female Saudi students, who resemble their younger selves. The participants act as the students' window into the world, through which they can learn about cultures, languages, and even skills that the participants gained through their sojourn and life experiences; all of which are not available to them otherwise. These findings are also consistent with the survey results. Almost three-fourths (74%) of the respondents were inclined towards helping their students understand English-speaking cultures when teaching the language. In a way, their students become global learners because they are exposed to so much of the culture through their instructors' firsthand experience.

In the first example of creating a hybrid classroom experience, Bayan says she likes to discuss culture with her students as part of her language lessons:

Language is culture...And I love to show them both sides [of culture]. Remember the show "Khawater" by Ahmed Al Shugairi? He showed that every culture has its pros and cons, like negatives and positives. I show them all. I tell them about everything...Movies and TV shows are only showing one side.

She uses an Arabic show about travel and culture to describe to her students that there are many sides to a culture that she examines critically. And because of her own experiences in U.S. culture, she can share with them cultural insights that are not shown on TV.

Similarly, Lailah uses her knowledge of culture to increase the students' cultural awareness:

They [the students] are pretty much interested in learning all about the cultures, Reem. As I said many of our students, unfortunately, haven't had the chance to travel. And some of them, they just know about all of those kinds of things from the internet, you know?...They're interested in knowing a lot about the other cultures, especially when we're talking; if there's something in the unit that talks about what's happening in another country or something.

For students who do not have the experience of traveling to other countries, Lailah is an insightful and relatable resource to help them understand what it is like in other cultures. They also turn to her with questions about religions other than Islam:

The students want to learn about other religions and the students want to learn about other cultures. [They ask] "Why are they calling gods for everything?" for example. The other day one of the students asked me, "I heard someone talk about a character in a movie or something. They said about him that he's god; he's the coffee god. What do they mean? Do they still worship God? Do they have people as gods?" So, you have to teach them about the culture. Why? What does it mean by someone if they call him a god?

Mona gives another example of how a vocabulary activity turned into a cultural discussion, which she was able to lead because of her knowledge from living in the United States:

Yesterday we were talking about the 'attic'. They asked me, "Miss how do they live in it?" And I was explaining the word attic because of it. So, they asked me what it meant, and they thought it was a ceiling. I said "No, they use it as a bedroom." So, they asked

me if I'd seen it or lived inside an attic. I said "no, but my friends did." They said "How? Don't you feel like it's just like a coffin?" So, they're asking me, "have you seen this?" Whatever we're learning about, "have you seen it?" ... I keep telling them the differences. This is one of the things that I do with them.

Talking about cultural differences in a way to make irrelevant concepts more relevant to students. A dictionary alone or an online explanation would not be sufficient for students to truly comprehend the nuances of the word.

On the other hand, Jumana receives many questions from her students, particularly about her experiences as a Saudi female living abroad:

They ask a lot of stuff. They give their opinions and whatever they think. About studying, teaching here in the university, and over there abroad. They talked about their experiences that they want to go there, but their families refuse, and they want to talk about a lot of stuff. And they always, always, because *mashallah tabarak Allah* [praise] they are so smart, they're always comparing

The students look to Jumana as a fellow Saudi female who may have been under the same cultural constraints as them but was able to overcome them successfully.

In addition to creating a bridge between cultures, the Saudi women in the study act as a bridge between languages. Being nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) with the same first language as the students, they are able to help their students make sense of the language, provide relevant material, and understand their students' precise learning difficulties (Amin, 2001; Au & Blake, 2003). Many times, the participants would share their own learning strategies

with their students to show how language learning is achievable, making them a model of a successful L2 learner (Cook, 2005).

For example, Bayan demonstrates to her students that she is a learner just like them, saying, “I share with them. I say that my mother is an Arabic speaker and my father is an Arabic speaker. We don’t speak English at home. I tell them how I learned from songs and movies.” Through her experience, the students can see their goal of learning English as attainable.

In the same way, Lailah introduces her students to the concept of “Global Englishes.” That is, the ways in which English is legitimately used around the world to challenge the “native speaker fallacy” and critique the monolingual orientation towards languages (Canagarajah, 2012). Lailah is cognizant that her students are mostly exposed to American and British dialects and makes an effort to increase their awareness of other forms of English:

When I bring my resources for the listening, I try as much as possible to bring them other accents. The other day I got them—the unit was about advertisement, —so I got them an advertisement that was originally Taiwanese, from Taiwan. So, they had to hear the Taiwanese accent when they’re talking in English. Yes, I like to have my students listen to all kinds of cultures and accents; also know about their culture informally.

She feels it is important to demonstrate to her students that “English is not confined to one or two places in the world for their native speakers.” This is a perspective she gained during her TESOL studies in the United States and from mixing with other non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) in the program that she felt responsible to share with her students. It also sends them a message that validates their speech, regardless of whether they have an accent that is not what is considered “native-like”.

Participants also share their language learning experiences from their U.S. studies in hopes that the students can apply them in their own studies. Jumana says:

I told them [my students] about academic word lists AWL. And I told them this is how I learned a lot of academic words. So *ya'ani* [I mean] please learn from it. I told them a lot of stuff about my learning. Because I am- at the end I'm an L2, and I understand the way they think about the language more than if a native speaker taught them. Many of my students actually they take my advice and do the same and I can see their progress in the next quiz

She switches between her position as a language teacher and a language learner to make the language more relevant and accessible to students. Jumana is also able to show empathy with her students and can relate to their experience in language learning, which is another benefit to being an NNEST (Amin, 2001; Au & Blake, 2003).

Similarly, Halah gives her students strategies that prepare them for public speaking, as this is what she struggled with the most in her sojourn years. She uses the strategies she was taught in the United States and applies it to her teaching as a way to link her global experiences to the local classroom. Correspondingly, when surveyed about the amount that they share their own English language learning experiences with their students, survey respondents were divided between “sometimes” sharing (48.6%) and “always” sharing (45.7%). Nevertheless, the results of the survey show that an overwhelming majority of the survey participants (91%) felt that being a non-native speaker in the U.S. helped them understand their students' difficulties with language learning.

Bringing the Global to the Local Teaching

After earning a U.S. graduate degree in language education, the participants returned with many ideas they want to apply in their teaching. Bayan commented about returning from her sojourn with the desire to “apply everything.” She says, “There was like [sigh of relief]. Now I get to do all of these things with my students.” She had been using a student-centered approach with her ESL students in the U.S. for two years. However, her students in Saudi Arabia were not prepared for the transition from their teacher-centered learning:

It’s new for the students... You feel the pressure of the students wanting you to teach them the usual way because they’re students and they still want to be taught using the Grammar-Translation Method, and you want to use other methods.

Bayan, like other participants, quickly realized that it is not a simple task to apply U.S.-gained knowledge in a K.S.A. classroom because of the different educational context and the students themselves being unprepared for a change in the way they learn. They are more familiar with what the participants consider traditional teaching methods, consisting of teacher-centered lecturing and the Grammar-Translation Method. That is one of the characteristics of the “Third Space,” that can be a place of tension and conflict that is a result of merging two or more cultures.

