



**Saudi University Teachers and Students Navigating Curriculum Change
in Academic Writing: A Complex Adaptive System Perspective**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been written by myself and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own. I also declare that paraphrasing tools (Grammarly & QuillBot) have been used in some parts of this thesis, to provide initial suggestions for paraphrases which I then checked, edited and attributed.

Abstract

This research focuses on an academic English Language Program for preparatory year (PY) university students in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the academic writing component. Prompted by educational changes in Saudi Arabia and within the study context, the study examines the impact of curriculum changes introduced in 2020 to improve students' academic writing skills.

The study aims to: (1) examine factors leading to curriculum changes, (2) explore teachers' perceptions of writing instructional practices, (3) understand preparatory year students' experiences in learning academic writing, and (4) highlight educational and contextual factors influencing teachers and students at a Saudi university. Through the framework of a complex adaptive system (CAS), the study highlights interactions among agents and elements within the system. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and through materials analysis.

Findings emphasized the interconnectedness of the national and institutional contexts, influenced by Vision 2030, which promote English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) at Saudi higher education. The English Language Center (ELC) has adapted its curriculum to improve writing instruction, driven by EMI policies. Leadership dynamics, influenced by KASP experiences, have been crucial in driving these changes.

At the agent level, some teachers have demonstrated qualities of being agents of change, showing adaptability and innovation in their classes; however, the top-down policy to curriculum changes at the ELC has limited the clarity of the English course and affected teacher agency. Students' prior experiences with English writing vary, impacting their readiness for university-level writing. The Preparatory Year demand and curriculum are seen by students as both beneficial and challenging due to its intensive nature.

The main implications of the study point out the importance of aligning educational policies with national goals such as Vision 2030 to ensure effective contributions from higher education institutions to national reforms. Empowering teachers by involving them in curriculum changes enhances their professional agency and autonomy. Establishing systems for continuous evaluation and feedback can ensure curriculum changes remain relevant and effective, supporting ongoing professional development.

Acknowledgments

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CAS	Complex Adaptive System
DoI	Diffusion of Innovation
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGP	English for General Purposes
ELC	English Language Center
ELPPs	English Language Preparatory Programs
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMI	English as a Medium of Instruction
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
KASP	King Abdullah Scholarship Programs
MoE	Ministry of Education
PGA	Process-Genre Approach
PY	Preparatory Year
RD&D	Research, Development and Diffusion
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour

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Chapter One: Introduction

The aim of this study is to understand how curriculum changes are navigated in a specific context in Saudi Arabia and explore the impact of those changes on teachers and students. This research centers on the field of academic writing including teaching, learning and materials of writing at the English Language Center (ELC).

The choice of this subject resulted from my personal observation and my professional ambition to address a topic that I have always been interested in exploring which is writing. Despite its essential role in higher education, writing has often been disregarded by teachers in Saudi Arabia and underestimated by students. This lack of focus on teaching writing at the site of this research has led me to choose this research project.

My goal is to provide an understanding of the current practices and issues associated with teaching and learning academic writing in the preparatory year program, using thorough inquiry and analysis. Through the exploration of this curriculum change at the context, I aim to contribute to the field of curriculum reforms, L2 writing and the chosen theoretical framework: complexity theory.

This study aims to focus on the context, policy, teachers, students and writing materials at the ELC. These elements would potentially lead to a holistic understanding of the topic under investigation, interactions within the system and consequences of these interactions.

1.1. Overview of the Chapter

This chapter presents the details of the ELC curriculum change (1.2), followed by the overview of the research (1.3), including motivation behind the research (1.3.1) and the problem statement (1.3.2.). The theoretical framework of this research has its place in this chapter by giving an overview of complexity theory (1.3.3). Next, I provide an overview of methods (1.3.4), the significance of the research (1.3.5), the aim of the research (1.3.6), the research questions (1.3.7), and my role as the researcher (1.3.8). The final section includes the organization of the thesis and a summary of the chapters (1.4 &

1.5). The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of this research, including all the key elements, before exploring the research in detail in the next chapters.

1.2. ELC Curriculum Change

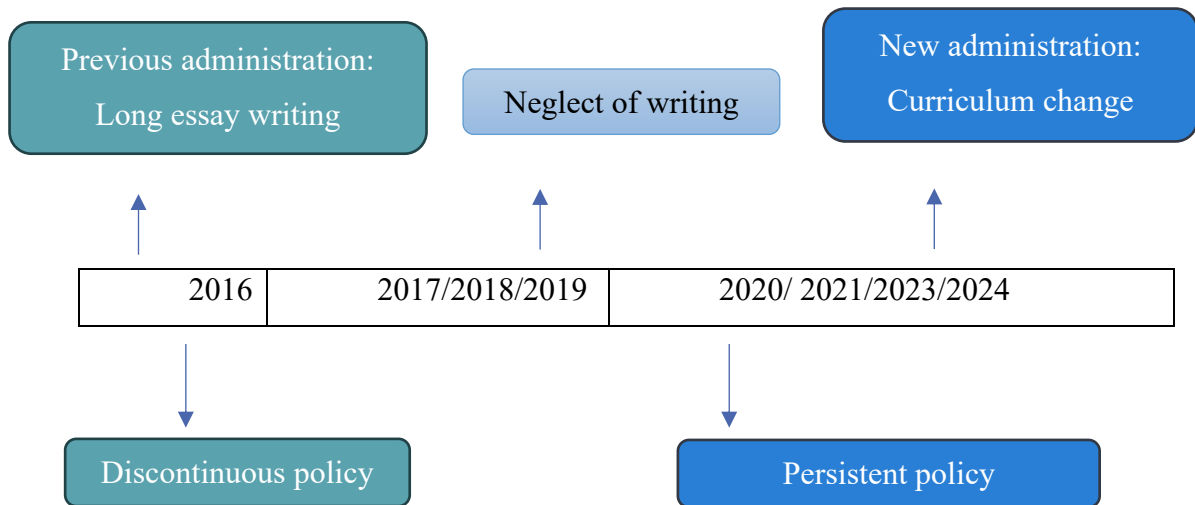
Recognizing the era of change taking place within the Saudi education system, this section provides an overview of the curriculum change which took place in the context under study. Several key points are outlined to provide a clear understanding of the curriculum change. First, I present who introduced the changes and why, including an introduction of the key person responsible for the change, their background information, and their role in the educational system. In the next part, I present key individuals and groups who had a role in the change and their contributions, criteria for selecting these specific individuals. In the subsequent section, I provide an overview of the curriculum change, including specific changes that were implemented, an overview of the materials used, and the processes used to implement the changes. Further details of the materials are given in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

1.2.1. Who Introduced the Curriculum Change and Why

The English Language Center (ELC) at a Saudi university has undergone significant curriculum changes aimed at enhancing the quality of English language instruction, particularly in writing and listening skills. This transformation is rooted in the broader national context of improving tertiary education and integrating English as a medium of instruction (EMI). Figure 1 summarizes the curriculum change, presenting key changes and timelines.

Figure 1

Timeline of changes at the ELC



Before exploring this topic in detail, it is essential to lay out the curriculum change and its elements. The ELC, responsible for providing English courses for the Preparatory Year at the site of this research, has had different administration/policy makers throughout the years. In 2016, under one of the directors back then, a curriculum change for the writing component was introduced, which included writing long essays similar to those used at other institutions. This change lasted only a year before it was removed from the curriculum due to difficulties implementing new practices at the ELC and the challenges teachers faced in teaching writing comprehensively as required. From that time until the beginning of 2020, teaching writing was not part of the curriculum at the ELC.

This situation changed with the new director, a Saudi woman who returned from the United Kingdom after completing her doctorate studies. Upon assuming her role as the director of the ELC, she started outlining changes in different directions. For example, methods of teaching English courses were one of the new foci at the ELC. Writing was reintroduced to the curriculum, and the listening component was also reformed. In this research, I am specifically interested in exploring the curriculum change of the writing component.

In 2020, these changes were implemented at the ELC. According to the administration at the center, adding writing was to prepare students properly for their future studies in an English as a Medium of Instruction context. Certain materials were used at the context, including the model paragraph task, assessment rubric, and writing tasks from the textbooks.

Former administrators at the ELC and active members of the administration committee played pivotal roles in the curriculum changes. Suha (a pseudonym), a teacher and one of the participants in this study, emphasized the importance of a gradual approach to reintroducing writing tasks, drawing from her previous experiences. She advocated for a balanced approach that considered the practicalities of teaching and the demands on both teachers and students.

Samaa, another teacher and former administrator with her PhD in assessment practices, contributed significantly to the development and modification of the assessment rubric. Her expertise in assessment practices helped tailor the rubric to the unique needs of the students and the context of the ELC. The feedback from teachers at the ELC was instrumental in refining the assessment rubric and other teaching materials.

1.2.2. Writing Materials and Their Functions

The newly implemented curriculum included various materials designed to support and enhance writing instruction. These materials were integral to the new teaching practices and were intended to provide a structured approach to writing practice. The specific changes are given in table 1.

Table 1

Curriculum Change Details at the ELC

New and Continued Changes	Details
1- Model Paragraph Task	All teachers are required to use a model task in their classrooms.
2- Two Writing Tasks	The required tasks per semester which students perform, and teachers assess.

3- Assessment Rubric	Teachers use a specific assessment rubric in their practice.
4- Textbook Writing Tasks	Textbooks have not been changed during this curriculum change. They have been used for more than five years at the ELC.
5- Final Writing Task	Students are required to write a task in their final exam. Previously, writing was not assessed in the final exam.

Model Paragraph Task. One of the key materials introduced was the model paragraph. This tool was provided to teachers to guide their instruction and help students understand the structure and format of written English. Teachers at the ELC reported that the model paragraph served as a template for students, enabling them to imitate sentence structures and develop their writing skills systematically.

Two Writing Tasks. The curriculum introduced two main writing tasks per semester, which were modified to align with the students' proficiency levels and the model paragraph. These tasks included practical exercises such as writing an email and describing a city. These tasks aimed to provide students with real-world writing experiences and gradually improve their writing skills.

Assessment Rubric. An essential component of the new curriculum was the assessment rubric used to evaluate students' writing tasks. The rubric included detailed criteria such as content, grammar/vocabulary, mechanics, coherence, and development. This structured assessment method ensured a comprehensive evaluation of students' writing abilities and provided clear guidelines for improvement.

Textbook Tasks. The ELC adopted textbooks from Oxford University Press (OUP), specifically the Milestones series. These textbooks included various writing tasks designed to systematically improve students' skills. The tasks focused on sentence structure, essay writing, collaborative work, and skills such as drafting and editing. This approach provided a comprehensive framework for writing instruction and ensured consistency in teaching practices.

Final Writing Task. The ELC has added a final writing task to the final exam that students perform by the end of the semester. The purpose of this task is to assess students' skills and the course outcomes. The task is typically similar to one of the two writing tasks students have already written during the semester.

1.2.3. Implementation and Adaptation

The implementation of the new curriculum involved several stages, with a focus on gradual and practical changes to ensure sustainability and effectiveness. The initial attempt to introduce writing tasks was about eight years ago. However, these changes were considered too demanding by both teachers and students. The administration at that time required students to complete five paragraphs per semester and take a final writing exam. This approach, although perceived as effective by teachers in improving writing skills, was not well-received due to its high demands on both students and teachers.

Recognizing the need for a more feasible approach, the new administration reintroduced writing tasks gradually. About two years ago, they decided to implement two writing tasks per semester. This approach was more manageable and allowed time for teachers to focus on writing without overwhelming the students.

To further emphasize the importance of writing, the administration included a writing task in the final exam. This decision was based on the understanding that a final exam would motivate students to take writing tasks seriously and work on their skills throughout the semester. This integration aimed to leverage the washback effect, where the presence of a final exam encourages better preparation and skill development.

To conclude, the curriculum change at the ELC responds to the Saudi education system's efforts to enhance English language proficiency among students. By introducing structured writing instruction and assessment methods, the ELC aims to equip students with essential skills for their future academic and professional careers. The gradual implementation and the involvement of experienced administrators and teachers have been key to the introduction of these changes. As the new curriculum continues to evolve, it promises to significantly improve the quality of English language education at the ELC and potentially serve as a model for similar institutions in Saudi Arabia.

1.3. Overview of the Research

1.3.1. Motivation Behind the Research

A few years back when I started my teaching career, I received instructions on what textbooks I would be using, how many lessons I was supposed to teach on a weekly basis and the divisions of marks and overall grade. As a novice teacher I started to ask my colleagues about teaching of writing and the place of writing in their practices. What prompted me to ask was that I noticed that teaching writing was not a topic that teachers were normally discussing compared to other skills, or concerns teachers would have. This disinterest was potentially reflected in the classrooms and among learners. Reasons like *“they will not be assessed in writing”*, *“their exam is multiple choice, and they don’t even need to write a sentence”* were expressed by the teachers at that time. I was excited to improve my students’ writing skills, but I found that I was doing extra work with unmotivated learners and no marks for writing to motivate students either. Therefore, I followed what those teachers were doing.

As I noted I was a novice teacher facing difficulties in teaching writing where little support was given from the administration, teachers and even students. My curiosity grew stronger to explore this topic in my doctoral studies plan. Since I started my doctoral studies, several educational changes at my workplace have taken place which made a significant impact on my area of research.

This research could be my way of exploring in depth what happened when educational changes were introduced. It is motivated by my own curiosity to understand what pedagogy emerges and what persists in teaching writing, why these specific pedagogical practices, and how teachers express their views on the continuous changes in their context. Moreover, I seek to take this exploration further to the students who are themselves facing shifting from high school to higher education level. Specifically, a sample of these students could strengthen my investigation into the context. I aim to explore their experiences with learning writing and what possible changes I could report to enhance teaching and learning of writing at the university.

To begin this exploration, I needed to develop an understanding of what prompted these changes at the higher level (authority at the English Language Center), which was beyond my observations. I also needed an explanation of how these changes on one level have affected another level i.e. teachers and students. To conduct this study, I develop a framework that would help me to look at the phenomenon holistically namely through the perspectives of complexity theory. Deciding to implement this theory came after reviewing the literature and finding its current use and relevancy in the education and applied linguistics fields.

To address this study, I conducted qualitative research in the Saudi Arabia context (the English Language Center within the university). This study was formed in two phases: the first phase was an initial exploration of the context by collecting useful documentation, the second phase was interviewing teachers and students to generate data and ultimately answer the research questions.

1.3.2. Problem Statement

The importance of writing as a skill acquired through explicit instruction is well-recognized in educational research, and there are many studies that have found writing develops through practice and within established teaching approaches (Brown, 2001; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Patel, 2008). However, the effectiveness of writing instruction depends on several factors, such as teachers' choice of the writing approach (Graham, 2019; Wingate, 2006), teachers' understanding of learners' writing needs, interests, and perceptions (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007; Nalliveetil & Mahasneh, 2017), and teachers' knowledge of the learning context where students perform their writing (Mishra, 2019; Pardo, 2006). The complexity of writing in a second language also contributes to the difficulties encountered with teaching it (Ghorbani et al., 2013; Moses & Mohamad, 2019).

L2 writing research in the Saudi context highlight common issues with English comprehension and proficiency among Saudi students (Alshammari, 2020), as well as specific difficulties regarding academic essay writing (Ankawi, 2023). Moreover, studies indicated the need for curriculum revisions to enhance writing instruction, solving common issues, and fostering students' attitudes toward writing (Ababneh, 2020;

Aburizaizah, 2021; Alkhalaf, 2022; Khadawardi, 2022). Furthermore, to align with the Saudi national Vision 2030 which aims at transforming the future of the country, it is essential to re-evaluate teaching approaches and curricular structures in Saudi universities (Yusuf, 2017). Considering these issues, it can be argued that there is a need for curriculum reform in the universities of Saudi Arabia to nurture competent English writers and facilitate overall academic growth among learners.

Mastery of L2 writing by students is not generally viewed as an essential skill in many contexts (Williams, 2012), including the context of this research, and therefore students were not particularly interested in acquiring it. Students were not assessed on their writing skills, nor did they need to use writing to perform well on their exams. This supplementary nature of writing instruction has been found to negatively affect students' proficiency in this skill, as they tended to consider learning to write in a second language as being less important than acquisition of other language skills (Al Fadda, 2012).

With more effort being put by the ELC into improving levels of students' writing proficiency, more focus has been put on writing skills at the English Language Center (ELC, 2020). As of 2020, teachers have been asked to assess students' ESL writing skill and include their results in an overall grade. This shift may have some impact on how teachers and students perceive and experience writing at the ELC. Thus, this research focuses on exploring students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences of existing and emerging writing practices and challenges.

1.3.3. Theoretical Framework

Complexity theory proposes a framework for examining systems characterized by the interaction of several elements or agents in different ways (McDaniel et al., 2013). It emphasizes a holistic outlook over a simplistic cause-and-effect approach, and it serves multiple roles, covering the exploration of learning, development, change, adaptation, and evolution (Mason, 2008; Morrison, 2008).

In the field of education, complexity theory has been integrated into research, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of educational systems, leadership, knowledge (Antonacopoulou & Chiva, 2007; Boal & Schultz, 2007; Borzillo &

Kaminska-Labbe, 2011; Butler & Allen, 2008; Cairney, 2012; Campbell-Hunt, 2007; Davis et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2019). Specifically, complexity theory has emerged as a valuable lens through which to examine learning processes and educational systems, highlighting the concept of complex adaptive systems (CAS), where elements interact and generate new behaviors and patterns (Larsen-Freeman, 1997).

Individual agents and elements within a complex adaptive system, such as teacher and students play a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics and adaptability of educational systems (Davis & Sumara, 2006). Understanding core concepts of CAS, such as heterogeneity, dynamics, openness, feedback loops, path dependence, and unintended consequences, contributes to understanding the complexity of educational systems (Jacobson et al., 2016; Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

This research is motivated by ongoing curriculum change within a university in Saudi Arabia, and a complexity theory framework could serve the aim of this research by increasing understanding of how curriculum changes are navigated in the context and what interactions among agents/ elements have taken place.

1.3.4. Overview of Methodology

The method used to conduct this research is a qualitative research approach focusing on understanding real world issues and experiences from the perspectives of the individuals (Harvey, 2018; Kılıçoğlu, 2018). To gain these perspectives from the teachers and students in at the university, I interviewed nine English teachers and eight PY students. The interviews were semi-structured giving both participants and I as the researcher the opportunity to elaborate on certain aspects during the interviews. Along with the interviews, I conducted materials analysis as a data source to complement the interviews. The purpose of this review of policy documents and writing materials is to understand the curriculum change at the context, and to be able to ask teachers and students questions related to the writing materials.

1.3.5. Significance of the Research

This study contributes to the discourse on academic writing in Saudi Arabia. On a contextual level, teaching of academic writing at the higher education has been avoided by teachers in Saudi Arabia and underestimated by students, highlighting a gap that this research aims to fill by exploring current curriculum change and its impact. Additionally, the motivation for this research stems from recognizing the complexities of existing academic writing practices and their implications for educational systems. The research aims to make observations about academic writing practices and their consequences, offering suggestions for policy makers and teachers to develop effective teaching and learning practices, especially for the preparatory year program in Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, the field covered in this study contributes to education, applied linguistics, and curriculum change. It contributes to these fields by exploring the complexity of curriculum change and teachers and students' experience of teaching and learning academic writing, offering insights into curriculum change processes for improving teaching practices and student success in higher education settings. Also, the research contributes to the framework of complex adaptive systems to understand higher education policy changes in coping with educational environments, which is particularly important in university contexts.

1.3.6. Aim of the Research

The aim of this study is to interrogate curriculum change at the university level in Saudi Arabia, and specifically to: (1) examine factors leading to the curriculum change in the context of the study, (2) explore teachers' perceptions in relation to their writing instructional practices, and their roles in the context, (3) explore the preparatory year (PY) students' experiences in learning academic writing, and (4) shed light on the educational and contextual factors influencing both teachers and students in relation to this topic at a university in Saudi Arabia.

1.3.7. Research Questions

This study investigates the transition process and impacts of the curriculum change in the English Language Center (ELC) from different perspectives of teachers and students.

RQ1: What contextual factors influence the curriculum change at the preparatory year at the university?

RQ2: How do teachers and students interact with the context and what are the consequences of these interactions?

RQ3: How do teachers and students interact with curriculum change and what are the consequences of these interactions?

1.3.8. Researcher's Role

During the conduct of this study, I was the main researcher from the beginning to the final stage. Although I am an English lecturer at the ELC, I was not involved in any decision-making for the curriculum change, nor did I teach writing classes with the new format. Therefore, I consider myself an outsider conducting research to explore the changes at the ELC. My responsibilities were selecting teachers and students for the research, conducting interviews, selecting relevant documents, and reviewing them. Moreover, I ensured that the process of data collection was ethical and that the participants signed the consent forms. Furthermore, I conducted the analysis of the data, made informed decisions regarding coding and the final themes. I tried to be reflective through the whole process by making analytical memos to help me expand my knowledge and strengthen the research.

1.4. Organization of the Thesis

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I present the key elements of the research including background of the study, problem statement, theoretical framework, significance, aim and research questions. In chapter 2, I introduce the context of this research focusing on the Saudi education history, current education system, national initiatives such as Vision 2030, teaching English in the country with the last section focusing on the tertiary level.

In chapter 3, I move to the literature review exploring areas related to this research. I discuss complexity theory, curriculum change, and teachers and students' experiences with teaching and learning of writing. In chapter 4, I focus on the research methodology describing the qualitative approach, the research site, the ELC and its English Language programs, the research data collection and analysis, and validation of the research.

In chapters 5, 6 and 7, I begin presenting the findings of the research starting with the documents followed by teachers and students' views. All these chapters are supported with the documents and the interviews. In chapter 8, I discuss the findings of the research starting with the context, teachers and then students. This chapter ends with a reflection on the theoretical framework. In chapter 9, I conclude this thesis by giving an overview of the study with a focus on answering the three research questions. I outline the research implications, limitations, and future research areas. I close this thesis with my reflection on the PhD journey.

1.5. Summary of the Chapter

The first chapter of this thesis started with the background for the study, followed by the overview of the research. This overview covered the problem statement, theoretical framework, overview of methodology, significance of the research, and aim of the research. I introduced the research questions I posed to investigate this topic and the researcher's role. Finally, I outline the thesis's organization, giving a brief description of each chapter in this thesis. In the next chapter, I present the context of the study, covering several aspects related to this research.

Chapter Two: Context of the Research

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present the context of this research from the general background to specific details about the Saudi education system. The aim of this study is to understand how curriculum changes are navigated in a specific context and explore the impact of those changes on teachers and students. The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the current research within the Saudi educational system, focusing on national initiatives, the tertiary level, the preparatory year, and practices of academic writing at the Saudi tertiary level.

In the first section I provide an overview about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) (2.2), its location, educational history, and influences on education. In the following section, I highlight King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) with a focus on women's education (2.3). Next, I describe different aspects of Vision 2030 including educational projects and challenges facing the Vision (2.4).

The second section focuses on the development of English language teaching (ELT) in KSA in different period of times (2.5). In the subsequent section, I move to the higher education (HE) system shedding light on the preparatory year (PY), its aim and language of instruction, and students' attitudes toward PY (2.6 & 2.7). This section concludes with a review of empirical studies in relation to the English programs at the PY and the writing component (2.8).

2.2. Overview of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

In the section I present an overview of the KSA. I highlight several areas starting from the location and population, a summary of the historical background of education, the Saudi education system, and the influence of religion and economy on education. The purpose of this section is to provide a general foundation of the education system in KSA before moving into a narrow focus in this chapter.

2.2.1. Location of KSA

Saudi Arabia is in the Middle East surrounded by the Gulf countries including Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Qatar. Besides these countries,

the kingdom is bordered by the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf. Saudi Arabia is well-known by its strategic location in the area. The capital of the kingdom is Riyadh located in the central region. The second most populated city is Jeddah considered as the major port city overlooking the Red Sea. In the eastern region, Dammam is the third largest city and the main Arabian Gulf port. In KSA, the total population was reported by the General Authority for Statistics (2021) to be 34.1 million in 2021 (mid-year). The numbers of population have decreased 2.6 percent compared to 2020 when the population was estimated to be 35.0 million. In the next section I focus on three areas: the history of education in KSA followed by the education system and influences on education.

2.2.2. Historical Background of Education

Education began with the establishment of the Directorate of Education in 1926, which has expanded nationwide after the Kingdom's formation in 1932. The first Ministry of Education was established in 1952, managing general education for boys, while the General Presidency for Girls' Education was founded in 1959 (MoE, 2021).

In 2003, the General Presidency for Girls' Education was merged into the Ministry of Education. Also, it is worth noting that the Ministry of Higher Education began operation in 1975 overseeing all university programs. Then, in 2015, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education were unified into one ministry named the Ministry of Education. This new Ministry of Education has set its mission as the following:

Making education accessible to all and raising the quality of its processes and outputs. Developing an educational environment that stimulates creativity and innovation to meet the requirements of development, improving the education system governance, developing the skills and capabilities of its employees, and providing learners with the necessary values and skills to become good citizens, and aware of their responsibilities towards the family, society, and homeland (MoE, 2021, para. Mission).

Moreover, the objectives of the Ministry of Education are to improve the overall environment of education and its institutions to reach the international competitive level. To achieve these objectives, the Ministry of Education (2021) strives to:

1. Encourage family involvement to prepare children for their future.
2. Establish a cohesive educational pathway.
3. Promote equal access to education.
4. Enhance fundamental educational achievements.
5. Enhance the standing of educational institutions.
6. Provide specialized knowledge in priority fields for outstanding individuals.
7. Ensure that educational achievements align with the demands of the labor market.

2.2.3. The Education System in KSA

The education system begins at the age of six, students are required to enrol in *the primary stage*, which is a compulsory stage in Saudi Arabia. Students who complete the primary stage can progress to the intermediate stage. *The intermediate stage* spans three years and consists of students aged 12 to 14. Upon completion of this stage, students transition to *secondary education*. The final phase of public education in Saudi Arabia, high school, admits students aged 15 to 19. *The tertiary level* follows secondary schools where students enrol at universities from the age of 19 (Alharbi, 2023).

At the higher education system, different programs are provided to students. Students could study postsecondary diploma, Bachelor of Science, teaching degree, bachelor's degree, higher diploma in education, master's degree and finally, doctoral degree (NCES, 2015). Few doctoral degree programs are offered at Saudi Arabian universities, leading many students to pursue doctoral studies overseas under the scholarship programs (2.3).

Having explored the education system, it is essential to note that religion and economy have shaped the education in KSA. These two primary factors are presented in the next section along with their impact on education.

2.2.4. Influences on Education in KSA

Religion. Islam is the official religion, while Arabic is the official language spoken among Saudi citizens. The importance of education in the Islamic beliefs is underscored by the first revelation of the Quran when Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) was instructed to “*Read. Read in the name of thy Lord who created; [He] created the human being from blood clot.*” (Quran, 1-5).

The Islamic values and principles, which are rooted in the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad emphasize the right to education for all, particularly for women, highlighting the significance of women’s empowerment (Karimullah, 2023). Some of these educational principles highlight practicing reflection, gaining wisdom, understanding different perspectives of people, encouraging respect for others, and finally encouraging continuous learning, and self-improvement (Alzitawi, 2022; Ratnasari, 2022).

For the Islamic world, KSA has a religious importance as being the birthplace of Islam. Muslims around the world go to Saudi Arabia particularly to the cities of Makkah and Medina where the two holy mosques are found. According to Quamar (2020), religion holds importance in Saudi socio-political life. Therefore, understanding the role of religion in shaping the education system is crucial to comprehend the ongoing changes within it.

The education system in Saudi Arabia possesses distinctive characteristics (Marghalani, 2017). It prioritizes and is influenced by Islamic values, it operates under a centralized structure where decisions are made by the Ministry of Education, and it maintains segregated schooling for male and female students. Moreover, Almalki (2023) emphasized that the traditions of gender segregation are meeting the social value system, appreciating, and following religious principles. At present the education system is still following this segregation of students and staff in its institutions. This signifies the

ongoing influence of religion on the education system in KSA. In the next section, I detail the impact of economy on education.

Economy. Economy is another elemental factor that has influenced the field of education in KSA. The kingdom has greatly invested in its educational system with a focus on higher education to build a knowledge society (Mishrif & Alabduljabbar, 2018; Onsmann, 2011; Saha, 2015). Over the past decade, there has been an emphasis on the role of education as a driver of economic growth and wider social development. These changes have led to significant investments in the education sector, including the development of many new universities and much more widespread access to higher education (Jenkins 2022; Saha 2015).

The discovery of oil in KSA has a major impact on the education sector. According to Ramady and Al-Sahlawi (2005), oil funding has enabled the government to invest in education by building universities, improving curriculum, and learning resources, sending students to study abroad and finally improving access to education.

In the year 2022, education funding in Saudi Arabia was estimated at \$37.5 billion, outpacing the amounts allocated to any other sector. The value of the education market is projected to exceed \$15 billion by 2030, a substantial surge from its \$4 billion in 2017 (HMC, 2022). For the higher education, in the recent years, the budget has tripled to \$15 billion (Gonaim, 2021).

The efforts to improve education were also seen through national initiatives: the launch of *King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP)* in 2005 and the launch of *Vision 2030* in 2016. In the next section, I discuss both initiatives in detail.

2.3. King Abdullah Scholarship Programs (KASP)

2.3.1. Overview of the Programs

This section of the chapter discusses the scholarship programs where Saudi students are given the opportunity to pursue their studies abroad. The purpose of this section is to serve as a background into the programs, their aim, statistics, and impact on Saudi women. Given the fact that some of the teachers in this research have been granted

funding under KASP, and to contextualize their experiences, it is essential to provide an overview of this program.

Since its establishment in 2005, the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) marked a significant shift in Saudi education, sending the first batch of Saudi students to the United States. Over time, the program evolved and became the largest scholarship program in the history of KSA, sending students to several countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and others (Alhalabi et al., 2017). This large scholarship program enabled Saudi scholarship recipients to study various levels of education, including a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, a doctorate, and a medical fellowship.

According to Smith and Abouammoh (2013), of 107,706 of the students enrolled in international institutions, 85 % of them were enrolled through the King Abdullah Scholarship and they were fully funded. The selection of academic disciplines and scholarships for the scholarship program has been aligned with the needs of the ministries, government agencies and private sector companies, to address the needs of the labour market in Saudi Arabia, and to get enough skilled human capital (SACM, 2024).

The primary objective of KASP is to prepare Saudi youth who are qualified to contribute effectively to the national development of the various economic sectors of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Government, annually, is allocating approximately SR. 9 billion (\$2.4 billion) to KASP. The Saudi government sponsors the education of about 130,000 Saudi students, studying abroad. The undergraduate schools of study currently supported by KASP are medicine, medical science, health science. Additional fields of study are supported at the postgraduate level (SACM, 2024).

The programs cover both male and female students who aim to pursue their education abroad. In the next section, I shed light on this aspect of the programs and the potential impact of these scholarships on Saudi women.

2.3.2. KASP and Saudi Women

Since it first launched in 2005, the King Abdullah Scholarship Program has allowed more than 50,000 women from Saudi Arabia to study overseas, primarily in

Western nations. Every year, hundreds of these women return to their home country (Alamri, 2017). The purpose of this section is to explore the influence of KASP on Saudi women who have pursued education abroad and have returned to KSA.

Scholars believe that KASP has a wide impact on Saudi students, in particular Saudi female students taking advantage of these programs. Mughal (2021) points out that KASP has expanded education to Saudi women, giving them opportunities to broaden their academic qualifications. This in return increases the number of women in the workplace, diversities the economy and consequently leads to achieving Vision 2030 (see 2.4).

Moreover, Alsqoor (2018) adds that KASP has had a profound impact on Saudi female students, both during their studies abroad and upon their return to Saudi Arabia. The program has not only enhanced the leadership skills of students but has also fostered personal growth and positive changes in both their professional and personal lives.

Additionally, KASP has played a pivotal role in shaping students' perceptions of female leadership within Saudi Arabia and has provided them with exposure to other cultures and mixed- gender settings and different educational systems, leading to transformative experiences. The program has been particularly influential in fostering leadership capabilities of Saudi females, leading to women's empowerment (Alsqoor, 2018; Rather, 2016; Young & Snead, 2017).

To conclude, in this section I emphasized KASP as a major national initiative in KSA where Saudi students are granted the opportunities to pursue their studies abroad, focusing on the impact of these programs on women. In the next section, I move to another recent initiative covering different aspects of Saudi future.

2.4. Vision 2030

2.4.1. Overview of the Vision

This Vision is a national initiative of the Saudi crown prince Mohammad Bin Salman to diversify the economy away from petrochemicals (making it less reliant on oil revenues), revitalize the economy and raise performance in all sectors above world

benchmarks, and enhance the quality of life in the Kingdom across many sectors such as education, healthcare, overcoming water shortage and growing the economy (Vision 2030, 2021).

2.4.2. Education in Vision 2030

The most important part of Saudi Vision 2030 is the ***National Transformation Program*** (NTP). It aims to transform Saudi Arabia's education system and diversify its economy. It also seeks to create employment opportunities for many young Saudis. Moreover, NTP aims to improve the educational quality by enhancing the processes of recruiting teachers, teacher training and development, and developing curriculum and methods of teaching. Also, it targets enhancing students' values and core skills as well as creativity and innovation (Vision 2030, 2021).

Due to the importance of the English Language in KSA (see 2.5.1), in Vision 2030, the government of Saudi Arabia is committed to pushing English language education forward in service of the country's greater economic and social needs (Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023). The Vision goes to great lengths to develop a wide variety of English language training and education courses, for everyone from young students to working professionals (Alqahtani & Albidewi, 2022). The Vision also underscores the importance of English language competency for the global sustainability and competitiveness of the country (Khan, 2021).

Albiladi (2022) adds that to realize the country's larger educational goals for English language, there is a need for effective substitutes for traditional language curricula, more technology in their methods of education, developing teamwork, students' open-mindedness, and using language strategies suitable for preparing learners for the job market.

To achieve the educational goals of the Vision, the Ministry of Education has focused on projects to develop the educational system in KSA and to lead to results that serve the future of Saudis. According to MoE (2020), some of these projects have been completed, some are in progress, and some are planned in the future.

Completed Projects. There have been many newly established projects that have supplemented the educational progress in KSA. These projects included:

1. educational job list: transforming teaching into a respected profession, aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for human capital development. SDGs were launched by the United Nations in 2015, to ensure access to affordable living standards, protect the environment, reduce poverty, improve healthcare and education, and foster gender equality (Digital Government Authority, 2023).
- 2- virtual school: providing comprehensive, equitable, and high-quality education through distance learning.
3. future gate: transitioning from traditional to digital education to meet the challenges of achieving SDGs for inclusive and quality education.

Projects Underway. The ministry of education highlighted the projects that are underway in KSA. These projects include the following:

- 1)- *the new higher education system* which is a system based on credibility of academic quality, achieving autonomy in financial, administrative, and academic affairs, achieving excellence in all areas, and meeting the needs of the national economy.
- 2)- *early childhood education enhancement* which focuses on investing in schools for boys and girls to ensure distinctive and excellent educational level.
- 3)- *national school tournament* which presents a cooperation between Ministry of Education and General Sport Authority.
- 4)- *the talent identification system* which targets the time of schools to qualify the potentials of young males and females for creativity and innovation.
- 5)- *teacher professional development program* which highlights improving educational outputs and strengthening the quality of teachers.

Future Projects. This project aligns with this current research where I focus on PY students' experiences. Preparing students at high school level might feed positively

into their tertiary education. This project is called *development of high school tracks and specialized academies*. It focuses on introducing a novel high school education model in Saudi Arabia, and it focuses on preparing students comprehensively for post-high school life, aligning with Vision 2030 goals. It includes specialized academies tailored to meet labour market demands and various high school tracks with a contemporary curriculum and innovative teaching methods.

Targeting all public high school students, this project aims to enhance educational efficiency, improve output quality, equip students with diverse skills, foster entrepreneurship, and promote citizenship values. It also seeks to prepare students for university studies, address future occupational needs, reduce unemployment, and raise awareness about future disciplines and required capabilities (MoE, 2020).

Educational Initiatives. Along with the above projects, the ministry of education has planned initiatives including the following: housing Subsidy Initiative, research and development support initiative, digital skills development initiative, Saudi digital library initiative and finally, Ryadee (pioneer) initiative.

To conclude, in this section, I presented an overview of the Vision 2030 and its main projects in the educational system. In the next section, I focused on the Impact of Vision 2030 on English Language Teaching (ELT) in the Saudi context.

2.4.3. Saudi Vision 2030 Impact on ELT

Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia has outlined an ambitious plan to reform the country's education system with a strong emphasis on English Language Teaching (ELT) as one of its components. With English increasingly being the language of instruction at different levels in Saudi schools, it is important to know how these changes are perceived by educators, students and other stakeholders through whom they are initiated. Many studies have discussed Vision 2030's impact on ELT and EMI, highlighting both opportunities and challenges associated with this transformation. This literature review collects findings from various studies to give a holistic view of the current situation of ELT in Saudi Arabia within the framework of Vision 2030 concerning changes in the role

played by English, the interrelationship between ELT and Vision 2030, and difficulties occurring on the way.

Khawaji (2022) argued that Vision 2030 has led to a dramatic shift in the status of English in Saudi Arabia, with an increasing number of proficient Saudi graduates leading to a decline in dependence on native English teachers. This indicates that Saudi Arabia is becoming more self-sufficient in teaching English as well as other subjects offered in their country. This perspective is further explored by Ndiaye et al. (2024), who studied how Teaching English as a Second Language and Vision 2030 are connected. The study established that Vision 2030 has significantly reshaped the education system in Saudi Arabia by introducing, among other things, changes in the approach to ELT. Among these alterations are updated syllabi, changes in teaching methods and the establishment of new standards compliant with Vision 2030 objectives.

Similarly, Jabeen (2023) investigated the impacts of the English language policy under Vision 2030 on teaching and learning process. The study concluded that EFL teachers were confronted with numerous challenges in embracing the new change mainly due to inadequacy in professional development opportunities especially for teaching young learners. Moreover, the lack of essential communication skills made the current EFL curriculum inadequate to meet policy requirements. This study showed a disconnect between policy goals and practical implementation as revealed by other related studies.

The influence of Vision 2030 on higher education, particularly in the teaching of English as an additional language, was the focus of Alfahadi (2019). The study showed that Vision 2030 has had a significant positive effect on both learning and professional development with a strong correlation between its implementation and improved ways of teaching EFL. However, the research also pointed out problems of incorporating modern technologies into EFL teaching, reflecting wider challenges of fitting education practices to this ambitious Vision.

Additionally, Khan (2021) stressed the importance of teachers in realizing Vision 2030 especially in preparing the young generation for the future aligned with what it seeks to achieve. Although it was evident that most teachers' commitment revolved around

ensuring that students are provided with appropriate skills, teachers were also aware that they need further advanced knowledge and expertise about how to bring these ideas into reality through pedagogical practices. This theme recurs throughout literature reviewed, including works by Jabeen (2023).

The characteristics and perceptions of English language teachers in the context of Vision 2030 were explored by Shawaqfeh (2018) and Al-Shehri (2020). Shawaqfeh (2018) identified four key categories for teachers: technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities. The study showed that these qualities were consistent with the educational aspirations of Vision 2030 implying that teacher effectiveness is crucial if desired results are to be achieved. Nonetheless, this study concluded that such attributes require deliberate preparation which was also found out by other studies in this review. Al-Shehri (2020) examined in a longitudinal study teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards Vision 2030 in the context of English Language Teaching. The study involved 15 female in-service teachers of English at two different time periods to capture any change that may have occurred in their views over time. Almost all the participants had a positive attitude towards Vision 2030. Despite that, there was no relationship between how the teachers thought about teaching and their actual classroom practices like technology use, pedagogy and implications for vision.

Lastly, Alhuthaif (2019) studied how lecturers at a Saudi university specialized in EFL understood and put into practice the concept of international mindedness as per Vision 2030. The research revealed that faculty members' interpretations of international mindedness were diverse due to their backgrounds as well as some obstacles like limited resources and inadequate institutional support. These findings stressed the need for a systematic approach for developing an international mindset and suggest collaboration among instructors to achieve Vision 2030 educational objectives effectively.

To conclude, research provided an understanding of the impact of Vision 2030 on ELT and the broader educational system in Saudi Arabia. Although there is a recognition of the significance of English and a general objective alignment with Vision 2030, significant hurdles remain. These include better teacher professional development, integration of modern teaching methods and technologies, and preservation of cultural and linguistic identity. These challenges must be addressed by Saudi Arabia as it attempts

to realize Vision 2030; otherwise, these aims will not be easily achieved. Despite the Vision objectives, projects and impact, some challenges still existed in different sectors in the Saudi context. In the next section, I discuss challenges faced by Vision 2030.

2.4.4. Challenges Facing the Vision 2030

Having presented the key objectives and projects of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and explored its influence on English language teaching, in this section I present several challenges that could be noticed in different areas of the Vision including the sector of education. Scholars (Abdulrahman et al., 2022; Kumar, 2023; Mirghani, 2020) argued that Vision 2030 faces a variety of challenges in the Saudi context.

First, Kumar (2023) believed that the societal, cultural, and religious aspects pose challenges to Vision 2030, especially because it promotes reforms that could conflict with the attitudes and beliefs in Saudi Arabia. Abdulrahman et al. (2022) added that the lack of training institutions and graduate centers presents a challenge for Vision 2030 as the economy would need to create advanced skills to function in a globalised world.

In the field of education in Saudi Arabia, in particular, many issues were reported as challenges to the Vision of the education system and what it is trying to achieve. According to Abdulrahman et al. (2022), the fact that there is a lack of knowledge of the types of specialisations that the Saudi workforce and Saudi economy would benefit from presents a significant challenge to the success of Vision 2030. These researchers also added that the increase in the number of graduates, particularly university graduates, is another challenge for Saudi Arabia. Even though Saudi students are completing their higher education every year, there is a lack of employment for these students. The biggest challenge for Vision 2030 is how to solve problems of transitioning from education to employment. Similarly, Mirghani (2020) emphasized the following challenges for the educational system:

- 1) Rote learning is common in Saudi education, which is a considerable disadvantage. This method of learning does not help in stimulating the ability to be creative, being innovative and thinking critically among the students and educators of the higher education.

2) The cultural factor is another issue where the decision-makers must struggle between traditional culture and religion and, at the same time, modernization, using technology, and aligning with the demands of the world.

3) The inadequate level of proficiency in English language among many teachers and students in the Saudi education system.

4) The shortcoming of the training courses taken by the teachers is a major obstacle. Teacher education must be addressed as it affects the quality of educators and their roles in preparing students for their studies.

To conclude, recognizing the challenges facing Vision 2030 highlights the need for changes across various sectors, including education, within the Saudi context. In the next section, I outline the key changes necessary for Saudi Arabia to successfully achieve the goals of Vision 2030.

2.4.5. Changes to Meet Vision 2030

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 acts as a radical project directed at altering the country from its traditional oil-dependent status into a diversified, knowledge-based economy. To reach this ambitious objective, higher education sector must be reformed especially in curriculum and teaching methods. The situation of Saudi Arabian university curricula has been analysed in several studies which have indicated that there is an urgent necessity for significant reforms so as the educational outcomes are aligned with the objectives of Vision 2030. This literature review comprises research findings on changes needed in educational practices addressing how the curriculum adjustments can facilitate Saudi Arabia's shift towards innovation-oriented nations.

According to Al Zahrani (2017), language is crucial in economic growth, suggesting that Saudi Arabia should implement effective language education approaches that have worked for other countries as it transitions into a knowledge-based economy. The researcher argued that it is essential for educational policy makers to prioritize English training within the context of Vision 2030 to enhance the nation's global competitiveness. This sentiment is shared by Mitchell and Alfuraih (2017) who argued that structured professional development in such aspects as curriculum, pedagogy and

English language proficiency, must be provided to teachers, if they are to achieve the goals envisioned under vision 2030.

Supporting this argument, Albiladi (2022) identified the need for significant changes in English teaching and learning approaches to meet Vision 2030's educational goals. according to Albiladi (2022), traditional language curricula should be abandoned in favour of authentic materials, technology integration into L2 classes, collaborative learning approaches adopted. The above changes are necessary towards nurturing openness, tolerance and employability among Saudi Arabian students while also aligning with broad objectives for vision 2030.

However, challenges persist in motivating both teachers and students towards these new educational goals. Khan (2011) argued that the content provided for teaching is not enough. University administrations have been trying to motivate teachers and learners, but commitment and dedication remain some of the areas that are questionable. The researcher pointed out that the role of teachers should be defined where they act as administrators, curriculum designers, facilitators, planners with reference to Vision 2030 educational interests.

Further emphasizing the need for curriculum reform, Abdullateef et al. (2023) highlighted that there must be an alignment between the curricula offered in Saudi universities and labour market needs and economic diversification projects associated with Vision 2030. This is also suggested by Abdulqadir et al. (2018), who advocated for reforming science curricula at elementary level to promote innovation among students and enhance their technological preparedness. These changes are critical in enabling the youth of Saudi Arabia adapt better to fast-paced global economies.

Allmnakrah and Evers (2019) highlighted the importance of comprehensive educational reform through initiatives like the Education Development Project (Tatweer), which was initiated by King Abdullah. The project stressed curriculum updating and adopting better teaching methods which would help students be ready for a varied and competitive economy. Similarly, Alotabi (2022) underscored that Vision 2030 requires reevaluating the professional education syllabus at secondary school level especially in areas where the current curriculum is inadequate.

Moreover, Mahmoud and Al-Othmany (2021) reinforced this sentiment by stressing out that new syllabuses are important, qualified teachers and engaged learners are prerequisites towards meeting vision 2030 objectives as well as goals of the Ministry of Education. These components will encourage an atmosphere that brings about fresh ideas into our educational system making them fit to be used by people who are going to tomorrow's workers.

Additionally, Mohiuddin et al. (2023) evaluated the status of higher education institutions relative to Vision 2030 goals. The main priorities highlighted include formulation and implementation of contemporary curricula, enrichment of staff training programs, cultivation of a culture for research innovation, and production of graduates with relevant competences to the labour market. Such priorities are indeed essential in bridging the gap between educational outcome and labour market demand aimed at forming knowledge-based society.

Al-Mwzaiji and Muhammad (2023) conducted a qualitative review of previous studies on EFL learning versus Vision 2030, asserting that EFL learning in Saudi Arabia has not yet been appropriately aligned towards meeting the ambitious goals of Vision 2030. These researchers contended that it is necessary to improve EFL education if Saudi students are to be effectively involved in global economy as well as exchange ideas. They argue that strategic improvements in EFL teaching would be important for achieving Vision 2030's set objectives specially when it comes to preparing learners for global economic challenges.

In summary, this section demonstrated the importance of curriculum reform in realizing Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. This means that education practices need to be adjusted to meet the demands of a new oil-independent economy, which is based on knowledge and innovation. Recommendations by researchers stressed on updating curricula, teacher professional development programs as well as technological inclusion and innovative teaching methods into classroom instruction. Addressing these areas will enable Saudi Arabia to better prepare its young generation for survival in a global economic race thus achieving Vision 2030 objectives at long run.

Recognizing the role of ELT in Vision 2030, it is essential to understand its importance within the Saudi educational system. In the following section, I explore the significance of English in Saudi Arabia and the development of ELT.

2.5. English Language Teaching (ELT) in Saudi Education

2.5.1. Overview of Importance of English Language in KSA

In Saudi Arabia like any other country where English is not the first language, English has its place in many aspects of the country which gives it importance in being introduced and used in different industries. In this section, I talk about the importance of English language in KSA, the development of ELT, and difficulties of the ELT in the Saudi system. The purpose of this section is to highlight the importance of English Language in KSA, the history and present status of ELT to understand the complexities of this current research.

To begin with, the importance of having an adequate level in English language could be found in different domains in the country. For instance, the tourism industry has been growing in the kingdom leading to more attention and requirements for English to be used and learned among Saudi citizens. In a recent survey conducted in the country, Al-Malki et al. (2022) found that speaking, reading, and listening skills in English were crucial for Saudis working in the tourism industry. These skills were necessary for interaction with visitors and introducing attractions in the Kingdom.

In the medical domain, health professionals working in Saudi Arabia consider medical English to be an important requirement, especially during periods when global communication and coordination is needed due to an international crisis (Azzhrani & Alghamdi 2020). Likewise, having a good command of the English language is considered essential in the medical sector to be able to understand medical terminology and concepts, perform surgeries and medical procedures accurately, give proper instructions, and give quick responses in case of medical emergencies (Alqurashi, 2016). Most medical students and faculties in Saudi Arabia prefer English as the medium of instruction for higher medical education to have easier access to medical science literature and to have better chances of getting employed (Alrajhi et al., 2019).

In business, being fluent in English is key to economic success. It means being able to engage in international trade, shape economies, and build business relationships. Being the primary language of many international organizations and institutions, it leads to enhanced marketing, negotiation, and entrepreneurial outcomes, and has a positive impact on an economy's wellbeing (Al-Ahdal & Al-Awaid, 2018). For law in Saudi, knowledge of English is also crucial in understanding international negotiations and it might be very beneficial in Saudi lawyers' future careers (Rochowska, 2013). In addition, Arabic and English legal cultures are different, which makes legal translation more difficult. Therefore, knowledge of English law might aid Saudi lawyers in dealing with this obstacle and enhance their performance (Alharbi & BinMasad, 2023; Bostanji, 2010).

For women in Saudi, English is highly esteemed in Saudi Arabia because of its importance in ensuring a better future career and personal well-being for many. Being fluent in English offers Saudi women ways to reinterpret their identity and social standing so that they can construct their lives by navigating between traditional gender roles and new goals of personal autonomy (Mustafa, 2017).

Finally, English is used widely in Saudi Arabia for multiple reasons at national, social, and individual levels; among these changes are education policies and language preferences (Mustafa, 2017). In higher education, English has been seen as an important skill to master for both students and educators. This recognition has led to the foundation of English language departments and centers to reach this goal (Almohaimed & Alnasser, 2022). In the next section, I outline the development of English Language Teaching (ELT) through the years.

2.5.2. Development of ELT

1930s-1980s. English language teaching was not a priority in the Kingdom, with the focus being on religious studies and Quranic education. The finding of oil in the early 1930s had a major effect on the education of English in Saudi Arabia, leading to greater involvement from the United States of America (USA) because of its economic stake in the oil sector (Zuhur, 2011). The close connection between KSA and the USA at that time increased the importance of English and English Language Teaching (ELT) for Saudi economic and social progress (Faruk, 2023). English became associated with the

discussion of petroleum, resulting in a higher need for enhanced English education in the nation (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). The development of intermediate and secondary schools in the 1950s was an important step in the evolution of education in KSA. English language became a mandatory subject in colleges during this time, although there was minimal focus on ELT (Mitchell & Alfuraih 2017).

In the 1970s, the Ministry of Education implemented the initial English language teaching framework and syllabus at the secondary level to improve students' English proficiency (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). This was a significant advancement in incorporating English language education into the official curriculum, establishing the foundation for further development in English Language Teaching (ELT). In the 1980s, following the growing trend toward pragmatism in ELT curriculum in the West, the Saudi Ministry of Education introduced a new English language curriculum based on functional language skills. Commins (2009) describes this development as the most significant shift since the beginning of ELT in Saudi Arabia.

2000- present. Since the terrorist event of September 11, 2001, in the United States of America, ELT in Saudi Arabia has undergone substantial re-evaluation. An entirely new Ministry of Education English curriculum was introduced in 2004 to address concerns surrounding the impact of extremism on the Saudi education system, aiming to foster tolerance and greater global awareness in learners (Elyas, 2008). This curriculum mirrors broader trends in society towards modernization and globalization.

In 2003, English was introduced at the primary level starting from grade six, and then later extended to fourth graders (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Ur Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). This led to a shortage of English language teachers, especially considering the need for equal numbers of male and female English teachers due to segregation (Al-Hazmi, 2003).