To address that, the participants consider what worked for them in the United States and find ways to make it work in their Saudi classrooms in a “balance” and “mix,” “from here and there.” They try to implement the best of both worlds, using communicative activities, games, discussions, reflections, group work, research, and student-led presentations, combined with episodes of the Grammar-Translation Method and teacher-centered instruction.

This is also demonstrated in the results of the survey. 77% of the EFL instructors in the survey report that they try to implement the same teaching methods they learned about in their TESOL courses, and 71% try to teach English the same way they were taught as students in U.S. classrooms. That said, just over half of the survey participants (57%) indicate that they “sometimes” use the teaching methods from before obtaining their degree from the U.S. In fact, thirty out of the thirty-five survey participants (85.7%) mention adapting what they learned in the U.S. to make it work in Saudi classrooms. This supports the findings that teachers do not completely disregard local teaching practices, but utilize it along with the new ways of instruction that they gained from the U.S.

As a result, their classes end up being a hybrid ‘Third Space’ that switch between elements of their global and local educational experiences. Bayan demonstrates that in her solution to prepare for both types of teaching, saying, “I think it’s always about being flexible in the classroom. No matter how you plan your class, sometimes you go there and they’re [the students] not into that activity or game or whatever, there’s always a small plan B.”

Farah faces the same dilemma in her classroom and describes the hybrid approach of interchanging between both student-centered and traditional methods:

I’m trying to do both. I’m trying to use both ways, so if one way doesn’t work, I go back to a traditional way of teaching. So that if they don’t understand from one way they can understand from the other.

Rawan, also describes this hybridity saying, “I could apply a lot of things that I used over there [in the U.S.], and there are things that I didn’t learn over there, but my experience over here [in K.S.A.] taught me.”

The hybridity or Third Space is not only limited to the participants approach to teaching. They also use methods they experienced abroad to discuss local topics, making the English language more relevant to their students. This was evident during my visits to some of the participants' classrooms. I will describe three classroom scenes in which the participants created a Third Space in the classroom, bringing the global experiences to the local classroom.

Classroom Scenes

Scene 1. The first classroom scene takes place in Lailah's classroom. It is a low-intermediate EFL class, with around 25 female first-year university students. The room is long with rows of seats fixed to the floor facing the front of the room, where there is a whiteboard, projector screen, and a large desk where Lailah is sitting. When the class begins, she greets her students and asks them if they are prepared for the discussion topic of the day (It is worth noting that my visit was only arranged the day before, so the activity was planned with the students before planning for my visit). The students had researched a topic before class related to the Saudi Vision 2030, a strategic plan to improve the country's economy and reduce dependence on oil (Saudi Vision 2030, n.d.), and prepared presentations and discussions. The students proceed to take turns coming up to the front of the room in groups of two or three to present some of the information they have found in their research and ask their peers the questions they have prepared. The topics they discuss range from unemployment, quality of life, the importance of exercise, women in the workforce, to other issues that affect their community. During the student-led discussions, Lailah is mostly a facilitator. She sometimes asks the students questions that challenge them to think more deeply and critically about their answers to some of the questions. At one point, a student asks Lailah about the meaning of an Arabic word in English,

which she in turn asks the same student to search for at home and return to explain to the class the next day, saying, “You can teach us a new word.”

Scene 2. The second classroom scene takes place in Bayan’s classroom. The room size is smaller than the classroom in scene 1 but is set up the same way with chairs fixed to the floor facing the whiteboard at the front of the room. There are about 18 female first-year university students in the low-intermediate EFL class. Bayan prepares the students for the next part of the lesson by writing two questions on the board: “1. Why do you think that learning English is important? 2. What strategies do you follow to improve your English language? Why?” The students are given large sheets of paper and they, knowing what is expected of them, promptly spread out into small groups to work at their desks or on the floor. They discuss how they would each answer the questions and make a list of all the reasons. While the students are working, Bayan goes around the class providing feedback to the students and answering questions. After nearly 15 minutes of working, the students share their answers with the class. Following that, Bayan explains to them the meaning of an “infographic” and shows them an example of a social-media infographic written in Arabic. The students immediately relate to the image and report seeing it in several public buildings. Bayan then asks the students to use the information on their list they had just made to create their own infographic in English about “The Benefits of Learning English.” The students continue to work for another 20 minutes to create a visual to present their information, all the while having group discussions where they codeswitch between Arabic and English. When they have finished, the students retrieve tape from Bayan’s desk and post their posters around the room. The classroom ends up looking like a poster session at an academic conference. The students take turns presenting their posters and going around to visit

their classmates' posters. During those mini-presentations, Bayan provides encouragement and also shares her own experiences in learning English with the students who are presenting.

Scene 3. The third scene is in Jumana's low-intermediate EFL classroom with about 16 female first year students. The room is set up similarly to the first two. The class has a reading lesson and Jumana provides the students with three text options to choose from. Without hesitation or urging by the instructor, the students ask each other in Arabic to set up a vote to decide on the text. While the students are deciding, Jumana divides the board into three equal parts, reading from the left to right: a. Gist, b. Click & Clunk, and c. Questions. Seeing as the students are all science majors, they decide on the text about the human brain. She then directs them to start reading and in groups think about how they will fill out the sections on the board. Some of the students request not to work in groups, to which Jumana smiles and replies, "You can figure it out." The students then take their reading material and break up into groups, some groups larger than others, and two of the students deciding to work individually. They read for 20 minutes, pausing once in a while to ask each other meanings of new vocabulary. Jumana goes around and answers questions the students come up with, mostly related to scientific jargon in the reading. Jumana then addresses the class, using herself as an example, and shares her experience using a dictionary with a thesaurus and provides them with a specific dictionary name that she used in her own learning of English. The next part is completely led by the students. After the students finish reading, a representative from each group comes up to the board to fill out each of the three sections. Especially interesting is the Click & Clunk section, where they share parts of the text that 'clicked' for them and other parts that were a 'clunk,' meaning that they did not understand. The questions written by the students include, "Is the size of the brain depend on intelligence?" and "What is the brain made of?" The students then proceeded to read

and critique each group's answers in the 'gist' section and whether they agree or not and why. Finally, each group reads the question they posted on the board and the class discusses the answers, codeswitching to Arabic for more complex words or ideas.

Commentary. These scenes are not the usual scene in a traditional English classroom in Saudi Arabia, where the students open a textbook, read the exercise question, the teacher chooses different students to answer each question while the other students copy the one student's answer, and afterwards the teacher moves on to the next exercise in the book. The students in these scenes are active participants in the classroom. In addition, the textbooks that are used in the English curriculum are oftentimes irrelevant to the students because they are published in other countries and have content that is decontextualized, relying heavily on sports content. As Lailah explains, "The book talks about like President Roosevelt, [the students wonder] who is President Roosevelt? and unit about soccer no interest, no connection, nothing relevant." The participants choose classroom materials that are relevant to their students.

Notably, in the scenes described above, the classroom is contingent on student-centered activities. The teachers are implementing student-centered activities that they experienced in the United States: group work, discussions, mini-conferences, and teaching academic skills. Even if the whole lesson is not student-driven, a Third Space is created where instructors are able to carve out large portions of student-centered activities. In addition, the topics of instruction are made relevant to the students. The global language of English is made local by discussing topics relevant to the students' immediate lives, such as changes in the local society and its effects on the community, benefits of learning English and sharing tips about that, and learning about the human brain.

The first scene in Laila's classroom shows her implementing academic skills commonly used in U.S. classrooms. The students research a topic of interest, present their findings to their classmates, and hold a discussion on the topic. What makes it a Third Space is that the topics they present are related to issues in the local Saudi society. They are able to use English as the medium to research and discuss issues that are relevant to their daily lives.

The second scene in Bayan's classroom also resembles elements commonly found in U.S. classrooms. The students create posters in groups and present them in an academic-conference style to their classmates. Even though the classroom is not conducive to group work, with fixed forward-facing seating, the teacher has created a Third Space, where the expectation is that students find a way to work together. Students take their spots working on the floor, engaged in the activity. The use of authentic Arabic materials also contributes to the creation of a Third Space, where foreign language lessons are made relevant and more accessible to students.

The third scene in Jumana's classroom shows a high level of democracy and a lot of engagement by the students: they select the material, come up with comprehension questions in groups, and have a class discussion on the topic. The students are self-directed throughout most of the lesson, are completely engaged in the topic and code-switch naturally between Arabic and English—without condemnation by their teacher—when communication becomes challenging.

Summary

The Saudi women report their study abroad experiences as transformative in several ways apparent in their identities as well as their teaching. The transformations they describe include, self-discovery and personal growth, intercultural awareness, independence, resilience and empowerment, confidence and increased agency, as well as a redefining of their roles as language instructors/teachers. They also report becoming more “human” with their students as a

result of their sojourn experiences. They outline characteristics of their classroom interactions with their students that are consistent with humanistic education, such building a strong rapport with students, displaying empathy, compassion, humor, kindness, and humility toward their students, in addition to facilitating their individual learning and personal growth. Lastly, their interviews and observations reveal how the participants utilize their knowledge of Saudi and U.S. cultures and educational systems to create their own hybrid culture in the classroom that combines, in their case, the best of both worlds. These results are also consistent with the results of the survey data that show participants use teaching methods obtained from their U.S. and K.S.A. classroom experiences. While they indicate trying to emulate their U.S. professors' classrooms, they also indicate finding ways to adapt those techniques and activities to better fit the Saudi context.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how Saudi female instructors of English in Saudi Arabia interpret their experiences living and studying in the United States and the impact that those experiences have on their current language teaching identity and practices in the Saudi educational context. The main questions guiding this study are: (a) What are the accounts of U.S.-educated Saudi EFL teachers at a K.S.A. institution of HE, on their study-abroad experiences that transform their teaching of English in Saudi Arabia? (b) How have the lived cultural, linguistic, and academic experiences of these individuals shaped their teaching and professional identities? and (c) What is the relevance and application of those experiences in K.S.A. classrooms?

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter by highlighting how they address each research question and illuminate some surprising findings. I will follow that by discussing the implications and limitations of the study, as well as areas for future research.

What are the accounts of U.S.-educated Saudi EFL instructors at a K.S.A. institution of HE, on their study-abroad experiences that transform their teaching of English in Saudi Arabia?

The picture that emerges from the results all suggest that the Saudi females underwent experiences while studying in the United States that were equally epistemically and personally transformative (Paul, 2014). Many of the experiences the participants faced when moving to the United States were new to them and they could not relate them to the experiences they had in

their home country. While some of them have mentioned having traveled abroad and to the United States before, living there was a different story. Being in a new country and culture, using a new language, studying in a different kind of classroom and meeting new people from around the world, all offered the participants opportunities for acquiring new knowledge that is epistemologically transformative (Perry et al., 2012). In other words, the experience changed what they knew about the world prior to their sojourn. In addition, the women's experiences in a new context led to self-realization and identity transformation. According to Brown and Graham (2009), the absence of familiarity, distance from the home-culture, and being outside one's comfort zone support the self-discovery of academic sojourners. Thus, it comes as no surprise for the Saudi women to feel like they were able to achieve self-realization during their time studying in the United States.

A possible explanation for what makes the experiences transformative for the participants is that many aspects of their U.S. academic sojourn triggered a *cultural disequilibrium*, causing them to evaluate their perspectives on things. According to Taylor (2001), in a cultural disequilibrium an individual's habits, routines, and the acts of carrying out simple daily tasks are disrupted when moving to a new culture. This requires a person to relearn many of the small tasks that have become automatic and taken for granted, such as greetings or getting groceries. For the participants, these matters also included being a student in the classroom and what it meant for them to be women in their new context. These are roles that they had mastered in their home cultures well into adulthood, but had to relearn according to the U.S. social structures and expectations to coexist in the new environment. This relearning of roles for adults, according to Taylor's Transformative Learning theory, results in the implicit and unconscious process of personal transformation.

The results demonstrate the transformative power of the Saudi women's journey studying in the United States that allowed them to redefine their identities based on the experiences they had during their sojourn. They were able to change their perspectives in life, discover new strengths in themselves, become more open-minded and interculturally aware, gain independence, build resilience; all of which resulted in a complete sense of empowerment and confidence in themselves and their abilities as English language instructors. In addition, studies suggest that it takes time for study-abroad students to develop a higher level of intercultural awareness and competence (Lantz-Deaton, 2017; Medina-López-Portillo, 2004). According to Gudykunst (1979), "Contact of only a short duration does not allow enough time to establish attitudes to change." (as cited in Medina-López-Portillo, 2004, p. 179). Therefore, the participants' long duration of time abroad was conducive to producing a significant change in perspective, seeing as they spent between 1.5 to 6 years in the United States.

Naturally, international sojourns allow those who participate in them the chance to get acquainted with other cultures, increasing their cultural awareness (Greenholtz, 2000; Marx & Moss, 2011). This was also true for the Saudi women in the study. Coming from a mostly monolingual and monocultural society, they were able to gain increased cultural competence and intercultural skills from interacting with a global community (Dunn et al., 2014). Intriguingly, the field of TESOL was especially impactful to that point. Most of the participants attribute their increased cultural awareness to being enrolled in their programs. TESOL, specifically, and how it is taught in the United States, emphasizes the role of intercultural competency as part of the instruction due to the large number of ESL learners in the multicultural society. This is also supported by results of Pederson's (2010) comparison of two of study-abroad groups, finding that the group which received training in intercultural pedagogy showed significantly higher

development on the intercultural sensitivity scale than the group not receiving any instruction. This further suggests that the cultural instruction the participants received in their TESOL programs had a role in increasing their cultural awareness. In addition, the participants were able to learn about other cultures through direct interactions with the numerous international students in those programs. These findings are consistent with the literature showing that TESOL programs in the United States comprise 40% international students (Selvi & Peercy, 2016). The increased probability of inter-cultural contact in TESOL classrooms allowed the Saudi women in the study greater chances to mingle with multi-cultural students and learn from them about their cultures than other fields of study may have afforded them.