In 2008, the Tatweer Project was initiated which aimed at transforming public school education in Saudi Arabia, to which English Language Teaching (ELT) was integral (Faruk, 2023). This project aligned with Saudi development strategies by concentrating on enhancing various aspects of public education, especially by improving

teaching and learning techniques, and developing English-language instruction, science, and other subjects.

In 2010, along with the Arabic language, English was introduced in the first primary grade to encourage children's English-language skills from an early age. These decisions came as part of a broad reform in citizenship and education designed to form students' language skills under the current educational system, strengthening their national identity and developing their skills under global umbrellas in line with international teaching standards (Alqahtani & Alsager, 2022).

In 2013, the Ministry of Education published the English Language Curriculum for Elementary, Intermediate and Secondary School, which emphasized the importance of developing students' English-language skills (MoE, 2013). Steps to improve ELT continued to increase through teacher professional development and standardized materials for teaching English, based on the national curriculum (Alshahrani, 2016). In line with the expansion and development of English language education in the Saudi Economy and Saudi English Language Education Policies, more people in KSA have a positive attitude toward English-language learning (Sarker, 2022).

At the higher education level, various ELT programs were developed to respond to the requirement of English training programs (Al-Hazmi, 2003). The College of Arts along with the Colleges of Education play a key role in the preparation of competent English users including EFL teachers in schools, and graduates for various jobs in the fields of health or computer science (Al-Hazmi, 2003). Preparatory Year Programs were also offered to strengthen the base of English for public schools' graduates and college students in different majors (Alghamdi, 2015). Moving to the next section of this chapter, the preparatory year and its programs is presented.

2.6. Tertiary Education in KSA

2.6.1. Overview of Preparatory Year System

This current research deals with curriculum change regarding the writing component at the tertiary level, particularly the preparatory year. The English Language Center which is common in many Saudi universities, its administrations, staff, and

students in the study are all part of this PY. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to contextualize this research within the PY system to better understand what language of instruction is used, how students view the PY and the overall quality of the English programs.

Definition. The Preparatory Year (PY) program is the most important phase between high school and university study for Saudi students. It is seen as a bridge between high school and the university system. It helps students to get acquainted with university study in general and to make a wise decision in choosing the right academic discipline for them from among the available study programs (Adelman, 2020). In Saudi Arabia, the importance of preparatory year programs, has led to the inclusion of such programs in the educational systems of all 25 government universities, 27 private universities and colleges and in many of the training institutions (MoE, 2024).

Aim. The preparatory year programs in KSA aim at several objectives including 1) providing students with the academic, vocational, social and study skills; 2) supporting students' scientific and intellectual competition; 3) encouraging students to study science, medicine and various programs; 4) maintaining high rate of students' admission to universities. (Brdese & Alsaggaf, 2021).

Language of Instruction. It is important to note that because of policy changes in Saudi Arabia over the past 10 years, significant transformations have taken place within higher education. One of these changes was the introduction of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) at the tertiary level.

EMI refers to the use of English as the language of instruction for various subjects in countries where English is not the primary language (Macaro et al., 2018). EMI has gained prominence in universities worldwide in recent years. This shift towards EMI can be attributed to several factors, including fostering national and individual competitiveness in the global economy (Huang, 2018), elevating university rankings among top institutions, creating opportunities for scholars and students, and increasing financial resources for university programs (Le Ha & Barnawi, 2015; Piller & Cho, 2013).

In Saudi Arabia, English has been present in the education system since its inception in 1926. However, the transition to English-medium instruction began in 2005.

Since then, significant changes have occurred, including the introduction of a preparatory year at Saudi universities, which serves as an EMI study context for certain universities and subjects. The EMI policy in the Saudi higher education has expanded for several reasons (e.g. Alharbi, 2022; Zumor & Abdesslem, 2022; Aldawsari, 2022; Alkhateeb, 2022; Elyas & Al-Hoorie, 2023)

- Globalization and competitiveness: Saudi universities aim to compete among top universities around the world. This could be achieved by improving the quality of the English language education in the higher education.
- Quality education: having an EMI policy at the higher education aims at improving the quality of English language programs and thus attracting more students looking for high qualifications.
- Transnational Higher Education (TNHE): EMI supports TNHE which results in international collaboration.
- Meeting demands of stakeholders, policymakers, educators, students, and the community.
- Technological advancement, economic growth, and access to modern knowledge.

To conclude, the preparatory year programs in Saudi universities is the most important phase between high school study and university education. It prepares students academically, socially, and linguistically for long university studies in English and helps them to make a wise decision concerning the right study program for them. Next, I specifically discuss research on EMI in Saudi universities.

2.6.2. Research on EMI in Saudi Universities

To support the realization of governmental visions for English proficiency among Arabic-speaking populations in the Gulf by 2030 and beyond, English language policies must be implemented at all educational levels (Gallagher & Jones, 2023). In Saudi Arabia, particularly under Vision 2030, there has been a growing emphasis on English, leading many institutions to adopt it as part of their EMI policy. This section explores how EMI is being implemented, while also highlighting the challenges faced by both students and educators throughout the process.

Numerous studies that examine EMI in Saudi higher education aim at exploring the challenges as well as the perceptions of those involved. Regarding postgraduate courses offered at a university in Riyadh, Abu Dabeel (2024) conducted a study involving EMI. The findings revealed that both teachers and learners demonstrated a strong liking for English-taught courses, suggesting optimism toward EMI adoption among tertiary institutions. Nevertheless, this liking was tempered by many difficulties; notably an overall dissatisfaction among stakeholders, which may erode long-term support for EMI. In addition, students were overwhelmed with assignments, while disparities in their knowledge foundation in English obstructed them from being effective learners and participants in EMI modules. These problems call for more targeted support structures aimed at enabling students to tackle challenges associated with using English language as the medium of instruction.

Similarly, Alkhateeb and Alhawsawi (2023) examined the challenges of implementing EMI at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, including inadequate English language preparation among students prior to joining higher education institutions. The other problem was inconsistency in what lecturers wanted from content and what learners' English skills could support. It also found that there was inadequate time for teaching in English which meant that understanding was very shallow especially when it came to memorizing content word for word. It arises a larger question about how well EMI supports good learning outcomes where English is not sufficiently developed as a means of instruction.

For further insight into the EMI experience, Alfehaid (2018) looked at the Preparatory Year Program at Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University. This study discovered that attitudes towards EMI were mainly positive, with students noting improvements in their English proficiency. However, just as in Alkhateeb and Alhawsawi's findings, Alfehaid noted that learning other subjects was challenging for learners because of language difficulties. Furthermore, the research showed that many tutors had inadequacy in English language to teach efficiently in an EMI setting. This dual challenge—students struggling with subject content due to language difficulties and instructors being inadequately prepared to teach in English—highlights the complexity of implementing EMI in a non-native English-speaking environment.

Additionally, Shamim et al. (2016) investigated English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in a pre-university year at a Saudi Arabian public university. The study observed that students had weak English ability but still used English for instrumental purposes in the study area. As a response to this, teachers took on several strategies to help the learners which sometimes resulted in poor performance in science subjects. The research called for an effective language policy that would promote EMI in higher education.

Aldawsari (2022) conducted a study at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University that sought to find out what teachers think about adopting EMI, and what students think about its adoption. Although teachers and students viewed EMI favourably, there was concern that instructional use of Arabic could reduce their skills in Arabic language as well as threaten their cultural identity. These findings indicate a contradiction between the assumed advantages of EMI and preservation of culture or linguistic heritage particularly within regions where Arabic is held dear.

Studies on EMI in Saudi Arabia explored views and problems across disciplines and student populations. Alasmari (2023) investigated Saudi Arabian foundation year students challenges in scientific subjects in an EMI context. The study showed that English language mattered to students, but they had difficulties in it, including poor English proficiency and incompetence in teaching staff. Additionally, EMI effectiveness was further hampered due to a paucity of course materials and lack of student motivation. Similarly, medical students from Saudi Arabia who were learning through EMI were studied by Alanazi and Curle (2024). Lack of fluency in spoken English, inability to comprehend lectures or read medical materials particularly at the initial stages of their courses were the major challenges facing these learners. However, this situation changed progressively as they moved up university levels.

Al-Zumor (2019) examined more specific matters related to EMI within scientific disciplines. The study discovered that EMI has potential detrimental effects on students' science-based results in their assessments. It was observed that anxiety, frustration and fear associated with learning in an EMI setting were important aspects that led to poor educational attainment and lack of understanding on scientific content. Raffaa and Ali (2023) further discussed Saudi undergraduate students enrolled in a computer science

program at a public college who faced challenges with respect to using English as a medium of instruction. Students exhibited mostly positive attitudes towards EMI; nevertheless, it posed severe challenges like academic writing difficulties, learning problems, and non-native English-speaking instructors failing to interact adequately with learners. Given this, even in technical domain like computer science where it is often assumed that English language competence is advantageous, any implementation of EMI may generate barriers for effective learning or student-teacher communication.

The introduction of EMI in Saudi Arabia may offer a chance to succeed or fail. In general, EMI is praised for its role in enhancing English language abilities and reducing the gap between language goals and Vision 2030 objectives, but it also brings some difficulties to teachers and students. Among these are concerns about linguistic skills, lack of readiness, false expectations and consequences on their culture and academic performance among others. Therefore, if EMI is to be a success, these issues must be addressed, supporting both learners and teachers and in line with Saudi Arabia's education system.

2.7. The Status of the PY at the Tertiary Level

In this part of the chapter, I introduce the PY in detail including how students view the value of the PY, calls for reform in the literature to improve the programs at the PY, English language materials, and the learning setting. Students at the context of this research are part of the PY system where they study PY courses including English courses.

In my research, students have experienced change in learning settings due the impact of the global pandemic. Therefore, this area is included due to their relevance and importance as part of the context. The purpose of this section is to contextualize students' experiences within the PY system. In the next section, I present each section with relevant support from the literature.

2.7.1. Students' Learning Experiences at the PY

Students' ability to be successful academically and professionally require good English language abilities. Saudi universities introduced preparatory year programs

(PYP) for students to provide them with better English language skills before starting their majors. One of the most important aspects to consider when trying to improve the English language instruction and better the students' experience is to understand their attitudes and difficulties in their learning experiences. In the next section I present empirical studies focusing on students at the PY.

First, research showed that students recognized the value and relevance of the PY programs for their university studies. Findings indicated that around 50% of students agreed that the preparatory year builds their confidence, while just under 60 % thought that the PY enhanced their adaptability to university studies. Interestingly, most students in this study claimed that the PY did not entirely help them in choosing their majors or prepare them for future studies (Aldarmahi et al., 2022). Findings also found that students overall appeared to value the programs and agreed that these programs are the key to their success (McMullan, 2014).

Focusing on ESP courses, other studies investigated how students perceive ESP courses and their impact on academic performance and future careers. Specifically, research evaluated students' views on the relevance of ESP components (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) to their studies. Findings indicate that students perceive ESP as crucial for both current studies and future careers, and that ESP enhanced their ability to comprehend specialized textbooks, highlighting its practical relevance (Montasser & Althaqafi, 2023). Findings also identified teaching quality, classroom dynamics, and the learning environment as key factors shaping students' positive attitudes towards ESP English courses (Alharbi, 2022).

Other studies indicated students' positive attitudes toward English courses at the PY in terms of higher confidence, exposure to academic skills and a better preparation to university studies (Alhamid, 2020; Laouini, 2022), a high level of motivation resulting from effective teaching practices (Massri, 2019), intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, practice over memorization and a dislike for Arabic usage in their classes (Al-Asmari, 2013). Courses were seen as effective, beneficial, and valuable, with teacher performance being rated more favourably than other program elements (Alshumaimeri, 2011). Finally, students showed openness to the English language and its culture, recognizing its

importance for education and communication, potentially influenced by Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative (Alalwi, 2021).

Along with students' attitudes toward the PY, several empirical studies examined the challenges students encounter in English language programs within Saudi Arabia's preparatory year. Research showed difficulties faced by pre-medical students, with writing being identified as the most challenging skill, followed by reading, speaking, and listening. Researchers suggested curriculum revisions and teaching method enhancements to improve program outcomes (Qadeer & Chow, 2023). Other two main challenges students perceived in their experiences included a shortage of qualified faculty and the lack of suitable curricula for intensive English programs (Al-Otaibi, 2015).

Moreover, challenges identified by English teachers were low English proficiency, low motivation, and inadequate opportunities for practice among students. Students themselves acknowledged the importance of English programs but struggled with their English proficiency and limited language skills (Al-Shehri, 2017), and finally, findings indicated organizational, educational, environmental, and assessment-related issues. Perspectives differed between teachers and students regarding the root causes of these challenges yet both agreed that the classroom environment (lack of facilities), the organization of the course (lack of learning methods and critical thinking development) had an impact on their experiences (Tawalbeh, 2014).

This section indicated how students perceived the PY programs with a focus on the English courses. Most studies have shown that students had positive attitudes toward the PY programs, indicating its relevancy, impact and factors influencing their experiences. Recognizing how common these challenges are, is essential for future changes at the higher education, especially, regarding the context of my research where students and their PY are major elements to understand CAS. One of the challenges identified by students was the English curriculum at the PY. In the next section, I discuss English language materials at the tertiary level shedding light of empirical studies on the topic.

2.7.2. Language Materials

Textbooks are considered a crucial element in the process of language learning, serving several roles in the classroom including being a primary or complementary resource for teachers and students, highlighting learning objectives, facilitating lesson planning, influencing the learning environment with their embedded philosophy (Sheldon, 1988; Wang et al., 2011). More importantly, language textbooks could shape students' learning experiences as being the second most essential component in the classrooms after the teachers (Guilloteaux, 2013; Riazi, 2003). Since in my research textbooks are being discussed within CAS, I provide this section to contextualize materials in the higher education in Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this section is to examine existing studies about the materials used in teaching students' English course at the university.

Research investigated the effectiveness of English curriculum used at Saudi higher education. Most of the textbooks in these universities are not designed specifically for Saudi population, they are published by external publication such as Oxford Publication Press or Cambridge English Unlimited.

Teachers' perceptions were explored in research regarding the role of the textbooks in their practice. Findings from these studies showed that teachers perceived textbooks to be suitable for teaching English to Saudi EFL university students, and that they would use these textbooks in future classes (Al-Nafisah & Al-shorman, 2011). Moreover, teachers' perceptions of curriculum revealed a lack of development in EFL within the Saudi educational system. While teachers suggested changes in the curriculum at the university, their involvement has not been considered by policy makers. Findings indicated that teachers' voices could contribute to enhancing the curriculum development (Almahmoud, 2016). Findings also showed instructors had positive attitudes towards the textbooks. Nevertheless, teachers preferred to teach topics that are interesting to students as well as meeting their needs. Additionally, PY teachers perceived the textbooks to be beneficial, opportunities for improvement were identified, particularly in updating sections to better suit student needs (Mohammad & Khan, 2023).

Other studies focused on students' experience at the university with the textbooks, indicating the importance of aligning students' needs, labor demands, and curriculum design for a successful curriculum change. Students had positive views of the curriculum specially in improving their vocabulary acquisitions, writing skills, and level of motivation to learn. Students also reflected on some problems with the curriculum; however, these issues were beyond the curriculum itself. Students noted uncertainty about the course requirement, lack of clear objectives, long hours of English classes (Aburizaizah, 2021).

Other research focused on suggesting alternative frameworks for better outcomes with the English curriculum at the Saudi universities. A hybrid curriculum framework tailored to the preparatory year students at Jazan University, aiming to address students' immediate needs and interests was proposed by Al-wossabi (2022). This framework focuses on themes and text-based content along with continuing the integrated skills textbook (focusing on all four language skills) used by teachers. The researcher emphasized going needs analyses and teachers' support in curriculum reforms. Other recommendation was materials should be tailored for Saudi Arabia by authors knowledgeable in Islamic, Saudi, Western, and other relevant cultural aspects to bridge the gaps between objectives and textbooks (Faruk, 2023).

Overall, these studies provided valuable insights into the language materials used at the higher education in Saudi Arabia, highlighting teachers' views and student' perceptions and suggestions for further reforms to improve material in line with students' needs and the Saudi context. In my research, textbooks are also published by Oxford University Press (see 4.4) and prescribed by the ELC policy, it is essential to look at the textbooks as an element within CAS to understand current issues or challenges perceived by teachers and student for future curriculum change. In the next section, I present a change in policy: learning settings.

2.7.3. Learning Settings

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 required a global shift from traditional face-to-face education to synchronous online learning, posing significant challenges to educational institutions worldwide, including those in Saudi Arabia. As educators and

institutions adapted to this new learning environment, it became crucial to assess the impact of online teaching on the development of English language skills among Saudi EFL students. The purpose of this section is twofold: 1)- education in KSA is moving toward digital learning as per Vision 2030, and 2)- teachers and students in my research have experienced this shift in settings. Therefore, it is essential to explore this learning settings in this chapter.

Research investigated the impact of online settings on the language skills. Findings showed that teaching of writing was effective in comparison to teaching of reading, listening, and speaking. Teachers were able to give extra attention to writing by giving more practice and coursework to students. On the other hand, teaching of speaking was neglected in e-learning classes. The researcher argued that teachers should be well prepared for this type of setting, considering students' experience as well (Alhaider, 2023).

Other studies focused on a variety of issues faced by teachers in this type of setting. Findings indicated while teachers generally possessed the necessary knowledge and training for effective online instruction and assessment, attitudes towards online teaching varied among instructors. Concerns were raised regarding student participation and assessment reliability, indicating areas for improvement in online teaching practices (Algethami, 2022). Some of these challenges included high internet subscription fees, technical issues, time constraints due to student's engagement in other tasks, doubts on the quality of the virtual class, and lack of students' motivation as teachers' assistance is limited (Ahmad et al., 2022). Teachers also perceived challenges such as limited internet connection and difficulty tracking student engagement hindered effective online instruction (Alqahtani et al., 2022), altering teaching methods without proper adjustments can reduce their effectiveness, student engagement, drive, and maintaining academic integrity (Saleh & Meccawy, 2022).

Additionally, teachers felt overwhelmed by the switch to online settings at the beginning; nevertheless, teachers indicated their adaptability to the new setting, highlighting opportunities they found in engaging students in learning and flexibility in the online classrooms (Alsulami & Alsolami, 2023).

Research explored students' views about the online setting indicating that students perceived online classes to hinder their engagement with teachers. Findings emphasized the importance of open communication between students and instructors in enhancing beliefs about online learning (Abed et al., 2022).

Overall, these studies highlighted the impact of online education on teachers and students' experiences at the Saudi universities. Since KSA is aiming to include digital learning to its education as a part of Vision 2030, it is essential to assess the effectiveness of this types of settings and find solutions to current issues especially in relation to English language learning. In the next section, I shift to programs in the tertiary level system and suggestions to improve these programs.

2.7.4. Calls for Reforms

Preparatory Year (PY) programs serve as crucial for students to succeed in higher education by addressing academic and English language proficiency needs. However, these programs need to reflect students' needs (Alghamdi, 2017), for them to be successful in improving student learning. In this section I present central suggestions about the preparatory year programs in general. The purpose of this section is to set out recommendations to improve students' learning experience and the overall outcomes of the PY.

Researchers proposed different ideas to improve the current state of the PY curriculum and students' learning. Studies stressed the importance of qualified teachers, the necessity of evaluating curriculum, as well as pedagogical and assessment methods to enhance preparatory year programs, faculty development (Alblowi, 2016; Al-Rabia et al., 2021). Additionally, the importance of adopting a systematic development of students' foundational skills in English, math, and science was also highlighted. This means that students could be introduced to fundamental language skills in the first semester and then a higher level in the second semester. Such systematic development can help prepare students for higher education (Ashry, 2017).

Other researchers made the connection between PY level and national level in their recommendations such as improving the preparatory year experiences for students by focusing on high impact educational practices (HIEPs). The researchers proposed stages to implement HIEPs including alignment between the institution and Vision 2030, policy documentation, targeting Saudi graduates for job opportunities, creating plans to enhance students' learning experiences (including writing intensive courses), and finally re-evaluations of outcomes (Zaghloul et al., 2021). Re-evaluating of course content and following up with students periodically to assess their satisfaction with the PY to implement necessary institutional reforms and improvements was supported by (Al-Shahrani, 2019). Finally, a framework for enhancing the preparatory year, aligning with Saudi Vision 2030's principle was advocated for a blended approach, incorporating elements from both American and British foundation year models while considering local, regional, and international insights (Alrayes, 2021).

To summarize, Saudi Arabia's PY programs could be modified to improve student learning and prepare them for higher education. In the next section I narrow the focus to academic writing component, specifically in the context of the Saudi higher education.

2.8. Academic Writing Component in the Saudi Higher Education

Developing writing skills is a critical aspect of academic success, yet Saudi students often encounter numerous challenges in this domain. In this section I outline these issues, the root causes behind them and scholars' suggestions for educational changes to improve students' writing. The focus in this section is on studies regarding academic writing in KSA. The purpose of this section is to contextualize my research by providing an overview of studies conducted in the context of Saudi higher education. This section is divided into two parts: the key challenges in students' writing and key effective practices in teaching writing.

2.8.1. Key Challenges in Students' Writing

Scholars have identified issues in Saudi students' writing which include spelling errors, technical terminology usage, and coherence issues (Mamoon & Alaraj, 2022), coherence and cohesion challenges, language use, and referencing difficulties (Khadawardi, 2022), capitalization and article usage (Alzamil, 2020), ideas generation,

vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, mechanics and punctuations (Shousha et al., 2020; Dhanapal & Agab, 2023), plural forms and choosing the right words (Nisa et al., 2023), active/ passive voice and using auxiliary verbs (Alsalam, 2022).

Other researchers have underscored the root causes of these challenges which include insufficient practice, the influence of Arabic language, focus on syntactic forms, ineffective teaching approaches, and reluctance of teachers to teach writing courses (Alghammas, 2020), inadequate writing practice and limited vocabulary (Mamoon & Alaraj, 2022), lack of practice and interference from Arabic on writing performance (Ababneh, 2020), translation word to word from Arabic to English (Khadawardi, 2022), time pressure, lack of writing techniques, apprehension of negative feedback, washback effect, and low self-confidence in writing skills (Alzahrani & Alshaikhi, 2023), and students' attitudes toward writing and materials issues (Yassin & Salman, 2023).

Finally, researchers have advocated for reforms to improve students' writing skills and overcome these challenges. For example, Alzamil (2020) highlighted the necessity of revision of writing course materials and teaching methods at Saudi universities. Alsalam (2022) and Alfaruqy et al, (2022) emphasized the importance of additional writing activities and peer assessment for skill enhancement. Adding to the discussion, Ababneh (2020) advocated for additional educational resources and potential curriculum adjustments. Similarly, Khasawneh (2023) called for targeted interventions to address difficulties in organizing paragraphs and maintaining writing flow. Alharbi (2019) and Alghammas (2020) emphasized the importance of improved instruction and support systems within university programs.

To conclude, in this section I presented perspectives on students' writing in Saudi Arabia summarizing challenges they face in their writing tasks, why these issues manifested and what researchers have suggested to overcome them. In the next section, I detail effective practices that could be applied in the Saudi educational system for better outcomes in writing classes.

2.8.2. Effective Practices in Teaching Writing

The section focuses on employing innovative pedagogical approaches, which is essential for equipping Saudi EFL learners with the requisite skills to navigate the

complexities of English writing effectively. By integrating different approaches tailored to the learners' needs, teachers can foster a productive learning environment for skill development and academic success. In this section, I focus on four topics about effective practices for teaching writing.

First, studies indicated the efficacy of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in promoting writing proficiency among Saudi EFL university students (A Grami, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2023; Alshenqeeti, 2020; Mugableh & Khreisat, 2019). The task-based approach emphasizes practical application and real-world tasks, providing students with meaningful writing opportunities. It fosters active engagement in the writing process and encourages collaboration, addressing the challenges Saudi EFL learners face in distinguishing between spoken and written English.

Moreover, it improves opinion essay writing skills among students, along with students' positive attitudes towards this teaching approach. Furthermore, this approach proves to impact students' writing proficiency, reading comprehension, motivation, and social interaction. Finally, TBLT could impact writing sub-skills including content, grammar rules, using the right vocabulary, mechanism, and organization of the written task.

Second, scholars (Aldossary, 2021; Alkhalaf, 2022; Alwaleedi, 2022) investigated the influence of collaborative writing on English language learning among university students in Saudi Arabia. Research indicated that the collaborative writing strategies promoted social interactions and ideas exchange among learners, accuracy, and fluency of writing, leading to improved writing quality and skill development compared to individual writing practice. It also offers valuable opportunities for peer support and scaffolding. This approach has a positive impact of students' attitudes toward writing as they consider collaborative an enjoyable experience in classrooms.

Other researchers (Alhujaylan, 2019; Zaghlool, 2020) examined the integration of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The findings showed CALL facilitates interactive learning experiences and provides personalized feedback, resulting in improvements in writing proficiency compared to traditional methods. Moreover, students expressed positive attitudes toward CALL writing activities, perceiving them as

beneficial, motivating, enjoyable, and conducive to self-confidence and independent learning skills.

Lastly, scholars believed that free writing and writing exercises could improve students' writing skills in the Saudi context. Alharthi (2021) examined the impact of free writing practice on Saudi students' writing skills. The results showed students who used free-writing technique improved their grammar acquisition. Additionally, students expressed positive attitudes toward free writing and the impact it had on their skills. Khan (2022) investigated the effectiveness of writing exercises in reducing writing errors among undergraduate Saudi EFL learners. Results indicated that the experimental group, which received additional writing exercises in the classroom, exhibited significantly fewer errors compared to the control group. The study advocates for adjustments in instructional strategies and course design to provide diverse writing opportunities and mitigate writing errors among EFL learners.

In conclusion, these studies advocate for the adoption of diverse approaches tailored to the needs of Saudi EFL learners. By embracing innovative methods such as task-based learning, collaborative writing, guided writing, and CALL, teachers can effectively address the challenges of teaching writing and empower learners to succeed in academic and professional contexts.