Also demonstrated in the results was the Saudi women's transformation towards self-reliance. Prior studies have discussed the role of study abroad program in increasing sojourners' independence and self-reliance (Giroir, 2014; Brown, 2009; Brown & Graham, 2009; Lorraine Brown & Brown, 2009). Other studies examining Saudi women in the U.S. also mention independence being a particularly significant outcome of their study abroad experience (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015; Song, 2018). What is unique about the results of this study are two features: (a) it reveals the struggles the participant had to overcome in order to gain their independence; and (b) it exhibits how that independence gained was not short lived. The Saudi women described the obstacles they faced in learning how to pay the bills, buy groceries, deal with difficult situations, and be the sole caretaker of their children, all without the support of their families and male relatives that they relied on back home. In addition to empowering them, they revealed that these experiences had a lasting effect on their personalities, meaning that their experiences were indeed transformative. They were able to carry their independence with them back to Saudi Arabia and create spaces for more independence within the norms and customs of

the Saudi society. This is in contrast to Brown and Graham's (2009) findings that doubt the sojourners' ability to maintain the changes they gained abroad when returning to their home countries. The Saudi women in this study were able to reconcile their newfound strengths and make a place for them when returning to home.

Furthermore, in contrast to Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern's (2015) findings about Saudi females not having the support of their families to study abroad, the participants in the current study received full support in their decisions to study abroad. They also received familial support in maintaining their independence when returning to Saudi Arabia. These two findings combined could be interpreted in light of the substantial shifts in the Saudi society's view of gender expectations in the last five years. In 2016, Saudi Arabia announced its Vision 2030 plan for economic and societal reform. The Vision calls for mobilizing more women in the workforce, and the government has been actively working towards creating ways to enable their involvement ever since. In their recently released report, the World Bank Group listed Saudi Arabia as the top country with "the most progress toward gender equality since 2017" (2020, p. 11). The findings of this report provide further support for the implication that societal constraints on women are changing, and results of studies published prior to the implementation of Vision 2030 are no longer valid amid these recent changes.

Another remarkable finding was how the Saudi women in the study responded to other people's preconceptions about women in Saudi Arabia. The participants were faced with the daily fact that they were representatives of an underrepresented and misunderstood demographic. Being oftentimes the first Saudi woman other people had encountered, they were confronted by misrepresentations and prejudices of Saudi and Muslim women conveyed by Western media. This can be interpreted as an *assigned identity* that others impose on them, which is in contrast of

the *claimed identity* they acknowledge for themselves (Varghese et al., 2005). Because of that, they were constantly aware of their “Otherness,” or the sense of not belonging as an outsider. Although this is not uncommon for international sojourners (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Roose, 2001), studies confirm that international students in the United States from Middle Eastern/Muslim heritage are likely to endure more discrimination and Othering than international students who are from European backgrounds (Lee & Rice, 2007). Notably, this experience of “Otherness” these female participants experienced only intensified their drive to succeed. They were motivated by the sense that they were representing the women of their country and their culture, and that how Americans perceived Saudi women was dependent on their performance. In other words, the participants were strongly motivated to push back against the identities *assigned* to them based on stereotypes others held about Saudi women and *claim* their identities as educated, hard-working, and strong Saudi women.

Interestingly, the participants commonly referred to their time abroad in the Arabic word *al-ghorba*, which literally translates to “being far away from one’s country; estrangement; loneliness; alienation; desolation” (*Translation and Meaning of غربة in English, English Arabic Dictionary of terms*, n.d.). The Arabic word, while meaning to be “away from one’s country,” has connotations of the hardships and loneliness that accompany being a stranger in another land. They used this word mostly when talking about the hard lessons they learned abroad, as it sums up the difficulties they faced in trying to adjust. However, the hardships also revealed to them hidden strengths that had never been tested. They built resilience through overcoming those adversities and were able to succeed in adjusting and in their academic goals. Their resilience is also carried over in their K.S.A. contexts and is present in their classroom teaching, where they do not give in to the local dominant teaching discourses of teacher-centered instruction. They

insist on finding ways to adapt their teaching according to their new beliefs and values about education and pass these on to their students. Now, they look back at those challenging times not with bitterness, but with a sense of fulfillment because of the invaluable transformations that have come from it.

Despite the difficulty of the adjustments the Saudi women had to make and the constant feelings of Otherness they felt, the U.S. academic community was very welcoming to them and offered them authentic opportunities to develop their professional skills. They were accepted to present at academic conferences in front of U.S. and international professors, they were allowed to lead university classrooms, and teach ESL at U.S. K-12 schools. They were offered the same opportunities as the other students in the program and they were able to show that they were capable women. As a representative of the women in their country, these were profound experiences that gave them credibility, and as TESOL professionals, increased confidence in their academic and professional abilities. This experience is in agreement with Cho and Peter's (2016) findings, which revealed that TESOL preservice teachers who conducted their teaching practicum abroad grew both personally and professionally, as well increased in their critical awareness to global issues related to English language teaching. As a result of this personal and professional growth, participants in this study returned to their K.S.A. classrooms able to enact their agency as language professionals to make decisions to adapt or adopt features of the fixed curriculum and how to implement those features. Whereas they mention that before their study-abroad experience, they would follow the textbook page by page, even if they did not agree with it. This is in line with Lasky's (2005) findings on teacher agency being mediated through professional training, which supports the development of professional identities.

In addition to the professional opportunities afforded them in the U.S. setting, the Saudi women's interactions with their professors had an extensive influence on them. Most of their previous interactions with professors and teachers in Saudi Arabia were characterized by what Arabai (2018) describes as having a great degree of "power distance between teachers and learners" (p. 104). The teacher was the central authority in the classroom and behaved towards the students with high formality, "with classroom discourse typically occurring unidirectionally, from the teacher to students" (p.104). However, when they began their U.S. academic studies, the participants were astonished at how their professors in the United States treated them with less of a power differential. They saw their professors laugh, tell jokes, share stories, as well as offer them help, support, and empathy. The professors also established student-centered classrooms, where the participants were highly engaged with the content, having discussions or presenting learning materials. These experiences with professors in the United States provided the participants with new models of teaching. It laid the foundation for them to adopt and adapt these approaches, as well as open doors to create their own hybrid style of teaching.

How have the lived cultural, linguistic, and academic experiences of these individuals shaped their teaching and professional identities?

According to Sachs, teacher identity "is mediated by their own experience in schools and outside of schools as well as their own beliefs and values about what it means to be a teacher and the type of teacher they aspire to be" (2001, p. 145). Likewise, the Saudi women's professional identities were mediated by their experiences studying in the United States. The experiences they had caused them to re-examine who they are as a person and who they wanted to be as a teacher.

One major way that the Saudi women's study-abroad experiences shaped their teaching is that it compelled them to shift their perspectives of their roles as teachers and their approach to

teaching. When they began their studies in United States, there was a dissonance between what they had known and experienced with teachers in Saudi Arabia up until their sojourn and their new experiences with their teachers and professors in the United States. It was during those times of vulnerability of being students in foreign country that they were met by professors who welcomed and supported them, who showed them empathy, understanding, open-mindedness, kindness, humility, and humor. These interactions made an immeasurable difference in making the outcomes of their study-abroad experience very positive. And because these encounters occurred during a time of change for them, it added to their new perspectives of what it meant to be an educator. The multiple encounters with diversity and newfound or increased cultural awareness led to the feeling of common humanity to prevail within the participants (Nussbaum, 1997). In other words, the Saudi women's newly transformed identities led to their openness to embrace a humanistic approach to teaching.

Of particular note in the findings is a strong connection between transformative learning and humanism in education (Khatib et al., 2013). Humanistic education is based on building a relationship with students, seeing them as "whole" people, acknowledging their emotions, facilitating their learning, encouraging their personal growth, and enabling them to reach their potentials. On the other hand, transformative experiences allow for self-realization, re-defined identities, and in the case of academic sojourners, increased autonomy, confidence and empowerment. Accordingly, transformative experiences can be conducive to adopting a more humanistic approach because of they are both related to "whole person" and affective learning. The women who had undergone experiences that are considered transformative see their students as individuals who can achieve the same kinds of growth and development beyond their classroom learning.

In his book *Education and Humanism: Linking Autonomy and Humanity*, Veugelers (2011) argues that a humanistic educator “focuses on developing rationality, autonomy, empowerment, creativity, affections and a concern for humanity” (p.1). This is exactly the pattern shown by the participants. The Saudi women went through transformations that allowed for their personal growth, autonomy, and empowerment, and as a result, they believe in the possibility of their students reaching similar kinds of growth. They are instructing young Saudi female students who they were once in their place, expressing a sincere desire to help them by using their own experiences to provide students with opportunities for growth and empowerment within their classrooms. They are, in a way, “paying it forward”. The Saudi instructors share stories with their students, teach them some of the lessons they have learned, and provide them with some of the same learning experiences they had in the United States, because they recognize their students’ potential. They feel a social responsibility towards their students (Veugelers, 2011), and aspire to help them benefit and grow as much as they did.

In addition, many emotions emerged from the Saudi women’s dialogues about their students and teaching them. Participants discussed feelings of empathy, compassion, kindness, humility, and humor. This is consistent with the humanistic educator approach that makes room for human affect and emotion in the classroom (Khatib et al., 2013; Schunk, 2012; Zhang & Atkin, 2010). Although this may seem trivial, it is an extremely valuable asset in learning, as “without the emotional value that gives salience to positive and negative decisions, people are unable to reason” (Taylor, 2001, p. 224). In fact, the greatest emotion expressed by the participants was empathy. They all showed empathy and understanding of their students’ struggles. This stems from multiple reasons according to their accounts and what is cited in the literature. First, the participants maintain that their empathy arises from having the same

experiences of recently being in the position of a student, which helps them relate to their own students when teaching. Studies have also suggested that women, more than men, are able to show empathy to those who undergo the same experiences (Toussaint & Webb, 2005; Batson et al., 1996). Second, the participants empathize with their students by referring to their understanding of the difficulties of learning a foreign language. This is consistent with the literature showing that non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) have demonstrated an ability to show more empathy towards language learners. Finally, Marx and Moss (2011) find that pre-service teachers who were immersed in a different culture as an outsider, return to their home culture with more empathy. Therefore, the Saudi women's experiences as students abroad, together with their understanding of their students' needs and challenges as NNESTs, help them to build a better understanding of their students and made them feel empathy with their students to a larger degree.

Humanism also acknowledges and accepts imperfection. That is where flexibility, humility, and facilitation come in for these educators who are displaying these humanistic features. The Saudi women are flexible in their classrooms, understanding that the reality of educating is not as neat as something produced by a "robot" or a "machine". Their humility allows to accept the flaws and messiness that comes with real learning. They know that sometimes they might prepare for something, and when the students are "not into" it, they are able to switch gears to a "plan b" that better serves their learning needs (also demonstrating their agency as teachers). They view their roles as facilitators to students' learning and self-actualization, representing a resource for the students, not the only source of knowledge in the classroom. According to Rogers (1969), one of the key figures in humanistic education, these features are at the heart of the humanistic view of teaching: "Rather than imparting learning, the

primary job of teachers is to act as facilitators who establish a classroom climate oriented toward significant learning and help students clarify their goals” (as cited in Schunk, 2012, p. 355). In addition, Rivers (1983) argues that “The foreign language teacher is essentially a humanist” (p. 23) because of how the field exposes them to diversity in the form of new languages and cultures, making them “more open to new ideas” (p. 23). These findings have important implications for how the Saudi women used their lived academic and cultural experiences to shape and transform their teaching and professional identities.

Metaphorical “Motherhood” and “Sisterhood”

One unanticipated finding in the study was how the participants viewed their relationship with their students. With the exception of one participant, the Saudi women in the study viewed themselves as mothers and older sisters to the students. These metaphors for their roles as teachers, which are undoubtedly related to their gender identities (Galea, 2005), was a way to humanize their relationship with their students. Collier argues that, “teachers just like mothers desire to nurture young people into healthy and decent human beings” (2005, p. 357). Thus, by using these metaphors and enacting them in the classroom, they were able to break down the hierarchies existing in the student-teacher in the Saudi educational contexts.

Additionally, the metaphorical ‘motherhood’ and ‘sisterhood’ is a way for the Saudi women to negotiate their new teaching identities in the local Saudi classrooms. While in the United States, they were engaged in the educational institution that allows for a more egalitarian approach to the student-teacher relationships, whereas their K.S.A. educational institutions that employ a more authoritarian approach to the relationship. They needed to construct an approach that they can adapt their roles and merge both understandings as one in their teaching. In addition, family relationships are highly valued in the Saudi culture, as families are considered a

“central institution in Arab culture” (Read, 2004, p. 1043), making it more likely for the participants to see their roles having more familial traits, as opposed to taking on the role of a mentor commonly found in Western cultures. Therefore, familial and maternal metaphors were used a ‘third space’ to construct their relationship with their students. Taking the role of a mother or an older sister allows them to build a caring relationship with their students, yet maintain some of the authority and respect of a mother or older sister. That way they can shift away from a completely authoritarian image and still implement a humanistic way of teaching. Put differently, the Saudi women were able to create a ‘third space’ that allows them to make room for two existing institutions to inform the way perform as professionals in a way that coexist amicably through metaphorical “motherhood” and “sisterhood”.