2.9. Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I presented a comprehensive background of the context of this study. I started with an overview of Saudi Arabia; specifically, I focused on the history of education, the education system, and the impact of religion and economy on education.

Next, I outlined national initiatives including the scholarship programs and its impact on Saudi women, and Vision 2030 along with projects to enhance the educational system. These two initiatives present key points about the impact of KASP on Saudi women and the objectives of Vision which could potentially align with this study in exploring factors influencing curriculum change at the ELC.

I then focused on the ELT area, shedding light on the development of English in KSA, the higher education system and PY system. I specifically pointed out students' experiences at the PY, language materials, learning settings and potential reforms. The

last section emphasized the writing component in Saudi higher education, difficulties students face and effective practices. In the next chapter, I move to other areas in this research such as the theoretical framework, curriculum change, teachers, and students in the broader context.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I provide the necessary context for situating my current research within the existing body of knowledge related to complexity theory and curriculum change. The purpose of this chapter is to locate this research within the broader context focusing on complexity theory, curriculum change, teachers and students' experiences in different contexts.

First, I explore existing literature on curriculum change, examining the various factors and ideologies that drive changes within educational institutions (3.2). A substantial part of (3.3) and (3.4) is dedicated to the concept of curriculum alignment and innovation in ELT and different theoretical frameworks underpinning innovation.

Second, I focus on the theoretical framework of complexity theory (3.7). I explore the theory's significance in the context of educational studies, its key concepts, and its relevance to my study. In (3.8) I discuss writing instruction and assessment practices.

Subsequently, I discuss research on the central role of teachers in the curriculum change process, their agency in driving change, their potential resistance to curriculum reform, and their perceptions regarding the teaching and assessment of writing at the university (3.10). In the final section, I explore previous research on students and their experiences of learning writing, their views on writing instructions, and their insights into writing assessment (3.11).

3.2. Curriculum Change

3.2.1. Overview of Curriculum Change

In this section, it is crucial to establish a clear understanding of a term prevalent in this literature review: "Curriculum Change," sometimes referred to as "Curriculum Reform." This term describes significant adjustments made to educational curriculum content, structure, and delivery methods. It involves a thorough reassessment and revision of the curriculum's goals, objectives, and learning outcomes to keep them in line with

current educational needs and trends (Kandiko Howson & Kingsbury, 2021). Throughout this thesis, I consistently use the term "curriculum change" for clarity.

With a clear understanding of the term curriculum change, I now explore whether it occurs suddenly or as a planned process and what external factors influence it. In fact, curriculum changes do not happen spontaneously; they are usually initiated by various factors that lead to several outcomes (Fullan, 2001). The need for curriculum change arises from evolving community dynamics, changing student demands, resource availability, and advancements in teaching methods (Marsh & Willis, 2007). In the following section, I present some of the ideologies and factors that have been found to shape the curriculum change process.

3.2.2. Factors and Ideologies leading to Curriculum Change

Curriculum change is multifaceted and influenced by a range of factors, with "pressure of accountability" being a significant driver, where educational leaders, such as school and university principals, are compelled to explore innovative ways to structure and deliver the curriculum (Smeed, 2010, p.8). In simpler terms, these leaders must creatively organize and present the curriculum to meet the diverse needs and expectations of all stakeholders, including parents, students, and governing bodies, while also maintaining accountability for the quality of education.

Furthermore, the beliefs and perspectives of educators hold considerable sway over curriculum decisions. Roberts (2015) identified five distinct curriculum orientations that reflect the convictions of academics:

1. Graduate employability: this orientation focuses on preparing students for future employment by developing skills and knowledge directly relevant to the job market.

2. Teaching-research relationships: academics emphasize the interaction between teaching and research within the curriculum, highlighting the integration of research into the educational experience.

3. Changing understandings about teaching and learning: this orientation centers on evolving ideas about how students learn and advocates for more student-centered and interactive learning.

4. Educational technologies: academics seek to use technology to enhance the curriculum, incorporating digital tools, online resources, and innovative teaching methods.

5. Flexibility: this orientation emphasizes adaptability and customizable learning pathways to meet changing circumstances and individual student needs.

Additionally, there are other key elements that influence the implementation of curriculum change, including components within the educational system: students, educational resources, facilities, the learning environment, and methods for assessing student progress (Chaudhary, 2015). The methods employed in teacher training, the individuals responsible for curriculum development, and the emphasis placed on specific courses within educational institutions are additional factors that impact curriculum changes (Bradfield & Exley, 2020).

Furthermore, the presence of high-stakes assessments and the emphasis on achieving favorable outcomes can significantly contribute to changes in educational curricula (Smeed, 2010). When examining the broader context, it becomes evident that curriculum change is subject to various influences, including the individuals involved in the field of education, as well as the policies and resources that shape pedagogical practices and educational outcomes. This complexity underscores the need for a holistic understanding of curriculum change dynamics.

As this current research explores curriculum change at the ELC, the concept of curriculum alignment becomes particularly relevant. The next section provides details about curriculum alignment and its frameworks.

3.3. Curriculum Alignment

3.3.1. Overview of Curriculum Alignment

First, Finney (2002) defines curriculum to include the selected content, the course organization, and the assessments and tasks. In English as a second language (ESL) courses, there are many forms of curriculum: from syllabus documents highlighting discrete language learning features to national policies that aim at developing global

proficiency in languages The curriculum is seen as the backbone of course organisation and implementation in higher education EFL settings, often taken as a guide or a framework for classroom practice (Li & Yuan, 2013; Yassi, 2018).

Anderson (2002) introduced the concept of curriculum alignment, which seeks to both identify and strengthen the relationship between the curriculum components. Curriculum alignment means the consistent connection among different parts of an education system, especially learning goals, evaluation and teaching. Curriculum alignment demands the harmonization of a subject's content, learning tasks, pedagogical approaches and evaluation techniques to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are attained (Harvey & Baumann, 2012).

According to Roach et al. (2008), curriculum alignment refers to the extent of match between what is taught in class and what is tested in examinations and indicates good student learning levels when it takes place. Teaching and learning resources are essential for instruction hence without aligning such resources with the curriculum then curriculum alignment cannot be achieved. Consequently, within the framework of curriculum alignment educators also regard this as part of instructional and assessment within education resource alignment process (Kuhn & Rundle-Thiesle, 2009).

For English (2000), alignment involves three key components: the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the tested curriculum. English (2000) described the written curriculum using terms like "curriculum" and "work plan." The taught curriculum was referred to as "delivered" and "work in practice." For the tested curriculum, terms such as "measured," "evaluated," and "work measurement" were used. Webb (1997) extends the concept of alignment to examine "the degree to which expectations [i.e., standards] and assessments are in agreement and function together to guide the system towards students learning what they are expected to know and do" (p. 4).

LaMarca et al. (2000) highlighted that well aligned educational systems should have assessments that allow students demonstrate their knowledge and skills regarding what has been expected by the curriculum frameworks thus enabling accurate interpretation of performance. Curriculum alignment has been given emphasis by

educational researchers (Porter et al., 2007). It has a positive effect on students' achievement in examinations (Murphy, 2007). Moreover, teaching becomes significantly more effective when there is coherence between the learning objectives set by educators, the teaching methods they use, and the ways in which they assess students' academic performance, compared to situations where such alignment is absent (Shuell, 1986).

Anderson (2005) noted that where there is high alignment between the prescribed, assessed, and enacted curriculum, students are given appropriate opportunities to meet learning objectives and receive suitable assessment tasks. Moreover, alignment among learning components results in educational accountability (Ziebell & Clarke, 2018). Furthermore, Blumberg (2009) Stated that students have a clear idea of the direction of their learning when learning goals, instructions, and assessment items are consistent.

In an aligned system, all politics and policy messages are similar (Porter, 2002). This alignment is seen in internal and external consistencies like that in official and operational curricula where the former refers to intended curriculum while the latter denotes enacted curriculum (Remillard & Heck, 2014). Internal alignment concerns original purpose of textbook creation according to curriculum standards (Polikoff et al., 2011). External alignment refers to how this coherence is perceived by third parties including users of textbooks, teachers, students undergoing evaluation process among others (Yu et al., 2022).

Similarly, Researchers (Pape-Zambito & Mostrom, 2018; Shaltry, 2020) divided alignment into two types of types: internal alignment which ensures that all components of a single course, such as teaching activities, assessments, and learning objectives, are coherent and support the same goals, allowing students to demonstrate their learning effectively. External alignment which involves comparing courses using standardized criteria, like core concepts or professional skills, to facilitate discussions and comparisons between different courses.

Furthermore, English (2000) distinguished two types of curriculum alignment, design alignment and delivery alignment. Design alignment is the relationship between the curriculum and the test, while delivery alignment is the relationship of what is taught to the test and to the curriculum. The concept of "curriculum alignment" revolves around

the idea that to achieve consistent instructional success, three key elements must be in harmony: instructional objectives, testing systems, and classroom instruction. Achieving this alignment involves four key approaches (Scott, 1983):

1. Teachers and administrators must clearly understand their teaching responsibilities.
2. Teachers need to make informed decisions regarding the allocation of time, selection of materials, and choice of teaching strategies that will best support students in acquiring the skills outlined in the objectives.
3. Teachers should continuously monitor their progress in implementing the curriculum plan.
4. Teachers and administrators must evaluate the outcomes of the school year, identify areas of strength and weakness, and use these insights to inform planning for the following year.

Lastly, Scott (1983) highlights steps regarding effectively align the curriculum from the administration and teachers' parts. The process of alignment can be broken down into four steps:

- Step 1: awareness of instructional objectives: teachers and administrators must have a clear understanding of what they are responsible for teaching.
- Step 2: planning: teachers need to make informed decisions regarding the allocation of time, selection of materials, and choice of teaching strategies that will effectively help students acquire the skills outlined in the objectives.
- Step 3: monitoring: teachers should track and assess the progress they are making in implementing the curriculum plan.
- Step 4: acknowledgment of results: the final step is to review and summarize the results from the year and use this information to prepare for the upcoming year.

To conclude, it is evident that curriculum alignment is of great significance when targeting the achievement of specific educational goals within the education systems. Moving on, the next section focuses on frameworks of curriculum alignment, starting with the Biggs Constructive Alignment framework (1996).

3.3.2. Curriculum Alignment Framework

Constructive Alignment (CA). Constructive alignment theory, introduced by Biggs (1996), is frequently acknowledged as having one of the crucial concepts of higher education (Biggs & Tang, 2007). The central premise of this theory is that the curriculum should be designed so that learning activities and assessment tasks are closely aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the course (Biggs, 2003).

CA, which was conceptualized by Biggs and Tang, is a well-used model in curriculum design to engage and mix learning outcomes, teaching strategies and assessment (Brown et al., 2012). This model strengthens the link between the curriculum and its practical implication, which is important in ensuring that the educational plan is delivered successfully (Hannah et al., 2021).

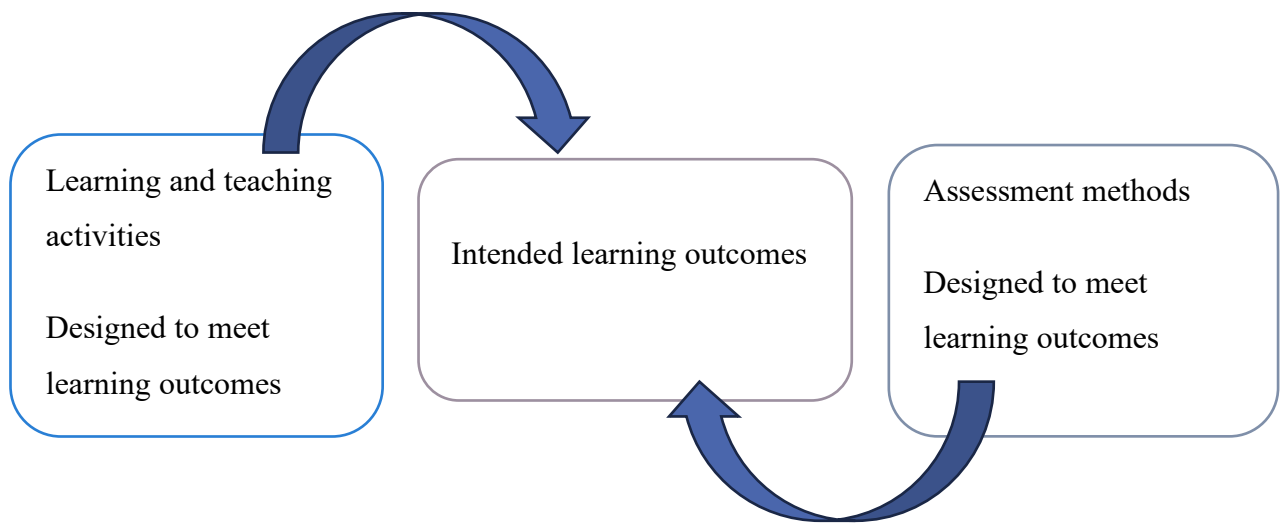
CA is a framework that aligns learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessments, fostering a coherent approach to teaching and learning (Lawrence, 2019). This alignment is designed to encourage deep learning, enhancing overall student success, especially within higher education contexts (Cain & Woodward, 2012).

Biggs (2014) proposed the idea of constructive alignment where constructive highlights that learners are not passive recipients of information provided by the teacher but are actively engaged in the construction of their own knowledge. on the other hand, alignment proposes that there is a need to ensure that any instruction and testing are oriented towards the same goal, which is to foster understanding of the desired content within learners. This framework is especially useful in higher education as it improves the quality of instruction and increases the learning outcomes of the students. (Livingstone, 2014).

According to Biggs (1999) the fundamental principle of constructive alignment is that a good teaching system aligns teaching method and assessment to the learning activities stated in the objectives so that all aspects of this system are in accord in supporting appropriate student learning. Figure 2 illustrates the principles underpinning constructive alignment.

Figure 2

Intended learning outcomes (Biggs, 1999)



Additionally, this approach can be viewed from two main angles (Ali, 2018): First, from the student's standpoint, constructive alignment highlights the actions and efforts students need to make to attain the desired learning. Second, from the teacher's standpoint, it involves designing teaching activities that are closely aligned with the intended learning outcomes, creating a unified and coherent educational experience. Moreover, the theory of constructive alignment is based on three core principles (Biggs, 1999).

1. The curriculum should be designed in a way that makes intended learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment, and evaluation interdependent, ensuring efficient student learning through their integration.
2. Teaching staff should adopt a reflective practitioner approach, continuously learning from their successes and mistakes.
3. Meaning is not simply delivered through direct instruction; it is constructed through the student's own learning activities.

Scholars noted that constructive alignment can considerably affect students' academic success as well as confidence, participation, and satisfaction (Larkin & Richardson, 2013). It has been suggested that the integration of constructive alignment in EFL programs provides the opportunity for teachers to engage with students and assess their learning (White, 2012). Various studies have examined top-down and bottom-up methods for implementing CA as well as the need for faculty to be actively involved in

the successful use of this framework (Ruge et al., 2019). Nevertheless, even though it has become a common practice, its application may face barriers. One of the main challenges is regarding CA not as an educational means but as administrative requirement, leading to its ineffectiveness (Loughlin et al., 2020)

In conclusion, while constructive alignment provides a framework for curriculum development and alignment, its success relies on the authentic engagement of educational practitioners and the careful consideration of its intended educational purposes. As I move forward, it is essential to recognize that effective curriculum change often relies on the introduction of innovative practices. Therefore, the next section explores innovation in ELT, a key component in driving educational changes.

3.4. Innovation in English Language Teaching

3.4.1. Definitions

From the beginning of English language teaching, change and innovation in language education have been of interest to both teachers and researchers (Hyland & Wong, 2013). Innovation in English Language Teaching (ELT) "can be seen as a new teaching methodology, pedagogical theory, methodological approach, teaching or assessment technique, learning or instructional tool" (Coombe & Hiasat, 2022, p. 467). Innovation is often seen as doing what benefits students the most, by finding strategies to keep them engaged and interested in classroom activities (Reinders et al., 2019). Innovation is modifying something that already exists by adding something new (O'Sullivan & Dooley, 2009).

Markee (1992) describes innovation in language teaching as suggestions for significant changes in teaching materials, methods, and values that are viewed as novel by the people within a formal language education system. This idea is further refined by Delano et al. (1994), who offer a more specific definition of innovation within the ESL context: "An innovation in a second language teaching program is an informed change in an underlying philosophy of language teaching/learning, brought about by direct experience, research findings, or other means, resulting in an adaptation of pedagogic

practices such that instruction is better able to promote language learning as it has come to be understood” (p. 489).

Carless (2012) broadens the perspective by viewing innovation as an effort to improve education by introducing something that is seen as new or different by those implementing it. This aligns with the theory of innovation which includes the creation of new processes, products, or enhancements to organizational structures within a particular industry (Sengupta, 2013). In the context of curriculum innovation, Manigandan and Kumar (2017) define the process as a controlled development process where the key outcomes are new teaching materials, methodological skills, and pedagogical values that are recognized as novel by those who might adopt them.

Fullan (2001) believes educational reform can happen in three areas including the use of new or revised materials, the use of new teaching approaches or the alterations of beliefs and understandings about curriculum and learning practices. Palmer (1993) adds that changes may be mandated by an external entity, such as a school, local authority, or government department, making them mandatory changes. Conversely, changes may be voluntary that the individual teacher finds beneficial for personal reasons, such as the desire to refresh their teaching approach after many years of using the same methods.

Examining the stages of innovation is important to understand how these reforms are adopted and integrated into educational practice. In the next section, I outline stages and steps of innovation.

3.4.2. Stages of Innovation

Rogers (1983) identifies five steps that potential adopters must take into consideration before adopting changes. These stages include understanding the new idea, appreciating its value, forming a preliminary commitment, translating such a decision into practice and lastly maintaining their commitment on the innovation. Similarly, Fullan (2001) presents three phases of innovation as shown in figure 3.

Figure 3

Three Phases of Innovation (Fullan, 2001)



1- Phase one (initiation, mobilization or adoption): this phase is concerned with the period before and up to deciding for adopting the change. It is about identifying the need for change and opting to take actions.

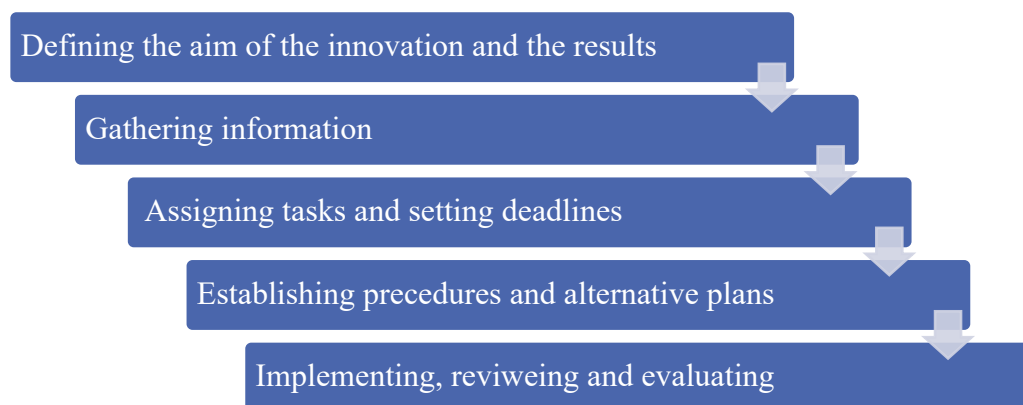
2- Phase two (implementation or initial use): the period of the first couple of years after a new conception is introduced or a reform implemented relates to this phase. It involves initial experiences and attempts at applying the change in real situations.

3- Phase three (continuation, incorporation, routinization, or institutionalization): this stage decides whether the change takes root into routine operations of an organization or ceases to exist. It pertains to embedding change into everyday practices of an organization.

Similarly, White (1987) sets several stages of innovation starting by the aim and ending by the evaluation (Figure 4). Specifically, the adopters first define the aim of the innovation by setting clear and specific goals as well as they define the results by clarifying the specific benefits and outcomes expected from the innovation. Afterward, it is essential to gather the information needed in the area. Furthermore, the process moves to assigning tasks, setting deadlines, establishing procedures, and preparing alternative plans, followed by implementing of the changes. Finally, the innovation plan must be reviewed and evaluated to adjust and make the needed changes.

Figure 4

Stages of Innovation (White, 1987)



In summary, the stages of changes presented by Rogers (1983), Fullan (2001), and White (1987) offer insights into the complex process of adopting and sustaining change. In the next section, I examine elements of innovation, focusing on the key factors that influence the successful implementation and sustainability of innovative practices.

3.4.3. Elements of Innovation

Researchers (Fullan, 2001; Waters, 2009; Wedell, 2009) stress that implementing a new ELT curriculum requires far more than merely introducing new materials. These researchers highlight two sets of factors including:

1- complex factors, which means that the implementation process is affected by a complicated interplay of human, institutional, and systemic elements.

2- secondary innovations: successfully implementing a primary innovation, such as a new English curriculum, requires policymakers to also handle secondary innovations. These involve changes in organizational practices and behaviors that support the main innovation.

Fullan (2001) expanded the scope of educational change to a wider context, identifying three sets of factors that influence implementation: 1- characteristics of the change: need, clarity, complexity and quality. 2- local characteristics: district, community, principal, teacher. 3- external factors: government, and other agencies.

Researchers highlight that a lack of clarity regarding goals and methods is a common issue in the change process. Even when there is consensus on the need for change, such as teachers wanting to enhance a curriculum area or the school overall, the specific changes required in teachers' actions may not be well-defined (Fullan, 2001). As for complex changes, they are characterized by the significant difficulty and scope of adjustments needed from those responsible for implementation. These changes necessitate a wide range of activities, structures, assessments, teaching strategies, and philosophical insights to ensure successful implementation (Fullan, 2001).

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) and Rogers (1983) identified five crucial attributes that the adopters should consider when they are introducing innovation. These attributes include *relative advantage*, which measures the degree to which an innovation is

perceived as being better than what it replaces; *compatibility*, which assess the extent of harmony between an innovation and existing philosophies, policies, practices or beliefs; *observability*, which focuses on how easy to see the changes made by the innovation; *trialability*, which refers to how easily an innovation can be experimented on in a small-scale basis; and *complexity*, this involves how hard it is seen to be in terms of use and understanding.

Kelly (1980) added three main criteria including *feasibility*, *acceptability* and *relevance*. Feasibility measures how practical and implementable the innovation is perceived to be, while acceptability refers to the compatibility of the innovation with teachers' own educational beliefs and teaching practices. Finally, relevance measures how well the innovation meets the specific needs of learners as perceived by the teachers. Innovations perceived as relevant to students' needs are more likely to be embraced and adopted by teachers.

Moreover, the success of an innovation and its implementation requires the application of several key features (Markee, 1997; Wilson & Corcoran, 1988). An ELT innovation can be met with enthusiastic support and implemented smoothly in some locations, encountering minimal resistance, while in other locations, it may be harshly criticized and decisively rejected (Stoller, 1994). To understand how innovations are adopted or resisted, it is essential to identify how innovators and potential adopters perceive the characteristics of these innovations (such as their complexity, practicality, usefulness, and flexibility). These perceptions can either hinder or facilitate the spread of innovations (Stoller, 1994).

Other elements in introducing change were given by Macalister and Nation (2019) to ensure that the innovation is effective in the context where it is introduced. These elements consist of the following:

- 1- ensuring the change is needed: are enough people dissatisfied with the present situation? what is the real reason for the change?

2. planning the change appropriately (Stoller, 1994): is the change too simple or too complex? is the change too insignificant or too visible? is the change too similar or too different from existing practices?
3. assessing the feasibility of the change: will the change involve more gains than losses? are there practical obstacles to the change, such as a lack of resources?
4. using a wide range of change strategies: does the change have official support? do people understand the value of the change? are the users involved in the change? is there frequent and good communication between all involved?
5. being prepared for a long-term process: is there enough time and money for the change? is there long-term support for the change?

Several factors determine how successful or unsuccessful innovations in English education are, according to Stoller (1994). The first factor is the *dissatisfaction factor* which means the extent of dissatisfaction with the current situation or status quo. A lower level of satisfaction with the existing methods or conditions would mean that an innovation could be accepted for use as a way of improving those matters. The second factor is referred to as *viability factor* and it investigates whether an innovation can work and achieve results in a particular context. Finally, *balanced divergence factor* includes attributes like explicitness, complexity, originality among others. Innovations that strike a balance between divergence, neither too radical nor too aligned with existing practices, are most likely to be adopted.

According to Carless (2012) and Markee (1997), successful innovation requires appropriate range, clear timeframe and adequate assistance. Additionally, teachers and opinion leaders need to get actively involved for them to own the program themselves. These researchers advocate for fitting implementations into the local context, as well as managing change through strategic approaches that acknowledge an unpredictable process of innovation calling for problem-solving strategies and effective communication between participants in it.

To conclude, an effective innovative ELT curriculum requires a strategy that considers factors like people, institutions and the system as well as secondary innovations

that support the primary change. In this next section, I develop these foundational insights into innovation and curriculum change by examining strategies that support these processes.

3.5. Strategies of Innovation in the ELT

3.5.1. Overview of Strategies

Drawing on behavioural and sociological theories, Chin and Benne (1970) suggested three main ways to effect change: (1) power-coercive, which brings about change through authority, rules, and top-down enforcement; (2) rational-empirical in nature, where clear explanations, justifications, and reasons that show why they need the change is given; or (3) normative-re-educative which seeks to bring changes through conversations with people from all sides. In terms of time commitment requirements, power-coercive takes the least amount of time followed by rational-empirical and finally normative-re-educative.

White (1988) highlights the need to consider the relationship between innovation and context, asserting that organizational culture, innovation strategy, and innovation models are likely interconnected. Macalister and Nation (2009) highlight that change is more likely to happen when people perceive support from authoritative sources such as the government, education department, and school administration (power-coercive). Additionally, it is more likely if there are strong reasons for the change (rational-empirical), and if individuals feel actively involved, valued, and a sense of ownership in the change process (normative-re-educative). Table 2 below shows the three approaches of changes and their key features.

3.5.2. Features of Strategies

Rational-Empirical Strategies are based on the belief that people are rational and will accept a change once evidence demonstrates its benefits to them. This strategy assumes that presenting positive information will be enough to prompt change. However, the challenge lies in effectively showing these benefits merely through information. This approach tends to be most effective when the audience is already inclined to agree with the arguments presented (Chin & Benne, 1970).

A specific model is linked to the strategies, namely Research Development and Diffusion (RD&D) model. The RD&D model involves a series of structures and a step-by-step way to diffuse from one point of source, which is the initiator, through many other people or organizations. It increases awareness about new programs before distributing them so that they can be adopted elsewhere (Havelock, 1971).

A Normative-Reductive Strategy operates on the understanding that change is a more complex process. It suggests that people act according to the values and attitudes prevalent in their society or culture, and that embracing change may require altering deeply held beliefs and behaviors. Unlike the previous strategy, the normative-reductive strategy requires a collaborative, problem-solving approach. It involves engaging all those affected by the change, allowing them to make decisions about the nature and extent of the change they wish to adopt. This approach not only focuses on the adoption of a specific innovation but also emphasizes the development individuals undergo because of their involvement, which can foster ongoing interest in further change and innovation (Chin & Benne, 1970).

The problem-solving model is associated to these strategies and is the model preferred by those in the educational practice, according to Havelock (1971). It assumes that innovation is one of the problem-solving processes that occurs within a client's or user's system. The process begins with the need stated by the user-client, which then results into a problem statement and diagnosis and specific innovative product. This model relies less on change agents' influence and more on their collaboration as opposed to other models. It emphasizes a bottom-up approach and corresponds to progressive thoughts about school-based development.

Power-Coercive strategies involve implementing changes through some form of sanctions that compel individuals to alter their behaviours or act in a specific manner. When those with legitimate authority use this approach, the result is typically manifested as laws and legislation. These strategies are often necessary when existing resistance in the system can only be overcome through coercion (Chin & Benne, 1970).

The center-periphery model which was developed by Schon (1973) is linked to these strategies. This model is based on broad diffusion studies that covered various fields such as agriculture, medicine and industry. The theory underpins the idea that innovations should be spread through an organized and planned manner which is supported by three fundamental principles. First, innovation pre-development stage: the model emphasizes that innovation has to be entirely developed and refined in its fundamental form before any diffusion initiatives are undertaken. Second, centralized transfer process: in this model, diffusion involves a systematic transfer of the innovation from a central source to the intended users. Third, directed diffusion with managed implementation: this stage includes spreading the innovation, training the users, and providing resources along with incentives to encourage adoption.

Table 2

Change Strategies and Models (Chin & Benn, 1976; Kennedy, 1987; Macalister & Nation, 2009)

Change strategy	Model of change	Leadership style	Key features
Rational-empirical	Research, development, and diffusion model	Analytical, reasoned	Explications and knowledge, may lack engagement
Normative-re-educative	Problem-solving model	Collaborative, participatory	Negotiation, involvement and willingness to change, strong communication
Power-coercive	Center-periphery model	Directive, authoritative	Rules, force and directions, often top-down, limited interaction

To conclude, the Rational-Empirical, Normative-Reductive, and Power-Coercive strategies each offer distinct approaches to driving change, reflecting different underlying assumptions about human behaviour and the dynamics of innovation. In the next section,

I present three theoretical frameworks underpinning innovation before moving to complexity theory which is used in this research.

3.6. Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning Innovation

3.6.1. Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DoI)

This theory outlines the adoption process, categorizes adopters, and identifies innovation attributes that influence adoption rates (Kapoor et al., 2011; Kee, 2017). Moreover, this theory is described as the process through which an innovation is shared over time through specific channels among members of a social system. This process includes four key elements (Mahajan & Peterson, 1985; Rogers, 1983).

1. innovation: an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or another unit of adoption.
2. communication channels: the methods by which messages are conveyed from one person to another.
3. time: which includes three components: (a) the innovation-decision process, (b) the relative time it takes for an individual or group to adopt the innovation, and (c) the rate of adoption of the innovation.
4. social system: a network of interrelated units that engage in collective problem-solving to achieve a common goal.

The Diffusion of Innovation theory has been used to study various aspects of curriculum innovation and technology adoption across different educational contexts. It was used in studies examining factors impacting the adoption of innovation (Rezgui & Sellami, 2023), E-learning in higher education (Pinho et al., 2021), blended learning (Grgurovic, 2014), innovation in the EFL contexts (Jwaifell & Gasaymeh, 2013), innovation in teaching methods (Chen, 2024), teacher professional development (Jawahir, 2021), and educational reforms (Liu, 2023). These studies highlight how the diffusion of innovation theory can provide insights into the adoption and implementation of innovations across various educational settings.

The DoI theory in English Language Teaching (ELT) and curriculum change can provide a structured framework to understand and facilitate the adoption of new teaching

methods and tools. For example, Sasaki (2018) applied diffusion of innovation theory to ELT curriculum changes. The study evaluated the alignment between government goals, classroom practices, and student achievement in English education in Japan. Findings showed reading and listening showed better alignment than writing and speaking; significant improvements were noted primarily in listening. The study also confirmed the strong influence of high-stakes university entrance exams on teaching and learning outcomes. Overall, these findings emphasize the need for better alignment of educational goals, practices, and achievements to enhance English education in Japan.

Applying diffusion of innovation theory to the Saudi context, Aidosari (2014) examined the difficulties in achieving an ELT context that is efficient enough for EFL classrooms at Saudi colleges. The challenges in ELT and changes were analyzed alongside the ways through which they could be improved in future reforms of Saudi universities. The problem highlighted is that introducing methods of teaching innovations are not adequate in bringing change into the classroom. The results showed that Saudi students needed more extensive training on technology use for ELT, while faculty required intensive courses.

Li and Edwards (2013) analyzed the viewpoints and experiences of Chinese participants in a British university's professional development program with a view to determining the implications of overseas training on curriculum change and innovation within their own locality. The study focused on methods used in new language teaching, which are localized, leaders' influence in innovative processes as well as the concept of remodeling innovations for colleagues who do not readily accept new practices. Using diffusion of innovations theory, the study highlighted how opinion leaders spread fresh ideas, adapt innovative strategies to meet specific local requirements, and enable these practices to spread to those who were not trained.

To summarize, the diffusion of innovation theory is a strong basis for understanding how ELT innovations and curriculum reforms are implemented into various learning contexts. Several studies that apply this theory emphasize its importance in leading successful educational reforms calling for alignment of innovations with local contexts, training needs and broader educational goals.

3.6.2. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The theory of planned behaviour is a widely acknowledged model for predicting societal conduct of human beings based on intentions that predict actual behaviours by highlighting the roles of control beliefs, normative beliefs and behavioural beliefs as well as perceived behaviour control, subjective norms and attitudes (Ajzen, 2011).

TPB has been applied in diverse educational settings to comprehend and enhance practices and attitudes. For example, TPB was applied in inclusive education (Opoku et al., 2021), in higher education (Hysaj et al., 2023), in educational research (Cooper et al., 2016), in teacher and technology (Teo et al., 2016), in English as a Foreign Language contexts (Hu et al., 2021), in professional development (Patterson, 2001), in assessment practices (Zeng & Huang, 2021) and in digital literacy (Laksani et al., 2020). These studies reveal how TPB can give insights into different educational practices ranging from understanding student behaviour to assessing professional development and technology integration.

Understanding an ELT curriculum requires TPB. By considering teachers' intentions and behaviours from both individual and contextual factors, TPB unveils difficulties supporting or hindering effective curriculum reform. For instance, Underwood (2012) tested the theory of planned behaviour in relation to the English language teaching curriculum whereby it was predicted that teachers' beliefs about grammar integration with communication-focused teaching would influence their intentions to implement it because of national curricular changes. The present study examined teachers' attitudes towards the reforms; their perception on social pressure to comply with these changes; and availability of necessary resources such as time, and training. TPB revealed key obstacles like misconceptions about examinations and inadequate support which hindered adoption of new pedagogical strategies together with guidelines for successful implementation of English Language Teaching innovations in schools and colleges.

Zhao et al. (2019) also examined the factors that influence successful implementation of an instructional model in China, using theory of planned behaviour. In

terms of these areas of consideration, the influencing factors have been classified as: individual factors, perceived social factors, and perceived contextual factors. Extending the TPB framework to capture teachers' understanding of reform ideas would facilitate its use in examining other reforms' related variables. Some important ones include perceived student benefits and support from administration which enabled teachers to consistently adopt new teaching methods thus ensuring sustainability when undertaking reforms.

In conclusion, the theory of planned behaviour provides important guidance about instructional arrangements as it predicts behaviour based on individual and contextual factors. The effective academic reforms and teacher beliefs that it has been applied in various studies, and the adoption of new teaching styles within varied education settings indicate its effectiveness. TPB is essential for guiding educational change in schools since it helps to identify barriers and facilitators of successful innovation implementation.

3.6.3. Activity Theory

Activity theory defines activity as a goal-directed system where cognition, behaviour, and motivation are integrated and organized by goals and self-regulation mechanisms (Bedny et al., 2000), focusing on understanding "who is doing what, why, and how" within a context (Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014). Activity Theory is especially applicable in contexts with substantial historical and cultural significance, where participants, their objectives, and their tools are undergoing continuous and swift changes (Hashim & Jones, 2007). Activity Theory analyzes the entirety of work activity by breaking it down into three main components: subject, tool, and object. The subject refers to the individual being studied, the object represents the goal of the activity, and the tool is the mediating device used to carry out the action (Hasan, 1998).

Activity theory has been applied in various studies to analyze curriculum change and development in educational settings. It has been used to examine medical curriculum reform (Law et al., 2022), science teaching practices (Barma & Bader, 2013), inclusive curriculum practices in higher education (Dracup et al., 2018), and English language teaching reforms (Kim, 2008). Activity Theory has proven effective in unravelling

curricular reform into manageable units of analysis and promoting collaboration among stakeholders for sustained change (Gedera & Williams, 2015; Law et al., 2022).

Wu et al. (2022) applied activity theory to ELT curriculum change and offered understanding of the connection between EFL teachers, reform goals and sociocultural context during collaborated curriculum design. The study explained how knowledge and experience are mediated within the teacher learning community, highlighting the social constructionist and cultural mediation approaches to collaboration process. Additionally, this study showed that EFL teachers interacted with educational reforms driven by internal as well as external motives to improve their professional growth and upgrade teaching methods.

Similarly, Barabadi and Razmjoo (2015) explored how English teachers perceived the new English curriculum and assessed their ability to implement it effectively within the specific social and institutional context of English education. The findings revealed that English teachers understood the new English curriculum but faced challenges in effectively implementing it due to the continued influence of traditional teaching methods, such as translation, mechanical drills, and conventional tests. The study indicated in a noticeable gap between teachers' perceptions of the new curriculum and its actual implementation.

To summarize, activity theory is a broad approach that supports the study of curriculum change by considering how individuals' goals and tools interact socio-cultural settings. As used in educational research, it simplifies complicated changes into steps or elements that can be handled separately thus helping stakeholders work together. The theory helps educators and policy makers to understand better reform dynamics by exposing difficulties and advantages of introducing new curricula.

In conclusion, while these three theories provide valuable perspectives on specific aspects such as adoption, individual decision-making, and goal-oriented activities, they tend to oversimplify interconnected nature of innovation. In contrast, complexity theory offers a holistic framework, acknowledging the nonlinear, unpredictable, and evolving characteristics of innovation systems. This makes it a more suitable choice for exploring

how various factors interact to shape educational reforms and technological advancements, as I demonstrate in the next section.

3.7. Theoretical Framework of this Research

3.7.1. Overview of Complexity Theory

Complexity theory offers a comprehensive theoretical framework for examining systems characterized by the interaction of numerous elements or agents in various ways. It emphasizes interconnectedness over a simplistic cause-and-effect approach (Larson-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Mason, 2008; Morrison, 2008). This theory serves multiple roles, covering the exploration of learning, development, change, adaptation, and evolution (Mason, 2008; Morrison, 2008).

Foster (2005, p. 875) characterizes complexity theory as a "body of theory about connections," while Hamstra (2017) defines it as a field of study that investigates interactions among independent agents. McDaniel and Driebe (2001) emphasize its concentration on comprehending intricate interaction patterns within systems across different levels and over time, as opposed to isolating individual elements.

Furthermore, complexity theory (e.g., Aritua et al., 2009; Borzillo & Kaminska-Labbé, 2011; Bovaird, 2008; Crawford & Kreiser, 2015) offers a new perspective by challenging reductionist and mechanical thinking, encouraging a comprehensive outlook. This perspective adapts seamlessly to comprehend interactions among interdependent individuals with shared goals and sheds light on organizational change processes. Additionally, this framework is dedicated to uncovering the fundamental dynamics that drive a wide range of outcomes within social systems.

Complexity theory serves as a framework that aims to comprehend intricate phenomena across various domains, including physical and social sciences (Masys, 2012; Romaguera et al., 2011), health and social care (Brainard & Hunter, 2015; Carroll et al., 2023), business and management (Czapla, 2019; Dixit & Sankaran, 2020), and political science (Cairney, 2012).

Complexity theory's applications extend beyond those mentioned above. One of the particularly compelling domains where complexity theory has found its place is in the realm of education. In the following section, I present how complexity theory applies to the field of education, shedding light on its potential to reshape our understanding of learning processes and educational systems.

3.7.2. Complexity Theory and Education

The application of complexity theory in various fields, including education, represents a shift from its origins in theoretical disciplines like physics and mathematics. Larsen-Freeman (1997) played a crucial role in introducing and exploring complexity theory within the context of applied linguistics. This expansion of complexity theory's reach has yielded valuable insights into the dynamics of educational systems, providing a novel perspective on how these systems function and adapt over time.

Specifically, complexity theory has been integrated into the study of education, shedding light on a wide range of educational topics. These include leadership in colleges (Davis et al., 2015), the dynamics of knowledge in community practices (Borzillo & Kaminska-Labbe, 2011), the evolution of strategy in organizations (Campbell-Hunt, 2007), organizational learning (Antonacopoulou & Chiva, 2007), leadership within complex adaptive systems (Boal & Schultz, 2007), policy implementation (Butler & Allen, 2008), teacher education (Martin et al., 2019), and policy-making systems (Cairney, 2012).

This exploration of complexity theory's applications sets the stage for a deeper understanding of complex adaptive systems. Moving ahead, I explore some key concepts of what a complex adaptive system is. A clear understanding of these concepts is essential to unravel the intricacies of these systems and their significance in various domains, including education, and consequently also relevant to the present study.

3.7.3. Key Concepts of a Complex Adaptive System (CAS)

To begin, it is essential to address a fundamental question: What defines a complex adaptive system? According to Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008), a complex adaptive system exhibits five distinct features. These comprise *the diversity* of its

elements or agents, *the dynamic interaction* among them, the presence of *non-linear behaviours*, their *openness* to external influences, and their remarkable *adaptability*.

CAS is a system composed of various individuals with numerous relationships, constantly interacting and mutually influencing one another, generating novel behaviours (Anderson et al., 2012; Lauser, 2010). These human social systems can exhibit self-organization behaviours (Hammer et al., 2012). Such systems defy traditional scientific paradigms (Lindberg & Schneider, 2013) and are characterized by their diversity, non-linearity, and the presence of multiple interactive, interdependent, and interconnected sub-elements (Waddock et al., 2015).

Throughout this thesis, I define Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) as a system in which different agents/ elements interact dynamically, exhibiting emerged behaviours and patterns. In the next section I present an overview of the key principles of a complex adaptive system that are relevant to this current research.

In the realm of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS), the term **agent** refers to individual elements within a system distinguished by their capacity for learning, adaptability, and influence over outcomes (Davis & Sumara, 2006). These agents may include students, teachers, and administrators. In this research I focus on teachers, and students as the primary agents while curriculum change, policies, context are seen as components within CAS.

Davis and Sumara (2006) and Holland (2006) emphasize that agents in the system are not just passive recipients of the system's processes but are active contributors who help create and operate the learning environment. These agents can adapt their behaviours in response to changes in the environment or the system. Morrison (2002) stressed that this **adaptation** is integral to the educational environment, as students, for example, are not passive recipients of knowledge but adapt their understanding and learning approaches based on their processing inputs. Therefore, understanding and incorporating adaptative aspects can shape teaching methods and improve educational outcomes (Davis & Sumara, 2006).

Moreover, within the framework of a complex adaptive system, several core concepts impact educational systems and their dynamics. For example, **heterogeneity**

underscores the diversity and variations that exist among the agents or elements of the system. The significance of heterogeneity becomes evident as teachers and students bring skills, backgrounds, knowledge levels, and interests into the classroom, thus contributing to the overall diversity of educational systems. This diversity leads to the **dynamics** of the system which play a crucial role in the operation of educational systems (Davis & Sumara, 2006).

Dynamics are the constantly changing relationships between all the parts of a system. For instance, in a classroom, these dynamics are observable in the continuous exchanges between students and teachers, resulting in adaptations to teaching strategies and learning styles (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). At a macro-level, dynamics extend to interactions among educators and decision-makers like school administrators and education policymakers. Changes in policies can influence teaching practices, and conversely, teaching practices can impact policy modifications (Spillane et al., 2002). Understanding the role of dynamics in educational systems is essential for grasping the power relationships, influence, and interdependence that contribute to the system's functionality and effectiveness (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

In this web of interactions, the concept of **openness** comes to the fore. Openness refers to the system's interaction with its external environment and its susceptibility to external influences. In interconnected educational environments, systems exchange information, resources, and influences with their surroundings. They continually take in inputs from the environment, process them, and generate outputs that impact the environment, creating a feedback loop (Holland, 2014). These feedback loops describe the mechanisms through which the outputs of a system influence its inputs, creating a continual cycle of interactions and adjustments (Jacobson et al., 2016).

In education, feedback loops can be found when a university implements a writing program that prioritizes assessment and revision. This enables the establishment of feedback loops, as seen in peer assessment, where students continually update, modify, and improve their work based on the feedback they receive (Falchikov, 2013). While feedback loops represent one aspect of a complex system, **path dependence** is another phenomenon frequently observed. This concept underscores how a system's current state and future outcomes are substantially influenced by its historical trajectories and initial

conditions (Jacobson et al., 2016). The specific path a system takes in its evolution can have a lasting impact on its behaviour and future directions.

Finally, complexity theory also addresses the issue of **unintended consequences**, which emerge within complex systems due to the interplay and interdependencies among diverse actors and components (Davis & Sumara, 2006). These unintended consequences may manifest, for example, when there is an overemphasis on teaching to standardized exams, inadvertently neglecting curricular components, and leading to limited student comprehension of the material.

In summary, complexity theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding complex systems, particularly in educational contexts. It underscores the interconnected nature of these systems, where multiple stakeholders—such as teachers, administrators, and students—interact dynamically. Moreover, it highlights how key principles such as heterogeneity, dynamics, openness, feedback loops, path dependence, and unintended consequences could contribute to the complexity of educational systems. For this research, this framework highlights the necessity of addressing multiple aspects simultaneously in educational reform, as opposed to focusing on individual elements. In the next section, I present some of the critiques of complexity theory in the literature.

3.7.4. Critiques of Complexity Theory

Critics express concerns about complexity theory, pointing out two main issues. First, they are concerned about the theory's lack of precision or rigor, suggesting that it may not have a solid and careful framework. Second, they highlight a shortage of original and groundbreaking ideas, implying that complexity theory may not bring genuinely new insights (Huang, 2022; Kemp, 2009).

Furthermore, Morrison (2008) highlights key points of the challenges of complexity theory in education, teaching, and learning. First, despite being frequently misunderstood as "prescriptive", complexity theory is fundamentally "descriptive", focusing on understanding complex systems rather than providing specific guidelines for action (p.29). In simple terms, it is meant to comprehend systems, not change them. Second, it is criticized for neglecting key values and ethical considerations in educational

philosophy and lacking explicit guidance on ethical practices in education. Third, complexity theory faces difficulty in defining the whole in education, making it complex to define the full picture in educational situations by establishing the boundaries of systems, such as an entire class or an individual. Fourth, the "added value" of complexity theory in educational philosophy suggests that its contributions may not be significant enough to justify its adoption in the field of education (p.31).

Furthermore, Morrison (2008) argues that complexity theory lacks a clear and unified framework, making it challenging to understand its key ideas consistently. Complex systems' concepts may not always align, potentially leading to contradictions or inconsistencies in its application to educational philosophy.

Despite these critiques regarding complexity theory, it is essential to recognize its usefulness in understanding educational systems. In this research, which centers on navigating curriculum change within a university, particularly writing instruction, complexity theory is used as a theoretical framework. In the next section, I discuss the significance of the theory in this current research.

3.7.5. The Significance of Complexity Theory for this Research

This research is motivated by the ongoing curriculum change within a university in Saudi Arabia. To better understand this change and its consequences, I have chosen complexity theory framework. This choice allows for a more profound exploration of the dynamic and interconnected nature of education, including various factors that influence successful curriculum reform processes and outcomes (Jameson & Bobis, 2023). Furthermore, this perspective recognizes the interdependence of elements within the system, including teachers, students, researchers, administrators, and policymakers (Joksimović & Manić, 2018). It emphasizes the significance of considering the social environment and the contextual factors in which the reform is unfolding (Pietarinen et al., 2017). Furthermore, Kuhn (2008) added that complexity theory aligns well with educational research, offering a perspective that embraces the intricate nature of educational systems and challenges conventional reductionist approaches.

By embracing a complex systems perspective, this research aims to provide a better understanding of the dynamic nature of curriculum change and to navigate the interactions in this one context. Understanding the systems' elements, including teachers, students, curriculum reform, and the broader context involving stakeholders, contributes to the value of the research. In the forthcoming section, the discussion pivots towards a detailed exploration of writing instruction and assessment.

3.8. Writing Instruction and Assessment Practices

Viewing the writing component as a sub-system within the broader curriculum change, this section begins by reviewing the existing literature, highlighting product, process and genre approaches in teaching writing. Subsequently, the study of assessment rubrics is introduced as an integral component of this current research.

In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), three main approaches to teaching writing exist, namely the product, process, and genre approaches (Badger & White, 2000). Scholars argue that each of these approaches has its strengths and can be effectively used for teaching academic writing (Badger & White, 2000). When deciding on the most suitable approach for a particular learning context, several factors come into play, including the students' language proficiency, the curriculum, and the contextual differences (Hasan & Akhand, 2010). This section explores the product approach, its strengths and limitations, and is followed by sections about process and genre approaches.

3.8.1. Product Approach to Second Language Writing

From the 1960s audio-lingual movement, which prioritized acquiring grammar rules in language teaching, emerged the product approach for writing instruction (Nordin & Mohammad, 2006). Grounded in behaviorism theory, this approach centers on “habit formation” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 40), stressing the crucial role of modeling and imitation in skill development. In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), this approach underscores the significance of learners accurately imitating language structures and adhering to grammar rules in writing, facilitating their gradual mastery of writing skills in English (Hyland, 2003).

Teacher Student Dynamic. In the product approach to writing, students follow a structured four-stage process, as proposed by Steele (2004) and Badger and White (2000):

1. **Exploration Stage:** Students explore text and analyze its genre. For example, if their task involves writing a formal letter, they first study the structure and language commonly used in formal letters.
2. **Controlled Writing Stage:** Students individually practice using specific sentence structures they are already familiar with. This step allows them to gain confidence in applying these structures correctly.
3. **Organization Stage:** As students make progress, they start to develop their ideas before commencing the actual drafting process. This stage emphasizes planning and structuring the content effectively.
4. **Final Writing Stage:** Students produce their final piece, incorporating the choices they made in the previous stages. Once the task is completed, feedback is provided to enhance their writing skills and comprehension further.

The product approach is mainly a teacher-centered approach where the teachers provide modelling and imitation practices, assistance, guidance, and summative evaluation of students' written work (Brown, 2001; Hyland, 2003). The students' role in the classrooms is to follow certain patterns given by the teachers so that students can focus on the phrases they write (Mehr, 2017).

Strengths and Limitations of the Product Approach. The product approach has gained popularity among teachers due to its perceived benefits for the students. Some of these benefits, according to Suryana and Iskandar (2015), are that the product approach enhances learners' ability to write by modelling different types of texts, for example, stories, describing situations, and writing arguments. Moreover, due to the emphasis of the product approach on modelling texts, this can be useful for students with a limited level of second language proficiency (Gabrielatos, 2002). Modelling practice enriches learners' lexical knowledge and improves their awareness regarding the accuracy of their writing. As a result, students' needs are met by this focus on grammatical knowledge (White & Badger, 2000).

The product approach also has its limitations, and it has been criticized by many scholars. Badger and White (2000) claimed that in this approach students' knowledge of the subject matter is not given much attention as the focus is mainly on planning the written texts. Similarly, Hyland (2003) pointed out that focusing on different stages of writing in the product approach, where students are required to follow the same format with little attention paid to the content, leads students to become restricted in what they write and how they experience writing. Furthermore, in a classroom where a product approach is used, students may feel overwhelmed when they receive teacher's feedback focusing on the final product (Zamel, 1987). This set of limitations has negatively affected the evaluation of the product approach and resulted in the emergence of the process approach (Brown, 2001).

3.8.2. Process Approach to Second Language Writing

During the 1960s and 1970s, scholars observed a discrepancy between prescribed writing methods and the actual practices of writers. This led to a greater focus on understanding the impact of thinking on the writing process. Flowers and Hayes (1981) introduced the cognitive process theory, emphasizing four main components: initial thinking, organizing ideas, setting specific goals, and establishing objectives to complete writing tasks. In the process approach to teaching writing, both the teacher and students actively participate in a structured sequence of activities. Hyland (2003) presents a process model of writing, where the teacher and students collaborate. This approach involves:

1. **Topic Selection:** The teacher and students jointly choose the writing topic.
2. **Prewriting:** This stage includes group brainstorming and note-making, followed by individual idea development.
3. **Writing and Revisions:** Students engage in a cycle of writing and multiple revision sub-cycles with input from both the teacher and peers. The teacher provides formative feedback and evaluates initial writing ideas.
4. **Proofreading:** Before the final submission, students proofread their drafts.