What is the relevance and application of those experiences in K.S.A. classrooms?

For the Saudi EFL instructors in the study, most often the content of what they learned in U.S. classrooms was not always helpful in their K.S.A. classrooms. However, that does not mean their studies in the United States were not relevant to their teaching. The educational and academic experiences they underwent during their studies provided new possibilities to what a classroom experience could be like. They were part of classroom environments that were different from what they had known before, in conjunction with engaging in the different languages and cultures within those environments. When the Saudi women returned from their U.S. academic sojourn, they re-entered as global citizens and intercultural beings, and in their approach to teaching, especially, they are *transcultural*, meaning that they are able to transcend cultural boundaries. They have acquired “competencies that enable them to operate within more than one cultural code” (Suárez-Orozco, 2004, p. 193); the cultural codes of the Saudi and U.S. educational contexts.

As the Saudi women enter their English classrooms in Saudi Arabia, they are part of, and representatives of, the English language and U.S. culture. At the same time, they are Saudi women who are members of the local culture and language. They are in a ‘hybrid’ symbolic space between cultures where there are more blurred lines between the dualities of “us/them, native speaker/non-native speaker, self/other,” (Kramsch & Uryu, 2010, p. 213) insider/outsider. This “hybridity” allows them to move loosely and seamlessly within those lines code-meshing and code-switching between languages and cultures throughout their instruction. It is through this hybridization that they create their “third space.”

According to Kramsch in the *Multilingual Subject*, this in-between ‘third space’ in the language classroom “opens up spaces of possibility not in abstract theories or in random flights of fancy, but in the particularity of day-to-day language practices, in, through, and across various languages” (2009, pp. 200-201). I would also add the term “cultures” to that definition, as in cultural values and classroom cultures, in how I operationalize the term ‘third space’ in this study,

The Saudi EFL instructors in this study were recently part of the U.S. educational institution that allows for a student-centered culture of learning, then returned to the K.S.A. educational institutions that employ a teacher-centered culture. They cannot simply adopt the U.S. approach in their K.S.A. classrooms; at the same time, they are not willing to abandon it completely. Using their ‘hybrid’ knowledge of both the U.S. and K.S.A. contexts, they create their own classroom context; a ‘third space’ that is unique to them and made relevant to their students. Within this space, they offer a hybrid approach to teaching in which they can mesh and switch between educational institution codes. As observed from their classroom teaching scenes, the instructors bring in educational experiences they had in U.S. classrooms and find ways to

make them work in their K.S.A. classrooms. They assign activities that they experienced in the United States (e.g. discussions, research, poster presentations, etc.) and adapt them by connecting these activities to topics that make sense to the students and the local culture, such as language learning and issues in the local society. However, the “Third Space” is also a place of conflict. Therefore, the students may sometimes resist the new ways in which they are being taught. The participants work with their students to resolve these conflicts in ways that could be considered as compromises. This is further enabled through their humanistic teaching approach that allows for flexibility and providing what is in the students’ best interest to realize their maximum potential. When the students are resistant to an activity that is too different from what they are familiar with, the instructor is able to switch into a closer approximation to their local learning culture.

Within the third space they also shift between the identities of learner and teacher. Their identities as NNESTs allow them to take the position of language learners at times. As shown in the results, they share their learning experiences with students, so that they can both relate and be relatable. At the same time, they shift into their roles as teachers and proficient speakers of English, providing opportunities for their students to learn and giving them guidance in how to improve their language skills. The Saudi women also represent role models to their young female counterparts of how they can, too, achieve proficiency and use the language in confidence. Bhat (2005) suggests that the hybridity found in these classrooms is further enabled by the English language arguing that “the Power of English, through its hybridity, draws on both global and local resources, allowing language consumers to glide effortlessly among local, national, and international identities” (p. 38). Indeed, the English classroom, being a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, is a space that allows for engaging and inviting different cultures.

The role of the participants in the classroom goes beyond being representatives of the English language, to being representatives of the U.S. culture. Living in the United States for several years has given them an insider's view and a greater understanding of the American culture. And in a globalized world, the Saudi women are still able to be a part of the U.S. Culture after their return to Saudi Arabia. Due to advancements in technology, they are able to maintain their connections with the U.S. culture through the internet, media (i.e. social media, movies, videos, and music), and U.S. friends that they are able to keep in touch with. Therefore, the Saudi women who were once ambassadors for their own country in the United States, become "human bridges between cultures upon their return home" (Bochner, as cited in Brown & Graham, 2009, p.79). In a sense, the classrooms have become *contact zones* of language and culture (Kramsch & Uryu, 2010) and these instructors are the bridges.

This bridging of cultures and languages in the classroom creates a culture in its own that "crosses so many cultural and national boundaries, in order to unify people across these boundaries, the values of the global culture necessarily emphasize tolerating and even celebrating differences" (Arnett, 2002, p. 779). As shown in the results, the Saudi women's students come to them with questions about culture (e.g. the discussion of the attic) and even religion (e.g. the discussion about calling someone 'a god'). They are consciously exposing their students to other cultures and relaying messages of open-mindedness to differences in cultures in a more authentic way than can be found in textbooks. It does not mean that they neglect cultural discrepancies. Quite the opposite. The students are asking about the dissimilarities and trying to make sense of them and how they can relate in their own culture, and as a response, their instructors are able to show and promote tolerance and open-mindedness to cultural differences. In fact, the literature shows that individuals with higher levels of development in intercultural

competence recognize differences in culture and are able to accept and make peace with those differences, whereas those with lower intercultural development neglect or minimize those divergences (Hammer, 2012; Greenholtz, 2000). This provides a point of comparison that the students can identify with, or as Claire Kramsch artfully puts it, “Outdoor gardens have no meaning in themselves unless they are related to and contrasted with indoor apartments and dwellings” (2013, p. 71). They can appreciate both the local and global cultures by being aware and open-minded to the differences between them. These results along with their analyses through the literature, support the idea that the Saudi women are bridging cultures in their classroom and promoting intercultural awareness. Therefore, they are assisting in closing the cultural gap, especially in cultures with perceived substantial “cultural distance” (Berry, 1997).

Implications

U.S.-Educated Saudi Instructors of English in HE

When I started this research project, I was curious to investigate how the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) will impact education in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, I wondered how the KASP will “help transform [Saudi Arabia’s] educational system” (Taylor & Albasri, 2014, p. 117), and how it will take place. Although the results of this study are not meant to be generalized, I can answer these questions for the participants in the study, as drawn from findings in the interviews, observations, and survey in addition to the results of similar studies on the KASP.