5. **Final Draft:** The teacher gives final feedback, and students publish their completed work as part of the classroom activity.

Teacher-Student Dynamic. This dynamic teacher-student interaction is a fundamental aspect of the process approach to writing instruction. Teachers play a dual role as they not only assess students' writing but also actively facilitate the writing process (Badger & White, 2003; Hyland, 2003).

Hyland (2003) suggests that teachers can guide and help students in regulating their thinking process. Moreover, students assume active roles beyond being passive recipients of knowledge. They become the focal point, with their needs, objectives, and competencies deemed essential (Onozawa, 2010). This shift involves engaging in self-reflection, evaluating their writing, and taking ownership of their work. Graham and Sandmel (2011) highlight this transformation, emphasizing that students continuously process their thoughts, evaluate them, and generate original ideas throughout the various stages of the writing process.

Strengths and Limitations of the Process Approach. The process approach to writing shifts the focus from sentence-level details to the writing process itself (Hedge, 2000). This approach motivates students to write successfully and enables them to write in the target language regardless of their proficiency level (Suryana & Iskandar, 2015). Teacher feedback plays a crucial role in enhancing students' writing-learning process (Myles, 2002). It also emphasizes the development of skills like prewriting and editing, with students actively contributing to the writing activity (White & Badger, 2000). However, the process approach has limitations. Hyland (2003) argues that it sometimes lacks a sufficient focus on the linguistic knowledge that learners need, potentially leading them to overlook the context and audience in their writing. Suryana and Iskandar (2015) note that the process approach can be time-consuming to implement in classrooms. Additionally, a deep engagement with individual cycles in the writing process might obscure the purpose of writing and the types of texts students produce (White & Badger, 2000).

3.8.3. Genre Approach to Second Language Writing

The genre approach to second language writing gained prominence in the 1980s in response to the product and process approaches. This approach is rooted in genre theory, which focuses on the relationship between text structure and effectiveness within a particular context and culture's goals. Genre represents socially recognized language usage patterns (Hyland, 2003). The genre approach underscores the direct connection between writing and the final text, with a strong emphasis on context and readership. For instance, in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context, using the genre approach means writing for the intended audience using the appropriate language and terminology. The genre approach is context-oriented, focusing on the context and the audience, emphasizing that writing does not occur in isolation (Hyland, 2003).

Teacher-Student Dynamic. The genre approach to writing education fosters learning for specific purposes. Teachers instruct students on how to write for specific contexts, equipping them with skills that extend beyond the classroom (Hyland, 2003). Active engagement characterizes both teachers and students in the writing process. Teachers assume pivotal roles, considering text and context while guiding discussions to familiarize students with genre, audience, and purpose. They further enhance learning through text analysis, modelling exercises and guided writing sessions. Feedback, integral to this approach, stems from teachers and peers, fostering a dynamic interaction. This interaction mirrors the genre approach's core, spotlighting students within a contextual framework, collaborating toward specific writing objectives while engaging in meaningful peer interaction (Flowerdew, 2002; Suryana & Iskandar, 2015).

Strengths and Limitations of the Genre Approach. The genre approach in teaching writing offers various benefits according to research. Unlike the product approach, it allows students to create different types of texts while considering both the text and its context, meeting individual needs. This method encourages students to come up with their own ideas, boosting critical thinking and creativity. It also helps students become more aware of how language works in texts. However, there are challenges, as not all students may have the vocabulary and grammar needed for specific readers. Also, focusing on various social, cultural, and contextual aspects might sometimes make it hard

for students to stay focused on one goal (Ahn, 2012; Paltridge, 2007; Suryana & Iskandar, 2015).

The following section discusses the second part of this theme – writing instruction and assessment practices. It begins with an overview of writing assessment, exploring assessment rubrics and the debates surrounding their use and associated challenges.

3.9. Assessment of Writing at the University Level

Understanding the assessment of writing is crucial, especially amid curriculum changes. This section explores L2 writing assessment, focusing particularly on teacher assessment via rubrics. Evaluating university-level writing involves diverse approaches like peer assessment (Kim, 2016; Sun et al., 2023), self-assessment (Susanti, 2023), and teacher assessment (Sutama & Suandi, 2021). Teacher assessment using assessment rubrics is pivotal in university writing evaluation in many contexts (Kim, 2016). These assessments may involve standardized measures, local rubrics (Good et al., 2012), and prompts encouraging students to reflect on their learning experiences (Condon, 2009).

3.9.1. Importance of Writing Assessment

Assessment of writing is crucial in evaluating students' proficiency and pinpointing areas for enhancing their writing skills (Maba, 2023). This process not only helps determine their current level of competence but also offers valuable insights into their accomplishments, thereby shedding light on the efficacy of the educational program (Nodoushan, 2014). Furthermore, evaluating writing goes beyond merely assessing; it is essential in providing performance feedback to students, which, in turn, contributes to their learning improvement (Adilah et al., 2016). It serves as a valuable tool for mentorship, enabling students to engage in revision and purposeful practice, ultimately elevating their learning outcomes (Beard, 2022). This multi-faceted approach to assessing writing is integral, as it plays a vital role in enhancing the overall quality of teaching and learning within academic institutions (Moore et al., 2009).

3.9.2. Focus on Assessment Rubrics

In this current study, the primary focus is placed on the use of an assessment rubric, which has been introduced as part of the curriculum change initiative (Appendix M). This section emphasizes the critical role of the assessment rubric component as a structured tool introduced in the context of curriculum change. An assessment rubric, as explained by Zhang and Weng (2023), serves as a valuable tool for evaluating student writing within ESL writing instruction. It should offer a well-structured set of criteria and standards to effectively assess and evaluate student work. Typically, it includes a list of specific criteria paired with a rating scale that enables educators to assign scores or levels of accomplishment for each individual criterion. This assessment rubric serves a dual purpose, being equally applicable for both formative and summative assessments. When assessing writing, these criteria may cover factors such as the intended audience, text organization, content, techniques, vocabulary usage, coherence, paragraph structure, sentence construction, and key elements like spelling and punctuation, as detailed by Beaglehole (2014). Ultimately, these assessment rubrics significantly contribute to fair and consistent evaluations of student-written assignments, offering students valuable feedback to recognize their strengths and areas for improvement (Özfidan & Mitchell, 2022; Uto, 2021).

3.9.3. Drawbacks and Challenges of Assessment Rubrics

The drawbacks of writing assessment rubrics stem from the ambiguity of certain criteria (Viñas, 2022). This lack of clarity may lead to imprecise reflection of intended assessment criteria, causing variations in scoring and interpretation of students' work. Using assessment rubrics for writing introduces various challenges, including potential issues in addressing reliability, validity, and score inflation, particularly in high-stakes assessments (Wheadon et al., 2020).

Ene and Kosobucki (2016) suggested that mandating rubrics might discourage teachers from providing personalized written comments, which learners value more. Relying solely on rubrics may not meet the requirement of comprehensive feedback desired by learners, indicating the importance of complement rubrics with individualized feedback when assessing L2 writing. Simultaneously, addressing these challenges

requires teacher training, acknowledged as an essential element, along with the time-intensive process of reviewing each rubric assessment area (Goodwin, 2019).

3.9.4. Washback Effect

Definition. In education, washback (or backwash) is as defined to the effect of testing has on teaching and learning practices. Washback effect centers around how high stakes tests can impact the educational system, teaching methods, and learning activities in the classrooms (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Hughes, 1989; Popham, 1987). It also involves direct and indirect impact of assessments on instructional approaches and classroom dynamics of both teachers and students (Prodromou, 1995).

Types and Impact of Washback. Positive washback emphasizes the advantages of testing on educational practices. Exams which are well-aligned with curriculum objectives can improve teaching and students' learning experience. This type of positive washback is supported in the language testing and assessment literature. Researchers claim that positive washback occurs when tests target effective teaching practices that align with the curriculum According to (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Taylor, 2005).

In contrast, negative washback could take place when a test limits the curriculum, leading teachers to focus only on test content, and consequently teachers neglect the broader educational objectives. Hoque (2016) explains that high-stakes tests can result in the practice of teaching for the exams where instruction is only focused on covering what students will be tested on, often at the expense of important skills not covered by the test.

Both types of washback can have an impact of students' learning experience. Positive washback can improve student participation in the classroom and enhance teachers' learning strategies, while negative washback may lead to students feeling anxious, prioritizing tests and grades (Tsagari, 2006; Xie, 2015).

To promote positive washback, it is important to consider teacher professional development, providing teachers with the knowledge to align their teaching approaches with curricular objectives (Turner, 2005). Policy could also look at tests design at the context, focusing on matching the overall objectives of the course with the tests and their formats (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Taylor, 2005). Taking this further, curriculum changes

could find holistic methods to assess outcomes rather than focusing on high-stakes testing (Kılıçkaya, 2016; Rahman et al., 2021).

Factors Influencing Washback. One of the factors that can influence the washback effect in the educational system is how teachers perceive the test's quality and how they match their teaching practices with the test's content (Shohamy et al., 1996). Researchers highlight that experienced educator with better educational backgrounds, particularly in assessments can integrate test requirements with teaching goals (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Turner, 2005; Webb, 2002).

Second factor covers the format of a test which can have an impact on teaching practices. Format of Multiple-choice tests could be an example of these tests that impact teaching practices in many contexts, since teachers focus on teaching listening and reading and ignore writing and speaking which are not being assessed through the tests (Wall & Alderson, 1993; Watanabe, 1996).

Some context factors prove to have an influence on washback effect in the educational system. These factors include the classroom settings, the lack of resources and the needs of students in specific context and test culture in the society (Watanabe, 2004). Lastly, policies play a role in washback effect when emphasizing high-stake tests leading to pressuring teachers in their practices (Kılıçkaya, 2016; Rahman et al., 2021). Often, curriculum changes that are not understood by the teachers may lead those teachers to diverge from the actual goals of the curriculum leading to mismatch between practice and policy (Andrews, 1994; Markee, 1997). Transitioning from the exploration of curriculum change and the writing component, the following sections discuss agents within CAS, starting with teachers.

3.10. Teachers in a Complex Adaptive System

Teachers are viewed as agents within CAS where understating their roles and functions is important in exploring my research. In this section, I present the existing literature on the various aspects of the teachers' role within the system, including: their participation in curriculum change, their agency in curriculum change, the potential for resistance to change and, finally, their perceptions of writing instruction and assessment.

3.10.1. Teachers' Involvement in Curriculum Change

Teachers' involvement is pivotal in the educational system, particularly in curriculum change, whether to be making decisions, suggesting ideas, or implementing changes in the classrooms. To return to the role of teachers in a complex adaptive system, teachers are part of a system with different components that interact with each other and lead to the emergence of patterns in the system. Therefore, in a context of curriculum change, it is essential to give teachers a platform to voice their views about their practice, what they witness in the classrooms when interacting with students, and how they perceive policy.

Teachers could engage with curriculum changes by understanding the principles that underlie these changes, which allow them to manage the arising uncertainties (Davies, 2022). Collaborative professional inquiry is another way that teachers can engage in curriculum changes as they work with researchers to develop their own expertise in the development of curricula (Priestley & Drew, 2016). Furthermore, by supporting and participating in institutionally provided trainings, using available resources and embracing personal learning opportunities, it is possible to implement new teaching and assessment practices amid an evolving curriculum (Bongco & De Guzman, 2022). Furthermore, teachers can contribute by aligning with the new curriculum's objectives, drawing from their experiences, and applying qualities like creativity, resilience, and adaptability (MacDonald et al., 2016). These multifaceted engagements highlight teachers' pivotal role in the complex process of curriculum changes, aligning with the principles of adaptability and interconnectedness embedded in the framework of complexity theory.

Teachers being involved in curriculum change brings several benefits. Teachers who play an active role in curriculum changes are more likely to support and embrace these changes. For example, a study by Shah et al. (2021) discovered that involving teachers in the curriculum change process may reduce the problems they face. This study, focused on teachers in Pakistan, found that they encountered challenges in adapting to the new curriculum, including issues like resource shortages, insufficient training, and lack of necessary qualifications. However, these teachers believed their involvement in the curriculum change process would help them effectively engage with and support the

changes. A similar study, Al-Dhuwaihi (2017), explored how teachers at a school in the United Kingdom responded to a new curriculum. The findings revealed that factors such as school support, autonomy, collaboration, professional development, and experience influenced teachers' reactions to change. When these factors were positive, teachers were more likely to embrace curriculum change. In essence, these studies highlight the importance of actively involving teachers in the curriculum change process, as it leads to better understanding, empowerment, and, ultimately, greater support and acceptance of the changes.

Engaging teachers in the curriculum change process has significant implications for their personal and professional development. It provides them with a sense of professional autonomy and ownership in shaping the curriculum, ultimately contributing to their self-efficacy. One key study by Poulton et al. (2020) highlighted the emergence of teachers' autonomy and self-determination in curriculum change in Australia. The research illustrated that top-down, centrally prescribed curriculum changes with standardized tests and achievement levels could limit teachers' self-determination and result in a decline in their self-efficacy and that of their collective. In contrast, a bottom-up approach that allowed localized curriculum decision-making empowered teachers with a sense of professional agency and self-efficacy. When teachers had a voice in the curriculum change process, they gained a feeling of ownership and control over their teaching practices.

Another study conducted by Gherzouli (2019) in the Algerian context underlined the impact of excluding teachers from the curriculum development process. In this case, the government controlled and dictated the curriculum, leaving teachers with minimal responsibility and involvement beyond applying the developed curriculum. The study found that teachers who were given the opportunity to participate in the curriculum change process believed it could lead to a sense of curriculum ownership, commitment, and professional development. This further emphasized the notion that involving teachers in curriculum development fosters a greater sense of ownership and dedication to the curriculum.

A crucial aspect of understanding the importance of teachers' involvement in curriculum change is their direct relationship with learners. This relationship plays a

significant role in how teachers perceive and respond to students' needs and learning styles at the classroom level. Scholars (e.g. Bano, 2022; Karakuş, 2021; Young, 1988) claimed that teachers' participation in curriculum change ensures that the curriculum is relevant and aligned with the needs of the students. When teachers are involved in the development process, they can provide valuable insights and expertise based on their experience in the classroom.

On the other hand, across diverse educational settings, research shed light on the common theme of insufficient teacher involvement in curriculum change, emphasizing the need for more inclusive practices. In Zambia, Luo and Muyunda (2021) revealed that secondary school teachers felt neglected and dissatisfied with the curriculum development process. The findings underscored the importance of teachers being well-acquainted with their learners and playing a central role in shaping curricular changes, emphasizing the need for their direct or indirect engagement. In Ireland, McGarry (2017) mirrored these concerns by demonstrating that despite teacher involvement in designing the Primary Language Curriculum, there was a notable absence of awareness and participation in the consultation process. Teachers' lack of information about the nature of the curriculum changes raised questions about effective communication between policy and teachers.

In Turkey, Susam and Demir (2020) further supported these observations, as primary school teachers expressed dissatisfaction with curricular modifications, feeling inadequately involved in the revision process. Their perception that the changes did not align with the country's intended educational needs, suggesting a recurring pattern of insufficient teacher engagement across different educational contexts.

In summary, existing research strongly argues that involving teachers in curriculum change is not only beneficial for their professional development but also essential for creating a sense of ownership and control over the curriculum, which, in turn, enhances their self-efficacy and commitment to delivering effective education. These studies advocate for a more inclusive approach to curriculum development, emphasizing the pivotal role of teachers in contributing valuable insights, experiences, and concerns to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of educational reforms. The recurring theme of

inadequate teacher involvement transcends geographical boundaries, pointing to a shared challenge that needs attention in education policy and practice.

While the literature has often underscored teachers' involvement and the challenges associated with insufficient teacher involvement in curriculum change, it is crucial to move towards an exploration of teachers' agency in this process. This shift from mere participation to active engagement is discussed in the next section.

3.10.2. Teachers' Agency in Curriculum Change

While change agents significantly impact organizational transformation, the current literature tends to view teachers as implementers of top-down changes, neglecting the potential for bottom-up educational reform—a notable gap identified by scholars in the field (Brown et al., 2021). Teachers have the potential to act as change agents, not only within their classrooms but also within their institutions and the broader society (Bourn, 2016). Yet, despite this potential, there is a noticeable lack of research dedicated to understanding teachers in the role of change agents and their experiences in leading educational change (Lukacs, 2015).

In the current research, it is essential to explore and recognize the agency of teachers in driving educational change, both from the top-down and bottom-up perspectives. This understanding can provide valuable insights into how teachers can actively shape and influence educational reforms, making them central players in the process.

How can teachers be identified as agents of change? Questions about their characteristics have been explored in the literature, and it is important to shed light on some of these characteristics. Lukacs (2015) explored the lived experience of teachers as agents of change in the United States. The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the administrators of a high school were contacted, and teachers were asked to identify colleagues who they felt were teacher change agents. In the second phase, the most frequently identified faculty member was interviewed in-depth about her role as a teacher change agent. The findings showed that those interviewed teachers have certain characteristics in common, including active involvement in school improvement, a unique

position for educational change, a desire for school-wide improvements, a growing interest in leadership, and recognition of student voice and agency.

A recent study by Tri (2023) explored the role of teachers as agents of change in the implementation of English-medium instruction (EMI) policy in Vietnam. The study underscored educators' role in educational reforms and suggested that they possessed the ability to enact and respond to shifts in language policies. This study specifically targeted content lecturers within Vietnamese higher education, assessing their potential to act as agents of change during the shift from Vietnamese to English as the medium of instruction. The findings showed that content lecturers did not merely conform to top-down policies; instead, they proactively adapted and reframed these policies to better serve their students. Teachers were seen as agents of change by possessing the ability to benefit their students, make active decisions in their classes, and implement the policy successfully.

Similarly, in the Netherlands context, Van der Heijden et al. (2015) investigated the qualities of educators who act as agents for change in the education sector, playing a vital role in the effectiveness of educational change. The findings showed that effective change-agent teachers had specific characteristics, which included lifelong learning, innovation, collaboration with colleagues, and mastery of guidance. Following this discussion of the role and essential traits of change-agent teachers, the focus now shifts to another critical aspect: teachers' perspectives on curriculum changes, with a specific lens on resistance.

3.10.3. Teachers' Resistance to Curriculum Change

In this section, I explore teachers' perspectives on curriculum changes with a particular focus on the theme of resistance. I aim to uncover the underlying reasons for teachers' resistance and question whether it is fair to label them as resistant.

To begin, teacher resistance, as described in the literature, is the term used to describe the visible behaviours and discontent expressed by teachers when they encounter new ideas, methods, or resources being introduced in educational settings (Córica, 2020).

It is widely acknowledged that teacher resistance is a multifaceted phenomenon, influenced by individual experiences and external factors (Mutch, 2012).

In a complex adaptive system framework, it is crucial to consider the broader context before categorizing teachers as "resistant." This is particularly relevant in environments characterized by heavy reliance on technology and frequent policy changes, where teachers might disengage when they perceive that these changes do not directly enhance the teaching and learning process (Howard & Mozejko, 2015). Furthermore, it is important to note that resistance is not always a negative concept; in fact, it can be a natural component of the transformation process, especially when teachers lack the necessary resources and support to effectively implement the proposed changes (Ba, 2012).

The question now arises: why do teachers often appear resistant to curriculum change? What factors make them less open to change? The reasons behind teachers' opposition to curriculum changes are multifaceted and include their protective nature to their students as well as the difficulties posed by the change process. Some instructors may oppose the new curriculum because they believe it is "developmentally inappropriate for their students," but others may experience professional vulnerability that lowers their self-efficacy and general well-being as teachers (Clasquin-Johnson, 2016, p. 40).

According to Ba (2012), a significant element that fuels teacher resistance is their belief that they lack the skills and expertise necessary to carry out the new curriculum. Instructors may worry about how these changes would affect students and the collaborative nature of teaching, feeling unprepared to handle them. Moreover, teachers frequently require a sense of understanding during the transition process; in the absence of this understanding, resistance may become more evident. Many times, resistance to change is a valid reaction that indicates that instructors and the educational system need more time and help to adjust to the changes, rather than a complete rejection of them.

It is important to recognize that, in contrast to a rigid interpretation of resistance, teachers may oppose curriculum change to defend their professional practices and

students. Their reluctance might stem from a sincere wish to ensure the changes serve teachers' and students' interests equally (Reinders, 2019).

Scholars have extensively studied teachers' reactions to curriculum changes, consistently observing what they term as "teachers' resistance". This resistant behavior appears to be a common response among teachers across various contexts. For instance, Aytacı (2023) conducted a study in a Turkish city, involving 349 teachers. The findings showed a strong inclination among teachers to resist curriculum changes. They perceived these changes as not significantly enhancing the teaching and learning processes, with gender and years of teaching experience having no significant impact on their perceptions.

A similar investigation by Lomba-Portela et al. (2022) in Spain also explored the theme of resistance among teachers. Their study revealed that resistance to educational changes was generally not very intense. High teacher workloads and policy changes emerged as the primary causes of resistance, with greater resistance observed among male educators and in public schools, particularly as teaching staff members gained more experience.

Furthermore, Kalman and Bozbayindir (2017) explored teachers' responses to a reform in Turkey. This mixed research approach consisted of quantitative analysis of teacher attitudes and sequential qualitative analysis of their beliefs and intentions. Findings showed that teachers demonstrated resistance to the recent educational reform on cognitive, affective, and intentional levels. The highest level of resistance was observed in the cognitive domain, indicating teachers' cognitive doubts or uncertainties about the reform's benefits and implications.

In summary, teachers' responses to curriculum change are a complex interplay of factors, and resistance is not always a negative phenomenon. Understanding the underlying reasons and providing necessary support is essential for effective educational reforms. Transitioning to the next aspect, I explore the literature on teachers' perspectives on teaching writing which is a specific focus area within this current research.

3.10.4. Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Academic Writing at the University Level

Since the 1980s, scholars have underscored the crucial need to discern L2 writing development as taking place within a dynamic context, including both micro and macro factors. These factors include students and teachers, available resources, as well as the broader educational and political landscapes (Leki et al., 2008). More recently, researchers such as Chokwe (2013) and Graham (2006) have emphasized the profound influence of contextual elements, particularly the interplay between teachers and learners, on the development of writing skills. Nystrand (2006) has expanded this perspective by asserting that writing, as a social skill, is significantly shaped by institutional and cultural factors. Therefore, in this section, I present a review of research exploring teachers' perceptions of their instructional practices in writing; while also considering the educational and contextual factors they believe impact their teaching of writing at the university level.

Researchers argue that effective writing instruction demands an approach that considers the pedagogical perspectives of teachers and the influence of contextual factors. A study conducted in New Zealand by Wette (2014) revealed that tertiary level instructors of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing used a diverse range of process- and product-oriented principles, showcasing their adaptability to address their students' specific needs. Notably, the study emphasized the use of modelling techniques, consisting of various strategies to enhance students' writing skills. Findings suggested that students can benefit from analysing exemplars and teacher-led support while using the genre approach.

Similarly, Rashid et al, (2022) examined the challenges faced by ESL teachers in Malaysian context when instructing university students in writing skills. The findings of this study offered solutions that stress the importance of providing model examples, encouraging students to read more to improve their vocabulary and grammar, and understanding students' unique needs and abilities to design effective writing lessons.

Shi and Cumming (1995) highlighted teachers' perceptions of second-language writing instruction at a Canadian university, focusing on the importance of considering teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their adaptability in the face of instructional innovations,

which resonates with the argument that changes in writing instruction should be thoughtfully aligned with teachers' individual beliefs and capacity to embrace new methods. Furthermore, Matsuda et al. (2013) explored how university composition instructors in the United States view the presence and requirements of second language (L2) writers. The results indicated that university teachers are conscious of both the existence and needs of L2 writers. However, the restrictions imposed by program policies hinder teachers from adequately meeting student needs. Additionally, standard teaching resources and adequate professional training proved beneficial. The study emphasized the importance of gaining a deeper comprehension of teachers' requirements.

This review of research on L2 writing instruction underscores the interplay of teachers' perspectives and contextual factors emphasizing the need for an approach that considers both teachers' and students' needs in the university setting. In the next section, I discuss teachers' perceptions of assessment of writing as one of the main focuses in my research.

3.10.5. Teachers' Perceptions of Assessment of Academic Writing at the University Level

Assessment in higher education settings has been a subject of significant scrutiny and debate in recent years, influencing the quality of the student learning experience and their overall engagement (Grainger & Weir, 2020). The use of assessment rubrics at the ELC has developed as a tool to enhance the effectiveness of assessment practices and to guide students in their learning experience. However, the impact of assessment rubrics on student engagement and learning experiences is multifaceted and context dependent.

In this section, I explore how assessment and assessment rubrics are viewed in higher education across different global contexts. Bharuthram (2015) in the South African context and Sohrabi et al. (2022) in the Iranian context both examined educators' assessment practices and perceptions, revealing a common disconnect between teachers' beliefs and the practical application of assessment rubrics. In both contexts, rubrics were found to be underutilized, with teachers often perceiving them as mere grading tools rather than instructional aids.

Adding depth to this understanding, Choubane (2022) aimed to understand how teachers at a university in Algeria perceive the challenges in assessing students' writing skills. Through questionnaires and interviews with ten English department instructors, it was found that teachers faced difficulties due to language barriers, time constraints, class size, and inadequate training opportunities. These challenges resulted from limited professional development, heavy workloads, and students' insufficient practice. In Tunisia, Ben Hedia (2020) explored the influence of university instructors' beliefs on grading practices, emphasizing the need for alignment between teaching approaches and perceptions of students' writing abilities. This study, like the others, emphasized the importance of addressing the gap between beliefs and practical assessment practices, calling for training and further research in the field of writing assessment.