This study implies that the experiences the Saudi women had while in the United States were transformative. The situations they faced, challenges they overcame, and opportunities they were offered were life-changing and caused them to rethink aspects of their identity. The argument is not only that these changes occurred because there are studies on Saudi women in

the United States and other international sojourners who experienced these changes. Instead, this study argues that those changes are sustained, thus making the experience ‘transformative’.

These women were able to negotiate their newfound strengths and carve a space for them in their teaching communities.

The study also implies that these women are using their experiences to create change in their classrooms. This addresses the claim that large-scale scholarship programs, such as KASP, have the potential for producing educational change. The truth is that in order for education to change, the values of the people in it have to change (Gardner, 2004). That is something that happens gradually over time. What is happening now is that changes are starting in the classrooms of these Saudi women. They are showing their students a different understanding of classroom experiences and a wider view of the world. These teachers are available resources for students to gain insight on cultures and languages in a way that is relevant to them and their daily lives, raising cultural and global awareness among Saudi youth, which is stated as one of the main objectives for learning English by Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Education. In short, if educational change is going to happen over time, it will happen from the bottom up, starting from such classrooms.

Ultimately, the Saudi women in this study are preparing their students for a globalized world. Gardner states that “Education for globalization will select for the crafting and performing of hybrid identities needed to work, think, and play across cultural boundaries” (2004, p. 255). The students are not only being prepared to use English, the language of globalization (Crystal, 2012), but also to be active participants in their quest for knowledge. They are being prepared to think critically, research, and negotiate. Furthermore, the students, who have most likely been exposed to other cultures online via the world wide web, are also

being shown how to display open-mindedness, inter-cultural awareness and tolerance of other cultures, while maintaining respect for their own values and cultural identity.

KASP

There are also implications of changes occurring in small communities having a ripple effect on all of society, thus driving social change. One obvious reason is the considerable number of students who have either graduated or are currently enrolled in the KASP. From 2008 to 2018 alone, 123,614 Saudi students have graduated and returned from international scholarships, 55,342 of them from the United States alone (Saudi Ministry of Education Planning and Development, n.d.). Furthermore, with 85,508 students currently enrolled in the KASP, 45,337 of them in the United States (Ministry of Education, 2019), it is hard to imagine that such a large-scale study-abroad program will not have an impact on society. In fact, in a congressional report on Saudi-U.S. relations, it stated that “the growth in the number of Saudi students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities that occurred after the mid 2000s may have cumulative economic, social, and political effects on Saudi society in future decades” (Congressional Research Service, 2020). Thus, the global experiences of these young educated Saudis are pivotal to the current or future societal changes. This includes the country’s current Vision 2030, which has been especially beneficial to women, allowing them to drive, travel solo, increase their participation in the workforce, and practice sports at schools. These changes could not have been successful or even possible without the role of the Saudi youth returning from international study-abroad programs.

Finally, the results imply that these women, and other Saudis in the program, are bridging the American and Saudi culture in a positive manner, away from the stereotypes that each culture may hold about the other. This is true to both their roles as students in the United States, as well

as their roles as English instructors in Saudi Arabia. It is evident that there is no substitute for personal experience and getting to know individuals personally to broaden one's knowledge and understanding of various cultures. This is especially important when there is a history of political and cultural tensions surrounding international and intercultural relationships in a post 9/11 world (Elyas, 2008; Elyas & Picard, 2010; Hilal & Denman, 2013). As a matter of fact, studying abroad can also be described as a tool for world peace (Hilal & Denman, 2013). The hundreds of thousands of returning Saudi students have come into positions education and leadership where their intercultural awareness, open-mindedness and tolerance are enacted. These messages that are being communicated to students at universities are reaching their families and other community members, promoting the importance of global relations.

The KASP program has undergone recent changes to its structure and is now called "Your Job, Your Scholarship," which emphasizes the importance of promoting knowledge, skills, and talents that target specific professions that are needed in the Saudi job market (Ministry of Education, n.d.). The results of this study imply the importance of such study-abroad programs to continue due to the various benefits on the participants in the program and the society as well. I would also suggest that teacher-education programs in Saudi Arabia preparing future educators of English devise a summer study-abroad program in an English-speaking country as part of the students' coursework. That way, pre-service teachers receive the benefits of a short-term sojourn and build their professional skills as teachers of English.

U.S.- TESOL Education Programs

The U.S.-TESOL programs attended by the Saudi women in this study provided them with unique opportunities and challenges. One of the challenges they faced was the "assigned identity" given to them by others in their program based on the stereotypes and misconceptions

surrounding Saudi women, especially those presented in the media, such as being oppressed, undereducated, not hardworking, and incompetent. Although the participants describe their teachers and professors admitting to them that they had changed their opinions about Saudi women, it is also important that educators are mindful of the messages they are sending. When educators tell that to the Saudi women, in good intentions, they are also implying that they held negative preconceived assumptions about them, which is a form of microaggression that reinforces the stereotypes (Sue, 2010). For that reason, educators must be aware of the assumptions they hold about different cultures that lead to (unintentionally) marginalizing students from that culture. They should also challenge their own assumptions and question why they were made in the first place. By doing these, educators create a more inclusive learning environment in which their students do not feel pressured to disprove false assumptions.

In addition, the study implicates the importance of providing various experiences for international students within the U.S.-TESOL programs, such as promoting multiculturalism in the classroom, providing professional and academic opportunities, as well as creating positive interactions with professors. Together, these experiences had the greatest influence on the participants' transformations and development. These experiences also continued to influence the participants' teaching and interactions with their own students long after they were completed.

Considerations and Future Directions

The findings of this study address a gap in the literature regarding Saudis who return from study-abroad programs in the United States, especially women. Interviewing and observing the female Saudi EFL instructors in this study with experiences in the United States enriches the scholarship on the broader phenomenon by shedding light on a particular subgroup of women. The number of participants in the qualitative analysis is both a strength and limitation. I was able

to gain deep insights to the experiences of these women, as they described them sincerely. However, some of the experiences they reported may not be the case for all Saudi females who had studied in the United States. While this is unavoidable, since everyone's reality and experiences are unique to them, I address these concerns through the triangulation of methods and support from previous literature.

In addition, readers should bear in mind that the study is based on the experiences of women. The absence of male participants is not necessarily a limitation, but it is beyond the scope of the study. Due to cultural constraints, I do not believe I could achieve such a deep understanding if I included Saudi male participants, since gender segregation limits participation across gender.

Future recommendations include examining the experiences of Saudi male EFL instructors who have studied in the United States to understand how their experience intersect with and diverge from the experiences of the women in this study. Another recommendation is to explore the experiences of the students who are in these women's classrooms experiencing the hybrid and humanistic approach to learning described in this study. It would be fruitful to observe whether the students appreciate the change brought in by their EFL instructors based on their U.S. experiences and how they believe it is influencing their learning.

Conclusion

The experiences of these Saudi women living and learning in another country and culture offered them different perspectives that challenged what they had already known about the world. These vulnerable situations offered them opportunities to redefine their identities, creating new understandings and interpretations about themselves in both worlds they belong to. They achieve self-realization and become more independent, openminded, and confident in their

professional abilities. These women then return to their classrooms empowered by those experiences and recognize the young women in their classrooms as younger selves. They pass on the messages that they gained through their study-abroad experience. They teach them with humanism and see them as whole beings with emotional needs, not just intellectual ones. They offer them empathy, compassion, humor, kindness, and humility. The instructors also create a hybrid classroom where they can combine features of their U.S. education with features of the local classroom so that it is still relevant to students. The classroom becomes a place where both cultures and languages come together, creating a third space that is a culture on its own.

Flores and Day (2006) argue that “becoming a teacher involves, in essence, the (trans)formation of the teacher identity” (p. 220). That is the case with these Saudi EFL instructors. Their accounts of their transformative experiences studying in the United States indicate that the scope of their transformation extends far beyond their role in the classroom. The accounts of these women compel us to think about how experiences have an essential role in learning. Added to that is how the human part cannot be separated from learning, seeing as it is how we make sense of the experiences we encounter. According to Dewey, “The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative” (1986, p. 25). Thus, educators are obliged to think about the kinds of experiences they are offering their students and how these experiences may have implications in shaping their realities inside and outside the classroom.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

- Tell me a little bit about yourself and your background.
- Could you describe your educational background?
- What are the experiences that brought you to study in the US? (probing prior learning and work experiences)
- How was your experience studying in the US? (probing learning and cultural experiences)
- How did the experience affect you? (probing the influence on professional identity construction)
- To what extent did the experience influence your teaching? (probing direct influence on teaching)
- Describe your teaching experiences before studying abroad.
- What have you found especially useful from your TESOL education? What have you found not so useful?
- What methods were you exposed to as an EFL student in KSA that you use as a teacher now?
- What methods were you exposed to as an ESL student in the US that you use as a teacher now?

- Did you have other work experiences before teaching? Follow up: What are they? and how do you think they shape who you are right now?
- How does your teaching compare after studying in the US? (probing transfer of knowledge)
- How do you think your students see you? Do you think they see you differently than they did before studying abroad?
- How do your colleagues see you? Do they see you differently than they did before studying abroad?
- How do your coordinators and supervisors see you? Do you think they see you differently than they did before studying abroad?

I will also ask questions regarding the EFL teaching objectives published by the KSA Ministry of Education. For example, I will provide a printed version of the document for them to review and ask some of the following questions:

- What do you think about these objectives?
- How much do you feel these objectives are being realized?
- How do you feel your US education has prepared you or not prepared you to address them?
- Which of these objectives do you feel receives the most attention? Which one the least?
- How do you predict your students will use the English language?

Appendix B: Observation Scheme

Teacher: _____ Date: _____ Class level: _____

Observation number: 1, 2, 3, 4 Time observed: from _____ to _____

	Evidence from Observations	Comments & Notes
Methods and Teaching Style	Use of Arabic	
	Drills and repetition	
	Translation	
	Teacher-centered	
	Grammar-focused	
	Student interaction	
	Student activities	
	Student-centered	
	Critical thinking	
Discussions		

	Mentions of Western cultures	
	Mentions of local culture (Saudi, Islamic, Jeddah, etc.)	
	Cultural comparisons	
Cultural Evidence	Use of authentic materials (books, pictures, videos, music, etc.)	
	Examples from US culture	
	Mentions of American figures	
	Attitude towards Western cultures	
	Experiences as language learner	
Personal Experience	Experiences living abroad	
	Showing empathy with learners	
	Stories from personal experiences	
Other		

Appendix C: Survey Items

How often are these statements true about your experience teaching English in KSA classrooms after studying in the U.S.?

Never – seldom – sometimes – usually – always – N/A

1. I use many of the teaching methods I used before obtaining my degree from the U.S.
2. I find that teaching grammar and translating the content to Arabic is most suitable for teaching my students.
3. I teach English the same way I was taught in KSA classrooms.
4. It is possible for my students to have discussions in English.
5. I teach English the same way I was taught in U.S. classrooms.
6. I face resistance from my students when I try to apply something I learned in the U.S.
7. I share my own experiences learning English with my students
8. I try to help my students understand English-speaking cultures when I teach the language
9. I share the things I learned from living and studying in the U.S. with my students.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Strongly disagree – disagree – neutral or N/A – agree – Strongly agree

10. My students look up to me because they know I earned my degree from the U.S.
11. My colleagues and superiors respect the new ideas I bring in from my experiences in the U.S.
12. I can teach the language better after studying in the U.S.
13. When teaching English in KSA, I apply the same teaching methods I learned about in my U.S. courses.
14. My U.S. education did not prepare me for teaching English in KSA.

15. I adapt what I learned in the U.S. to make it work in Saudi classrooms.
16. My U.S. education is reflected in the way I teach in KSA classrooms.
17. When I teach my students in KSA, I try to think of how my professors taught me in the U.S.
18. I am more confident in my teaching skills after studying in the U.S.
19. Being a non-native speaker in the U.S. helps me understand my students' difficulties with language learning.
20. I am more open-minded and understanding of my students after studying abroad.
21. I am the same teacher I was before studying in the U.S.

Appendix D: Oral Consent Agreement

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my dissertation study and taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me. Before we begin, I'd like to tell you a little more about my dissertation research and what to expect. I'm hoping to learn more about Saudi English university instructors who have completed their education in an American TESOL program, like you.

I'd like to interview you a few times through this month to hear what your experiences are living and studying in the US and then returning to teach in KSA: what you found useful, and what wasn't, and how you think that shapes your teaching and who you are as a person. In our interviews, I will be asking about your experiences in the US and your experiences as a teacher in KSA to help me understand more about the topic. I'd also like to visit your classroom to learn more about your teaching and to have a better understanding of your current experiences. In my classroom visits, because I will not be able to video record, I will be taking notes to help me remember your lesson later. There is no right or wrong way to teach or answer the interview questions. I simply want to learn more about your experiences as teacher. The interviews and observations should not present any risk to you because there are no right or wrong ways to do it. Still, the results will benefit the academic community of EFL instructors, especially in Saudi Arabia, by adding to the knowledge and understanding of teacher education abroad and how teaching takes place locally.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can stop the interview or observation and be removed from the study at any time without harming you or affecting our relationship. I would like to audio record the interviews so I can write it out and study it, but only if you agree. I will save the recording on my personal computer that is password-protected until the end of

December 2021, then I will delete them and only keep the transcripts. Anything that you share or information that I collect will be confidential (private) and will not share it with anyone. In my study, I will not use your name, so no one will know who the participants in my study are.

Thank you for showing that you agree to participate in my dissertation study. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me, Reem Al-Samiri, at [number retracted] or reem.a@ku.edu, or my academic advisor Dr. Lizette Peter at lpeter@ku.edu. I will also leave a copy of this form with you, so you can contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Reem Al-Samiri