Additionally, Qasim and Qasim (2015) explored how Pakistani university instructors perceive rubric use in assessing student writing. Through interviews with six educators, the research examined the value of rubrics. Findings showed that four of the six respondents attest to the effectiveness of rubrics in grading and addressing writing errors, seeing them as valuable tools for gauging student advancement and evaluating teaching methodologies. The study advocated for integrating authentic criteria within rubrics to encourage student self-reflection and independent learning.

This section underscores the need for aligning teachers' perceptions with practical assessment methods, calling for improved training and research in writing assessment. Collaboration among teachers is advocated to enhance teaching practices and create holistic assessment frameworks.

In the preceding section, I explored teachers' roles within a complex adaptive system. Now, I shift focus to other agents in my research: students. This section explored existing research on students' perspectives on their writing experiences, their approaches to learning writing, and the influence these factors may have on students' improvement.

3.11. Students in a Complex Adaptive System

Engaging students in the curriculum change process holds significant importance (Barker et al., 2020; Saito & Fatemi, 2022; Stephen et al., 2022; Wachholz, 1994). This

inclusion ensures the curriculum meets students' specific needs. It enables students to contribute their valuable insights, shaping the curriculum. Additionally, it respects students' voices and individual needs while considering their diverse knowledge, learning approaches, and motivations, thereby enhancing the curriculum's adaptability and relevance.

From a complex adaptive system perspective, students are pivotal agents, actively shaping the system through their actions and interactions. This active involvement contributes to the emergence of patterns and outcomes (Blikstein et al., 2008). Therefore, I regard students as agents in a complex adaptive system to explore their perspectives regarding their learning experiences, potentially influencing future initiatives in the Saudi context. This section is structured with three parts:

3.11.1. Students' Perceptions of Academic Writing Experience at the University Level

3.11.2. Students' Improvement and Academic Writing Approaches

3.11.3. Students' Learning and Writing Assessment Practices

In the first part, I present empirical studies exploring students' perceptions of their academic writing experiences. This part aims to uncover the factors that students identify as influential in their learning. Moving on to the second part, I focus on research about the interactions between students and writing instruction and, specifically, how students perceive the impact of writing approaches on their progress. In the third part, I highlight studies about students' views regarding the assessment of their writing, including the use of assessment rubrics.

3.11.1. Students' Perceptions of Academic Writing Experience at the University Level

This exploration of students' experiences in university-level writing takes a complexity theory perspective. It shows how various internal and external factors interact to shape their learning journey. Education systems, seen through complexity theory, are dynamic and adaptable. This examination aims to uncover students' encounters with academic writing in different educational contexts.

Researchers emphasized the role of students' prior learning experiences, as well as the effective communication between teachers and students in shaping their university learning. For example, Ellis et al. (2007) conducted a study in an Australian university and found that students considered their previous experiences as an important factor for learning at university. Results of this study also pointed out that the significance of understanding the purpose of writing assignments on students learning process and the quality of the writing. Similarly, Altinmakas and Bayyurt (2019) conducted a study in a Turkish university, where they emphasized the impact of how students were taught writing in school on their university learning. Moreover, these students recognized that their instructors' expectations significantly influenced their progress.

Furthermore, the existing literature reveals the complex interplay of internal and external factors that significantly impact students' learning experiences in academic writing. Bok and Cho (2022) highlighted perspectives of Korean university students regarding academic English writing, revealing the coexistence of both positive and negative sentiments. Findings suggested that the nature of the subject, the quality of teaching, and the students' language proficiency could considerably affect students' perceptions. Nevertheless, the common recognition of writing's importance in enhancing academic tasks underlined its unique role in their university education.

This argument was extended by Budjalemba and Listyani (2020) through their study involving Indonesian university students struggling with an Academic Writing course. They identified two main sets of factors contributing to students' difficulties. The first set, comprised of internal factors like motivation, confidence, knowledge, and pressure, reflects the significant role of students' individual characteristics and psychological states in shaping their writing experiences. The second set included external factors, such as teaching style, classroom environment, instructional materials, and conventions of academic writing. This study underscored the importance of quality instructional materials and clear instructions in facilitating effective academic writing, further highlighting the impact of external factors on students' learning.

Moreover, Asaoka and Usui (2003) conducted research exploring Japanese students' views of academic writing classes. This study categorized students' challenges

into three main levels: the surface, macro, and contextual levels. The surface level included linguistic difficulties such as accuracy and fluency in writing, which were common struggles. The macro level consisted of issues associated with the writing process itself, such as planning, text structure, and use of sources. The contextual level highlighted external factors influencing students' experiences, including teacher expectations, lack positive feedback, interference from their native language (L1), and specific task requirements.

Lastly, existing studies from various educational contexts shed light on the multifaceted influences on writing skills. In the Vietnam context, Lan (2023) explored university non-English major students' writing, revealing how teaching approaches, sociocultural influences, and writing purposes impact students' skills. In the American context, Eckstein et al, (2021) examined first-year students' perspectives, emphasizing differences in self-perceptions among students. This study highlighted the significance of self-efficacy, emotions, and writing competence during the high school to college transition. In the Egyptian context Ahmed and Myhill (2016) investigated the socio-cultural impact on L2 English writing among university students. The researchers identified barriers such as limited writing topics, exam-focused culture, lack of critical thinking, and restricted reading habits.

To conclude, students' experiences in university-level writing are influenced by a several factors. Understanding the impact of these factors is crucial for improving writing experiences and outcomes in higher education. In the next section, I discuss specific writing approaches and their impact on students' learning.

3.11.2. Students' Improvement and Academic Writing Approaches

The debate on the use of modelling text in a product-Based approach revolved around the varying responses of students to this approach (Sowell, 2019). While some students may find modelling text efficient as it provides guidance and inspiration for their writing, others may use it merely to replicate the provided models, impeding the development of their original writing skills. This debate was extended by Pasand and Haghi (2013), which placed an emphasis on creating final, error-free texts by having students copy and transform models. Josifović-Elezović and Mitić (2015) contributed to

the discourse by highlighting concerns related to the product approach for writing. The researchers suggested that this method may lead to students memorizing phrases without achieving a deeper understanding of the language and cultural dimensions of writing. The effectiveness of this approach is a matter of ongoing discussion within the academic community.

In the literature, there is a scarcity of studies that have demonstrated the effectiveness of a product approach in teaching writing. I was able to locate two studies that have mainly focused on the product approach. Most of the existing literature focused on an integration of approaches (product, process, and genre) or the process approach independently. For this current research, I present the studies supporting the product approach, followed by studies focusing on a combination of the approaches.

Product Approach. Scholars in the field of L2 writing believed that the use of reformulation and model text significantly enhances the writing abilities of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, leading to improved overall writing performance. In China, Yang and Zhang (2010) conducted a study exploring the role of model text in improving the writing performance of EFL students. Their study included a three-step writing process and found that students who received support through model text showed a substantial improvement in their writing proficiency compared to those without such support. This approach provided clear instructions and illustrations, enhancing students' understanding of their writing tasks. Moreover, Macbeth (2010) examined the use and effectiveness of model examples as educational tools in academic writing for English language learners in the United States. While students generally perceived the models positively and found them valuable for providing clarity and guidance for their writing, the researcher emphasized the importance of students recognizing that these models are not to be copied but used as tools to aid students to write. Misunderstanding this aspect could lead to challenges and could ultimately affect the development of students' writing skills. In the next section, I present the impact of an integration of approaches on students' improvement.

Combination of Process and Product. The integration of process and product approaches in writing instruction proven to be more effective than using either approach in isolation. This combined method not only enhances students' writing proficiency but

also improves students' linguistic accuracy, fosters creative thinking, and promotes autonomy throughout the writing process. Hasan and Akhand (2010) conducted a study at a university in Bangladesh. The findings revealed that solely using the product approach did not significantly contribute to students' writing skills. In contrast, the process approach, while initially was found challenging in organizing ideas, helped students become better at brainstorming and structuring their thoughts. Pasand and Haji (2013) conducted a study at a university in Iran aimed to explore whether having EFL learners complete an incomplete model text within the process-product approach positively impacted their writing accuracy. After training on the process approach, students engaged in two writing sessions: one following the process approach and another completing a model text within the process-product approach. Comparing their writing performance revealed improvements in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, grammar, and overall accuracy when completing the model text. The results indicated a notable increase in writing accuracy with this approach. Marantika and Tustiawatiin (2023) in an Indonesian university context echoed these findings, highlighting the advantages of the process approach in organizing ideas and focusing on grammatical structures.

Furthermore, Agustiana (2016) investigated the combined impact of product and process-based writing approaches on EFL students. The study involved 24 university students in Indonesia, utilizing tests, observations, and student feedback. The results highlighted significant improvements in writing skills across various aspects, such as clarity, coherence and grammatical elements. Additionally, students showed a notably positive attitude toward this combined approach in the classroom. Similarly, Tuvachit and Soontornwipast (2018), in a Thai instructional context, supported these findings, demonstrating that combining process and product approaches positively influenced attitudes, building confidence in addressing writing challenges and improving overall writing skills among students.

Combination of Process and Genre. In the realm of English language education, various instructional approaches are used to enhance students' writing skills. This section synthesizes five studies that investigate the effectiveness of the Process-Genre Approach (PGA) in improving writing proficiency across different contexts. PGA integrates

process-oriented writing strategies with genre-based instruction, aiming to develop students' writing skills.

Truong (2022) investigated the impact of PGA in the Vietnamese context, demonstrating its positive influence on overall writing performance and students' self-efficacy in generating ideas, adhering to writing rules, and implementing writing autonomy. Yucedal et al. (2022) found similar results among language preparatory students in Iraq, where PGA significantly improved writing scores and fostered a collaborative learning environment.

Waer (2020) observed significant improvements in L2 writing self-efficacy and performance among university English majors in Egypt after a PGA intervention. Kondal (2020) explored the impact of PGA on management students' business writing skills in Pakistan, showing marked improvements in writing organization, vocabulary usage, and overall proficiency.

Belmekki and Sekkal (2018) focused on ESP students in Algeria, finding that PGA led to notable enhancements in various writing components, including organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. These findings underscored the effectiveness of PGA in enhancing writing skills across diverse educational settings.

Viewed through the perspective complexity theory, this section emphasizes the relationship between writing approaches and students' improvement. It highlights the necessity for a balanced approach that integrates diverse practices, fostering both skill development and students' autonomy in writing. This underscores the significance of a holistic approach to second-language writing instruction for student growth. In the next section, I present research on writing assessment practice, its challenges, and benefits.

3.11.3. Students' Learning and Writing Assessment Practices

Research revealed that students frequently face difficulties related to understanding assessment purposes and criteria, which gives rise to various challenges and leads to perceptions of assessments as unfair or irrelevant.

To begin with, Shalem et al. (2016) shed light on the perceptions of first-year students in South Africa regarding written assessment tasks, highlighting significant

challenges they confront in academic writing. Notably, students, particularly those with average or lower academic performance, struggle to evaluate their instructors' feedback due to a misunderstanding of academic criteria. In New Zealand, Fletcher et al. (2011) complemented this argument by revealing that students often view assessment in higher education as primarily emphasizing accountability, grades, and qualifications. This perspective resulted in students rating assessments as irrelevant and unfair, underscoring the discrepancy between their perceptions and the actual purpose and fairness of assessments, which contributed to the challenges they faced.

Furthermore, Aldukhayel (2017) examined the clarity and familiarity of scoring rubrics used for assessing writing, finding that students had a limited understanding of these rubrics in the Saudi Arabian context. This limited understanding suggested that students struggled to understand the criteria used for evaluating their writing, underscoring the disconnect between their perceptions and the assessment process. Chowdhury (2020) explored the use of assessment rubrics in Bangladesh. The researcher emphasized that students are frequently unaware of the criteria used for marking their writing, resulting in them not finding the assessment rubrics fair. This lack of transparency in the assessment process increased students' difficulties in understanding what is expected of them in academic writing.

On the other hand, it is argued that assessment practice carries numerous positive effects on students' learning. Research centers on the valuable role of rubrics as essential tools for both assessment and writing instruction at the university level. In the Indonesian context, Arindra and Ardi (2020) aimed to examine the extent of second language writing anxiety experienced by students and their use of assessment rubrics. The findings revealed that introducing writing assessment rubrics effectively reduced students' writing anxiety and facilitated more effective writing. This initial success underscored the valuable role of rubrics in promoting a positive shift in students' perceptions and their ability to handle writing assignments. Meanwhile, a recent study conducted by Goodwin and Kirkpatrick (2023) in Kuwait University supported this perspective by demonstrating that rubrics were highly effective in business writing classes. Assessment rubrics ensured consistent and fair grading, guided students through their assignments, and provided immediate

feedback. This not only indicated the use of rubrics but also emphasized their potential to improve the quality of students' writing and overall learning experiences.

Moreover, Trinh (2020) investigated the impact of incorporating scoring rubrics in the instruction of academic writing for first-year English majors at the University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University. The study included 150 students, spread across six different classes, all specializing in English language teaching or English language translation. The findings showed that students showed significant enhancements in their academic writing competencies, resulting in improved grades and a reduction in writing-related errors. The application of rubrics proved advantageous for students across proficiency levels, assisting them in comprehending concepts, self-correcting errors, and gaining valuable insights from their mistakes. In a Lebanese university, Sabieh (2021) further reinforced the argument by exploring the positive impact of using rubrics in the learning process, emphasizing increased clarity, engagement, and the promotion of critical thinking skills. These results highlighted that flexible rubric use can be a tool for enhanced student learning and development.

This section contrasts the challenges students encounter in understanding assessment criteria and purposes, often resulting in perceptions of assessments as unfair or irrelevant, with the multifaceted positive impact of using rubrics in university-level writing assessment. These studies show how rubrics positively influence students' perceptions, reduce anxiety, and enhance learning outcomes. Moreover, research emphasizes the significance of integrating rubrics as valuable tools in the assessment of writing at the university level.

3.12. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter centered on the literature related to complexity theory, curriculum change, the perceptions of teachers and students, and university-level writing practices. Its goal was to provide a contextual framework for the research within the broader field.

This study defines a complex adaptive system as a system characterized by diverse agents or elements that interact with each other, leading to emerged patterns. This theory

is particularly relevant in the context of ongoing curriculum reforms in a Saudi Arabian university.

Arguments from the teachers' section advocate for an inclusive role for teachers in curriculum change, highlighting their potential as active agents of change and the importance of their involvement in effective educational change. It is also argued that students' prior learning along with internal and external factors could influence their learning experience. Acknowledging students' voice and being aware of these factors could be considered as useful input for policy at the site of this research. In the next chapter, I present the methodology used in this study to navigate this complex system.

Chapter Four: Site and Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I introduce the methods used in conducting this research. The purpose of the chapter is to introduce the methodology of this research, rationales behind decisions I have made while conducting the study and a background of the research's site and participants. In the next section, I begin with the research design.

First, I discuss the research design with a focus on the qualitative research approach (4.2). In the following section I present the research site (4.3), English language programs for the PY (4.4), and access to site and selection of the participants an overview of the teachers followed by the students (4.5). Teachers are teaching under the ELC administration and students are preparatory year university students.

The following section focuses on the data collection procedures, and the research instruments. The instruments used in this research included semi-structured interview and document analysis are discussed thoroughly. I have conducted a pilot study prior to doing the actual study. The purpose, procedures and summary of the pilot are given in detail.

In the next section I explain the data collection procedures, and the data analysis. In this research I used a thematic analysis with its six steps. All these steps are presented in a table. In the last section I focus on the validity of the study including elements such as credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. I then explain the positionality of the researcher in this study before concluding with the ethical considerations raised in the study.

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1. *Qualitative Research Approach*

Definition. Qualitative research is described by Kılıçoğlu (2018) and by Harvey (2018) as an approach that tries to understand real world issues and experiences, from the perspective of the individuals. Kılıçoğlu (2018) mentions that document analysis and interviews are used in gathering data in qualitative research, while Harvey (2018)

emphasises how qualitative research is designed to provide highly detailed insights into an experience as reported by those who have lived it. Richards (2003) adds that qualitative research focuses on how people interpret a specific phenomenon in their environment.

The purpose of qualitative research is to collect data on the unique human experiences, behaviors, attitudes, emotions, and feelings within a specific population, focusing on context-specific insights (Cissé & Rasmussen, 2022). Moreover, Yin (2011) highlights the distinctive features of qualitative research, which are relevant to this current study:

1- Understanding the meanings of people's lives within real-life conditions: Qualitative research aims to explore the intricate and contextualized aspects of individuals' experiences, seeking a deep understanding of their subjective realities within their contexts.

2- Representing the views of study participants: By giving voice to the perspectives and viewpoints of the participants, qualitative research ensures their active involvement in shaping the knowledge generated. This approach values their unique insights and personal narratives.

3- Exploring contextual conditions: Qualitative research goes beyond individual experiences and explores the broader contextual factors that influence people's lives. This includes considering the social, cultural, and environmental aspects that shape individuals' behaviors, beliefs, and practices.

4- Contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts: Qualitative research aims to expand our understanding of human behavior by shedding light on existing concepts or proposing new ones. It seeks to generate insights that deepen theoretical frameworks and enhance our comprehension of complex phenomena.

5- Using multiple sources of evidence: Qualitative research strives to gather evidence from various sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. By triangulating data from different perspectives and contexts, it increases the credibility and richness of the findings.

In alignment with these features of Yin (2011), in my research, by interviewing the participants I aimed to explore how these participants see their context, curriculum change and experiences (see Chapters 5, 6 & 7). I also focused on perceptions and views of the human participants which enrich the exploration of the topic. The context is an important element along with teachers, students, and the curriculum change to be explored within CAS. Therefore, different levels in the context were explored throughout this research (see Chapters 5 & 8). In my research, I aimed to understand the practices and behaviors of teachers and students as well as explore the implication of complexity theory as the theoretical framework of this study (see Chapter 8). For collecting the data, I depended on interviews with teachers and student and official documents to answer the research questions (see 4.6).

To conclude, this research adopted a qualitative research approach to explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers and students regarding academic writing and its contextual influences. By using multiple data sources, including semi-structured interviews and document analysis, the study aimed to capture an understanding of the research subject and contribute meaningful insights to the existing knowledge base. In the next section, I transition to the advantages and disadvantages of this approach.

Advantages and Disadvantages. Qualitative research offers several benefits for researchers who choose to apply qualitative methods in collecting data and exploring areas. One significant benefit of qualitative research is the thick description of the contextual and societal aspects of the participants' views (Denzin, 1989). Qualitative research also displays flexibility, as researchers can adapt their methods and processes to fit new findings or shifts in focus (Maxwell, 2012).

Moreover, qualitative research is known for its considerable strength, primarily ascribed to the attention it affords in establishing rapport and being able to explore responses from participants. By establishing genuine bonds and coming into the lived experiences of others, the ways of qualitative research offer deep insights, giving better insight into the phenomenon under investigation (Wolff et al., 2019).

On the other hand, there are several disadvantages in qualitative research (Mwita, 2022). Specifically, qualitative research can be heavily influenced by the researcher's

subjective opinions and can require complex data analysis. Secondly, qualitative research has low generalisability, which means it is difficult to replicate findings. Thirdly, the methodology may require smaller sample sizes and might take a long time to complete.

To conclude, in this section (4.2) I present the research design in this research starting with defining the qualitative approach to research, its advantages and disadvantages, and making relevant connections to this current research. In the next section (4.3), I describe the site of the research and how I was granted access to it.

4.3. Research Site: English Language Center (ELC)

Presently, Saudi Arabian universities implement a preparatory year for students who come directly from high school to undergraduate studies (see 2.6.1). At prestigious universities such as the site of this research which includes men and women section, this preparatory year is required for all new incoming students. During this foundational year, students take classes in different colleges. Each college focuses on a different area of study. These colleges include: the College of Medicine, College of Applied Science, College of Engineering and Islamic Architecture, College of Computers and Information Systems, and College of Business Administration. All students at each college follow a specific course of training that includes a set of appropriate subjects. For instance, students in the College of Medicine are required to take important subjects such as medical biochemistry and physics.

The English Language Preparatory Programs (ELPPs), developed by the University's English Language Center, are a key part of the preparatory year. Before explaining in detail what ELPPs are, it is essential to give a broad overview of the role of the English Language Center and its context within the University as a whole. The overview includes a description of ELPPs, the textbooks used, and students' assessment and expected outcomes.

4.3.1. ELC History

Initially, according to the ELC (2023), English Language Center was established in 1979 and was then affiliated to the College of Social Sciences established in 1983. The center started with 20 male students who were the university teaching assistants and

lecturers preparing to study abroad for postgraduate degrees. In 1985, the center started to run courses for the students at the College of Islamic Architecture. In 1986, the center began to provide courses for the Engineering students and expanded its courses to include students who applied to study the degree in medical physics. In 1987, the center started to run courses out of the university by running special courses for school principals, teachers of primary and intermediate schools of the local province.

In later years, the center began giving courses in several other departments. It started teaching male students in the newly established College of Medicine and Medical Sciences in 1997. Later, female students were enrolled. In the following years the center offered intensive courses for officers of the KSA border guard, and teachers' assistants and lecturers.

In 1998, the center became affiliated with the College of Community Service and Continuing Education and started offering courses in English for students undertaking diplomas in different fields. The center started to conduct intensive and refresher courses for new university students and the Saudi Telecom Company staff. The number of students enrolled in the center grew extremely large, reaching more than 1000 students in the first semester of 2002. The university saw the need to build many new colleges i.e. the College of Applied Medical Sciences and the College of Pharmacy, leading to a surge in the number of students in the university, particularly in the newly established colleges. The number of student groups increased to 13 groups of males and 14 groups of females in the academic year 2006. At present, the English Language Center is still operating within the university and under the ELC administration. In the next section I detail the ELC's aim and structure.

2.3.2. ELC Aim and Structure

From the official mission statement of the ELC (2023), the ELC aims at “In addition to providing a targeted service to the community, the ELC has a mandate to create a theoretically grounded and practically effective teaching and learning environments for students in the context of globally interconnected institutions so as to help those students achieve academic goals.”

The ELC (2023) has set goals to achieve its mission by 1) delivering programs of high standards to meet students' needs; 2) extending the ELC's courses to the university employees and the community; 3) ensuring quality teaching by initiating international partnerships and well-developed teaching approaches.

The administration at the ELC consists of a Director and Vice Director, who cover both the male and female sections in the ELC; while academically, the staff at the ELC hold qualifications that reflect the range of their educational backgrounds. Several faculty members possess credentials such as Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Master of Arts (MA) and Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees in fields including English Language, Translation Studies, Applied Linguistics, and Teaching English as a Second Language. The ELC is predominantly composed of Saudi citizens who bring a wealth of expertise and experience to the center's educational initiatives. More details about the staff background is given in section 4.5.1.

Before the start of the academic year, students undergo placement tests conducted by the English Language Center (ELC) to determine their English proficiency levels. Based on the results of these tests, students entering the preparatory year are classified into four levels by the ELC before the start of their first semester at the university. These levels range from Beginners to Advanced. These students are placed into levels as follows (ELC, 2020):

- Beginners, who use A1, A2, and B1 textbooks, have 20 hours of classes per week.
- Average students, who also use A2 and B1 textbooks, attend 16 hours of classes weekly.
- High-level students, use B1 textbooks, have 8 hours of classes per week.
- Advanced students are exempted from the English courses; however, they are still required to study all other courses except English courses in the PY.

During the first semester, students focus on studying English for General Purposes (EGP), while in the second semester, they shift to English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In the subsequent section, I provide the objectives of both the EGP and ESP courses, the textbooks used, and the assessment criteria.

4.4. English Language Preparatory Programs (ELPPs)

4.4.1. English for General Purposes (EGP)

The English for General Purposes (EGP) course is one of the important courses of the preparatory year (PY). This course is mandatory for all PY students and is organized for each course depending on the time allocated to it. Since 2016, teachers have used new textbooks for the EGP course published by Oxford University Press (OUP). These materials are Milestones in English which is available at three levels: beginner, elementary and pre-intermediate.

According to Oxford University Press (2024), the course is designed for students to achieve the language skills required to pursue their university courses. It aims to increase the proficiency in students' language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). It also pays a great deal of attention to developing the sub-skills of language (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary), to help students master the four main skills of the English language. Completion of this course, which is the entrance course for PY, is a requirement for their entry into the ESP course (English for specific purposes) which comes in the subsequent semester.

The series helps teachers and students to achieve the course objectives by providing core course books and many supplementary books. The common supplementary materials available for each level include an e-book (with extra activities and materials), a speaking scheme and assessment materials. Moreover, teachers can get access to more specialized supplementary materials by logging on to the OUP website using the passwords provided by the ELC.

EGP is the entrance course for all PY students, which helps them to achieve the basic English skills needed for their university courses the next semester. The course books are promoted as including a wide range of activities and materials that help students achieve the language learning goal. They use four different skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) in different activities to enhance their skills and make them ready for their university courses.

Outcomes and Assessment. According to the ELC (2020), one of the primary objectives of the course is to train students not only to recognize and correct language mistakes they make, but also to master accurate grammar and vocabulary, and organize paragraphs. The assessment breakdown for the first semester is outlined as follows:

- Course work: makes up (20%) of the grade with the aim to test students' understanding of the course, and ability to apply this understanding in real life.
- The mid-term test: covers (30%) of the final mark. This exam evaluates students on the knowledge they have acquired during the first half of the semester.
- Writing and speaking assessments: account for (10 %) of the grade and are designed to test students' ability to express themselves in writing and speak effortlessly to an audience.
- The final exam: represents (40%) of the total grade and constitutes a global exam in which students' knowledge and skills acquired during the semester will be tested.

4.4.2. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

In the second semester, students attend English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. Those courses aim to prepare students for their major fields of study. ESP courses include three main streams: *Technical Stream*, *Business Administration Stream*, *Medical Stream*. In this section, I detail each stream (the three streams), their objectives, materials, and course assessment and outcome.

Technical Stream. The Technical Stream is for students who want to complete their studies in technical colleges (industry majors such as Engineering and Computer Science). The textbooks for the Technical Stream are from the Oxford University Press and the preferred series are two textbooks per semester, such as Oxford English for Careers: Technology 1 and Technology 2. These textbooks use a communicative approach to enable learners to acquire an extensive range of technology-centered vocabulary and strategic language skills, with a degree of exposure to authentic materials used in academic and professional contexts.

The Technical Stream courses are designed to prepare students to engage with course materials, participate with class activities, and receive tailored instruction.

Students would be able to communicate and understand more technical aspects of English - equipping them to be more successful and well-prepared for their academic lives and future jobs when they master the basic terminology of a technical subject.

Business Stream. The business stream of ELPPs is part of the college education for the current Preparatory Year (PY) students who aim to study in the College of Business Administration. This English course is required for their academic future. First, the course is designed to prepare students for further study in business. They need to learn English for successful study and future development. Secondly, the course teaches them how to deal with academic style and text.

The Business Stream's ultimate objective is to expose students to the language conventions related to business. By focusing on conventional business language and practices, students develop a richer appreciation of the special linguistic features of business discourse, as well as making students aware of genre practices of business language. The Business Stream works towards mastery of all four language domains: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. It does this by weaving together discourse activities in the classroom, with rich scenarios set in authentic business contexts and constantly focusing on supporting the development of language skills in a business-linked frame (OUP, 2024).

All course content for the Business Stream is drawn from a selection of customized course books published by Oxford University. Two main textbooks have been specially written for the Business Stream: Commerce 1 and Commerce 2.

Medical Stream. The Medical Stream is a part of the English Language Preparatory Programs (ELPPs) mainly designed for Preparatory Year (PY) students with a specific goal of studying one of the many specializations of medical education: Medicine and Medical Sciences, Dentistry, Physiotherapy, Health Administration, Pharmacology. This course is an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) type, and all its components are specially designed for students who plan to study and eventually pursue a career in the medical field.

The major goal that the course is expected to achieve is to teach non-native language students the specialized medical vocabulary that is unique to the discourse of medical settings. One way that the course achieves this goal is by exposing students to medical vocabulary and making sure that they are familiar with the different kinds of medical terminology (OUP, 2024).

In this course, there is an emphasis on improving the students' fluency and accuracy in medical reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students have readings drawn from various Oxford University Press materials. The Medical Stream's curriculum consists of two textbooks: Nursing 1 and Nursing 2. These textbooks are written to suit the students in the Medical Stream by providing them with academic instructions on medical terms, procedures, and communication. With the knowledge in the textbooks, students might develop the language skills which are appropriate for their medical careers.

Outcomes and Assessment. Upon the completion of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course, as stated on the website of the ELC (2020), learners could achieve several learning outcomes. Students would potentially improve their skills in using textual and oral English language within administration, technology, medical and other fields. They would also demonstrate skills such as paraphrasing, summarizing, incorporating quotes, using connectives and quotation marks, and citing references.

Moreover, Students would be capable of using the necessary vocabularies required for their occupations, such as technical or medical terminology. They could read and comprehend content in their field. They would show their ability using the language accurately to express thoughts. Also, they would be able to write different forms of text, from paragraphs to essays and reports, and formal/informal email, in an appropriate style with clear structures and cohesive organization.

Assessment of the ESP courses as given by the ELC (2020) is divided into the following:

- Coursework: worth (20%) of the final mark and consists of tests, oral presentations, essays and spoken assignments.
- Mid-term Exam: The mid-term is worth (30%) of your grade and covers the material through the mid-term.

- Writing and Oral Communication: (10 %) of the final grade. This aspect assesses students' proficiency in writing and oral communications.
- Final Exam: The final exam carries the highest weight (40%) and acts as a comprehensive evaluation of the students' overall ability in the ESP course.

These assessment tools offer a portrait of a student's language competence and the student's ability to use language in their subject specialty. In the next section I move to the research site and access, and section of participants and their profiles.

4.5. Research Access

The purpose of this section is to introduce the site of the research, how I accessed the site, and how I approached the director of the ELC to grant approval and gain access to necessary documents and to the participants.

Access to the university and the participants was facilitated by my position as a faculty member at the university. This enabled me to contact the director of the ELC and inform her about the research and what was needed for the data collection stage. I was welcomed to conduct the research and was given approval after completing an ethical form from the ELC. In this form I made sure to include all the details about the data instruments, participation risk and procedures. I was given the approval to start the data collection.

To initiate the recruitment process, I reached out to the head of the English Language Center, where the study was conducted. It is important to note that as a full-time PhD candidate, I was not directly involved in teaching or assessing the students participating in the research, ensuring no bias in the selection process. Following approval to begin data collection, I personally recruited teachers and students to participate in the study. The selection process for both teachers and students is discussed in the subsequent section. In the next section I present the procedures I have followed to recruit teachers and students.

4.5.1. Selections of Teachers

The study included a total of nine female university teachers who were actively teaching English at the English Language Center. The sampling technique I used for

selecting these teachers was purposive sampling, which is commonly found in qualitative research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Purposive sampling is a deliberate sampling technique aimed at selecting a sample with predefined characteristics that align with the study's specific goals. This approach offers benefits such as efficiency, reliability, and the opportunity to collect data from experts with deep knowledge within a particular cultural context (Andrade, 2020; Tongco, 2007).

The criteria for choosing the teachers included their willingness to participate in the study, and their interest in teaching writing and sharing their perspectives for this research. The aim was to recruit teachers with varying levels of experience to explore the influence of their experience on their teaching practices. For confidentiality purposes, pseudonyms have been assigned to each teacher to reference them in this research. The following section provides an overview of the nine teachers who willingly participated in the study.

Suha: With nine years of teaching experience at the ELC and a PhD in Applied Linguistics, she brings a wealth of expertise to her role. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, she has served as an administrator at the ELC for two years. Her contributions extend beyond the classroom, as she actively prepares and delivers workshops on various topics such as vocabulary teaching, academic writing, and language testing. These workshops cater to students, teachers, and scholars across Saudi Arabia, showcasing her commitment to sharing knowledge and advancing language education. Furthermore, her teaching portfolio encompasses a range of specialized subjects including English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for General Purposes (EGP), Medical Language, and Computer Science.

Rema: has 14 years of teaching experience at the ELC and a total of 22 years of teaching in Saudi Arabia. She brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her role. Her educational background includes an MA in Applied Linguistics, supplemented by additional language teaching courses completed in the UK.

In addition to her work at the ELC, she has also taught at the College of Health Sciences within the Ministry of Health. This diverse teaching experience has allowed her to work with students at different levels and be exposed to various policies and

educational contexts across different cities in Saudi Arabia. Her extensive teaching background and exposure to diverse educational settings have contributed to her comprehensive understanding of teaching methodologies, student needs, and the impact of policy on classroom practice. This breadth of experience positions her as an asset in the field of language education.

Sama: has five years of teaching experience and a PhD in language assessment, specifically classroom-based assessment, she brings a strong background in evaluating and measuring language proficiency. Additionally, she has gained valuable administrative knowledge during her six-month experience as an administrator at the ELC.

Her commitment to professional development is evident through her practicum in the UK, where she had the opportunity to teach refugees, honing her skills in working with diverse learner populations. Furthermore, she has specialized experience in teaching young learners, specifically those between the ages of 8 and 15. With her expertise in language assessment, administrative experience, and a diverse teaching background that includes working with young learners and refugees, she possesses a well-rounded skill set that contributes to her effectiveness as an educator.

Ghadah: With five years of teaching experience at the ELC, she has developed a strong foundation in language teaching. Her educational background includes a PhD in Language Teaching, specializing in teaching English for specific purposes.

In addition to her teaching role, she has also served as the head of the Professional Development stream for teachers at the ELC. This position highlights her commitment to enhancing the skills and knowledge of fellow educators, ensuring continuous growth and improvement within the teaching community. Her combination of teaching experience, specialized expertise in English for specific purposes, and leadership in professional development make her an asset in the field of language education.

Salma: has six to seven years of teaching experience at the ELC, and she has developed a solid foundation in language instruction. Her educational background includes an MA in Education, which has equipped her with a deep understanding of pedagogical principles and effective teaching strategies. As a native speaker of English,

born and raised in the USA, she brings a high level of language proficiency and cultural fluency to her teaching practice. Driven by her passion for education, she is planning to pursue a PhD soon to further advance her knowledge and expertise in the field. Her specific interest lies in teaching reading and improving students' reading skills.

Dana: Having accumulated two years of teaching experience at the ELC, she brings valuable insights to language instruction. Her educational background is distinguished by a PhD in translation studies and drama, providing her with a unique perspective on language learning and innovative teaching methodologies.

In addition to her tenure at the ELC, she has also taught young learners at the elementary level in schools. This experience has honed her ability to develop effective instructional strategies that cater to the specific needs and interests of young students, facilitating their language development and fostering a love for learning.

Amal: with over 10 years of teaching experience, she has developed a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the field. Currently pursuing a PhD, she is dedicated to advancing her understanding of language education and exploring new avenues for research and innovation. During her time at the ELC, she actively participated in her own research study by teaching and collecting data. This firsthand experience allowed her to merge theory and practice, gaining valuable insights into the into language instructions and the dynamics of the classroom.

Her particular interest lies in teaching listening skills and using technology to enhance English language instruction. With a focus on incorporating innovative tools and techniques into her teaching, she strives to create engaging and interactive learning experiences for her students.

Basmah: has been teaching at the ELC since 2017. She earned a MA in teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from the United States. Her interests focus on second language acquisition, translanguaging, and multilingual education. Basmah has experience in teaching English medical courses, business courses as well as technology courses. She plays an active role in presenting workshops to students. These courses focus on academic writing. She is eager to pursue her PhD studies in the coming years to expand her knowledge.

To conclude, in this section I presented the profiles of teachers who have taken part in the interviews. In the next section I move to the other group of participants in this research: students at PY.

4.5.2. Selection of Students

The participants in the study consisted of female preparatory year students, specifically aged 18 or 19 years old. These students primarily spoke Arabic as their first language, and their proficiency levels in English varied. Convenience sampling was employed to recruit students for the study. Convenience sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling strategy that entails the inclusion of individuals who are readily available to the researcher (Wu et al., 2014; Etikan et al., 2016). To recruit students, the teacher participants were requested to encourage students in their classes to take part in semi-structured interviews. The teachers played a pivotal role in facilitating the recruitment process. In Table 3, an overview of the students' profiles is presented, providing relevant details about pseudonym names, and commonalities and differences among the students who participated in the study.

Table 3

Students' Participants Profile

Names	Commonalities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amjad, • Amani • Leen • Sara • Bushra • Nada • Rawan • Asma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their status as preparatory year students • Age 19 Years old • Their enrolment in the medical stream studies • Saudi citizens with Arabic language as their mother tongue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proficiency in English • Educational background (public versus private secondary education)

4.6. Data Collection Methods

I used semi-structured interviews as the main research method. Materials analysis was used to complement the interviews. In the next section I discuss both instruments (semi-structured interviews and document analysis) and their advantages and disadvantages, respectively.

4.6.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

The main instrument used in this research is the semi-structured interviews which represents a conversational approach to interviewing that center on specific themes, offering room for flexibility and the possibility of uncovering unforeseen insights (Adams, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers and students in the preparatory year. Using this semi-structured model for interviewing allowed me to probe participants' responses further while also allowing participants to expand their answers. The interviews were conducted online using videoconferencing software (Teams) and lasted approximately 50 to 60 minutes. Interviews with teachers were in English while students were given the option to talk either in Arabic or English language.

Teachers' interviews included questions specifically targeting teachers' educational background and experience, their perceptions of the curriculum change including the writing instruction given by the ELC, assessment rubric, writing tasks, textbooks, policies at the ELC as well as educational and contextual factors. The interview guide (Appendix E) details what I discussed with each teacher.

Students were preparatory year students at the university studying English Language, as a part of their preparatory year courses. I aimed to interview students and ask them about their attitudes and experiences toward academic writing at the university. Interview guide (Appendix F) details what I discussed with the students. Similarly, students introduced themselves and then the remainder of each interview focused on student's perceptions of academic writing and assessment, educational and contextual factors influencing their learning experience.

4.7. Document Analysis

4.7.1. Definitions

Document analysis is a qualitative research approach, involving the examination and reviewing of existing documents as a source of data to gain insights and understanding of a particular phenomenon (Bowen, 2009).

The term "document" extends its scope beyond written content to include visual media such as photographs, videos, and films. In the context of qualitative analysis, a document is broadly defined as any source containing information or data amenable to scrutiny and analysis (Flick, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Using documents in qualitative research has both strengths and limitations. Merriam (2009) stated that documents are easily found, whether publicly or through personal connection, thus saving the researcher's time. They are objective compared to other types of data. The term "objective" here refers to the characteristic of documents being impartial and unbiased sources of information. Unlike classroom observations or interviews, where the researcher's interpretation or influence can affect the study, documents provide a more objective data source as the researcher's viewpoints do not influence them.

Limitations of using documents include difficulties that the researcher may encounter in making sense of the information gathered. This is because the collected documents were not made for the sake of the study. This may lead to questioning the "accuracy" and "authenticity" of the documents (Merriam, 2009, p. 154). In the next section, I expand on the different methods of documents analysis.

4.7.2. Methods of Document Analysis

The purpose of this section is to provide a background of the different approach used in document analysis. In each method, I presented its definitions and steps used in applying the method to data. I started with content analysis, followed by discourse analysis.

Content Analysis. Content analysis has been defined in the literature as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Mayring (2000) defines it as an empirical and methodological text analysis approach within its communication context by adopting specific content analytical rules and step by step models without predetermined numbers.

Content analysis can be carried out in three ways (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Conventional content analysis involves deriving categories for coding directly from the data while remaining unbiased. This allows themes to emerge naturally from the text. Directed content analysis on other hand starts with established theories or previous studies to guide initial codes, using these frameworks in interpreting the text data versus existing concepts. Summative content analysis focuses on quantifying certain aspects like key words or phrases which are used to interpret what is underneath based on these measures of quantities. In relation to research objectives and context, each method has its own way of analyzing and making meaning out of textual data.

According to George (2009), there are two types of content analysis: "frequency" and "non-frequency". In contrast to the former, which counts features of the content's characteristics, non-frequency content analysis concerns itself with the appearance or disappearance of some elements to make inferences (p. 145). Kohlbacher (2006) also argues that in addition to explicit or manifest content, researchers should consider latent content when interpreting materials and must take context into consideration. Additionally, Bell & Stevenson (2006) note that any qualitative documentary analysis must be able to look at the wider context, in addition to the content of the document itself, the text found in the document and the impact of policies in documents especially in policy studies.

Scott (1990) and Silverman (2006) argue for a thorough review of theory and research, suggesting that a deep theoretical base is essential for understanding not only the text but also its implications. Finally, Bowen (2009) outlines the process of document analysis, which includes skimming, reading, and interpretation, organizing information into categories and themes.

To carry out a content analysis, Roumell (2024) describes five steps, namely, selection of materials, developing coding framework, categorical analysis techniques, data reduction and interpretation, and comparing data. The steps are broken down as follows in table 4.

Table 4

Content Analysis Steps (Roumell, 2024)

Step	Description
1. Selection of relevant material	Identify and collect documents and materials relevant to the research focus.
2. Development of coding framework	Develop a coding framework with categories and codes relevant to the research questions.
3. Application of categorical analysis techniques	Use the coding framework to organize and categorize data. Apply cross-coding to explore relationships among categories.
4. Data reduction and interpretation	Reduce data to focus on themes and patterns. Analyze and interpret findings within coding categories.
5. Comparative and qualitative approach	Ensure the analysis is comparative by examining similarities and differences. Maintain a qualitative perspective throughout.

According to Elo and Kyngäs (2008), when using content analysis to develop a conceptual model of a phenomenon, both inductive and deductive processes include three main phases: preparation, organizing, and reporting. The preparation phase is similar for both approaches. In inductive content analysis, concepts are developed directly from the data. Deductive content analysis, however, uses a framework based on existing knowledge to structure the analysis. A simpler approach of analysis involves coding the data, organizing these codes into themes, and interpreting the results to understand the phenomenon being studied (Kyngäs, 2020).

Puppis (2019) highlights a model consists of two main steps: 1)- Coding: in this step the researcher focuses on assigning segments of text to pre-defined categories. 2)- Interpretation: in this step the researcher focuses on identifying patterns within these categories and contextualizing them theoretically. Stanton (1995) adds content analysis involves five key stages: (1) establishing objectives; (2) defining the unit of analysis; (3) creating categories for analysis; (4) testing the coding for reliability; and (5) performing the analysis.

To conclude, content analysis serves as an important research technique that provides a systematic and flexible way of studying different forms of data. It is an approach that assists in the interpretation of raw data by identifying patterns, themes and meanings represented in texts or visuals. This method can be used within qualitative as well as quantitative frameworks, making it applicable in many research situations. For this research, content analysis is used in analysing the writing materials at the ELC (see 4.7.6). In this next section, I present the second method of analysis: discourse analysis.

Discourse Analysis. Discourse analysis is used to refer to the examination of language use in context; this includes both written and spoken forms with an emphasis on understanding how communication works through words (Paltridge, 2006). Furthermore, discourse analysis is a study that examines how language is used in social relations, both oral and written forms, to focus on the organization, functions, and socio-cultural forces affecting it (Demo, 2001).

Language is seen not just a way people express themselves but also a means through which they communicate while making sense about the world around them, according to Marshall (1994). Discourse analysis has many different branches within multiple disciplines like sociolinguistics, cultural studies, sociology, and psychology (Potter, 2012).

Bryman (2012) further explains that critical discourse analysis, influenced by critical theorist Michael Foucault, examines the relationship between language use, power, and social differences. Foucault's ideas, as referenced by Dick (2004) and

Perryman (2012), emphasize that knowledge and power are connected, with discourse playing a role in shaping social systems and structures. Perryman (2012) asserts that discourse within social structures can generate new truths and knowledge, therefore empowering those who possess it. Dick (2004) adds that discourses not only constitute individual identities and relationships but also reflect the ideological systems within society.

Demo (2001) explains that a discourse analysis of written texts might explore topic development and cohesion across sentences, whereas an analysis of spoken language could examine these elements along with turn-taking practices, the opening and closing sequences of social interactions, and narrative structure.

Consequently, researchers are encouraged to look beyond the language itself, exploring the interplay between the social world and the ways language is use (Bryman, 2012; Paltridge, 2006). Moreover, critical discourse analysis has become a prominent method for examining text and speech, characterized less by a unified theoretical or methodological framework and more by a shared aim to describe, explain, and critically assess how text and talk contribute to the creation, maintenance, and legitimization of injustice, and oppression in society (Leeuwen, 2015).

Three-dimensional discourse analysis is a method that examines discourse through three distinct levels: (1) textual analysis, which involves describing and analysing the text itself; (2) discursive practice analysis (meso level), which interprets how the text interacts with broader discourses; and (3) sociocultural practice analysis, which explains the connection between discourse processes and social processes (Fairclough, 1995).

In conclusion, discourse analysis focuses on examining how language mirrors and forms society. More importantly this approach to studying social communication reveals social forces as well as the ideological framework through which identity construction and formation of relationships occur. in this research I used discourse analysis to look at the writing materials (see 4.7.6). In the next section, I focus on introducing the choice of material analysis.

4.7.3. Materials Analysis of this Study

The term "language teaching materials" cover many resources, including teacher-created exercises, news articles, radio shows, online practice tools, games, dictionaries, and even full-length novels, alongside the more traditional coursebooks (Littlejohn, 2022). Materials serve multiple roles: they can be informative, providing learners with information about the target language; instructional, guiding language practice; experiential, allowing learners to encounter the language in real contexts; eliciting, encouraging learners to actively use the language; and exploratory, facilitating discoveries about linguistic aspects (Tomlinson, 2012).

In this research, I focus on the teaching-learning materials used in the classroom. From this point forward, I refer to this as materials analysis. These materials include the model paragraph associated with the students' writing tasks, the writing tasks found in the textbooks, and the assessment rubric. The following section details the rationale behind the materials analysis, the framework for materials selection, and the analytical framework used in the analysis.

4.7.4. Rationale of the Materials Analysis

In this section, I present the documents I focused on in my research. This initial section serves as the background of the study, including the analytical framework. It presents the procedure for selecting and determining the supporting documents, as well as the roles and functions of the writing materials.

Using document analysis in this study is that it serves multiple purposes. First, it aids in triangulating the data, thereby enhancing the overall credibility of the research (Bowen, 2009; Patton, 2002). Second, document analysis helps in comprehending the context of the research, including its historical aspects. By examining relevant documents, a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter can be achieved.

Moreover, document analysis complements the data collected through other research methods, reinforcing the findings, and providing additional perspectives. It also facilitates the generation of pertinent research questions, enabling a more focused investigation (Bowen, 2009; Patton, 2002). In the case of this research, I have chosen to

conduct materials analysis to gain insights into the curriculum changes that have occurred at the university where I am employed as an English Language lecturer. These materials include model paragraph task, textbook tasks, and assessment rubric. While I have not personally experienced these changes first-hand from 2020 to the present, analysing relevant materials allows me to bridge that gap in my knowledge and inform my research effectively.

4.7.5. Framework of Materials Selection

In the initial phase of this research, the first step involved identifying the documents to be included in the study. To accomplish this, a systematic procedure was adopted to determine and select the relevant documents. The selection process followed the factors outlined by Flick (2018). Four key elements guided the document selection: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning.

Authenticity, in this context, refers to the documents being sourced from reputable and trustworthy origins (Mogalakwe, 2009). This criterion ensures that the selected documents are suitable for use in qualitative research. In this study, all the writing materials used were obtained through the administration at the English Language Center and were used by the study participants during their routine teaching duties.

The second factor involves ensuring the credibility of the documents, which entails preserving the documents in their original form without any alterations (Dunne et al., 2016). Flick (2018) highlights the importance of researchers verifying the credibility of the documents by examining their primary sources. In my research, I ensured that all materials were originally provided by the authorities at the English Language Center. The remaining two factors, representativeness and meaning, emphasize the significance of the documents under investigation and their value for the research. In the next section I move to the analytical framework of the analysis and the process I followed in analyzing the materials.

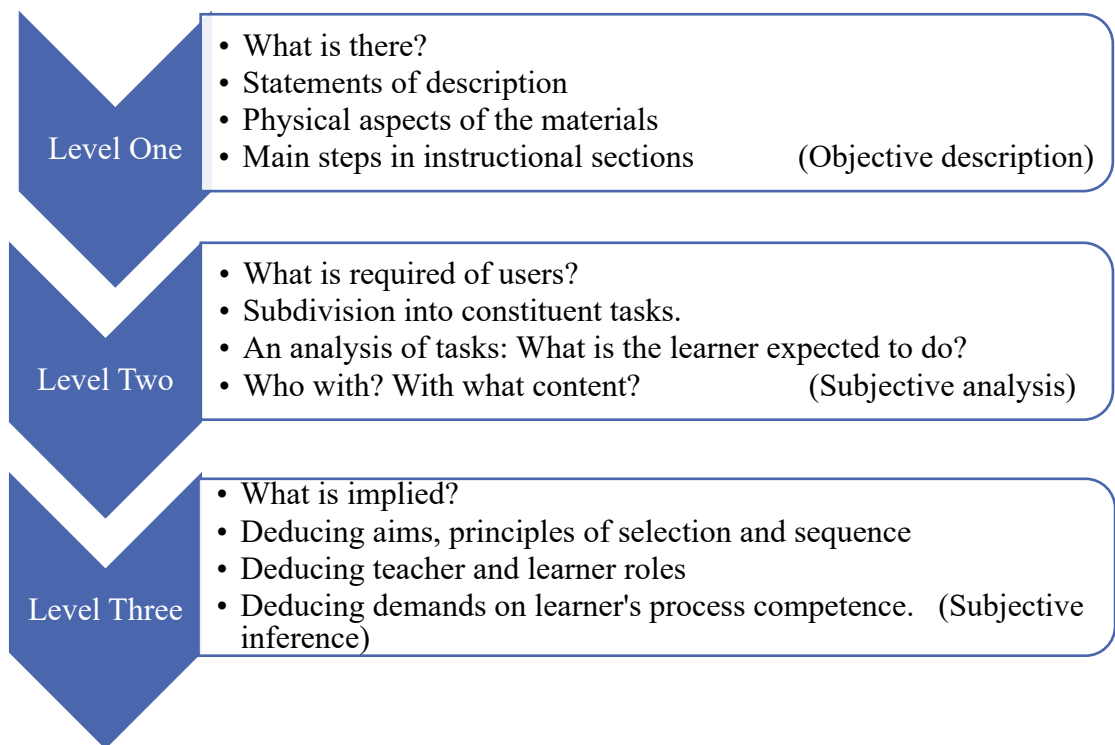
4.7.6. Analytical Framework of Materials Analysis

The Framework. In this research I followed content analysis and discourse analysis of the materials, following a data driven framework from (Littlejohn, 2022). This

framework focuses on the data found in the materials, rather than creating theories based on the finding, hence data driven. The framework consists of three levels as follows:

Figure 5

Three Levels Framework Analysis (Littlejohn, 2011)



According to Littlejohn (2022), in the first level of the framework, the researcher gathers objective information about the materials, such as their layout, the various components they include, and the total number of pages. In the second level, the researcher involves in a subjective analysis that examines what the materials require from users by closely analysing the tasks they present. Finally, in the third level, the researcher makes subjective inferences to understand what the materials suggest. This stage focuses on insights from the first two levels to explore how the materials define the roles of teachers and learners, as well as their underlying goals, selection criteria, and sequence in the classroom. This framework is used to analyse the materials (see Chapter 5).

Analysing the Tasks. For my analysis, in the first level of my analysis, I used content analysis on the tasks aimed at evaluating them relatively objectively. This

included stating some very basic facts concerning the tasks, such as: the format of the tasks, the physical layout and sequence of the tasks.

This first level stage was descriptive and objective, where no drawing of conclusions was made but explaining what existed in the materials. This content analysis of tasks enabled me to see how the tasks were arranged in order and therefore helped in covering all the aspects of the materials prior to the earlier intended deeper analysis.

In the second level of my analysis, I moved towards discourse analysis. At this point, there was a phase where I questioned deeply what the tasks required from students. This analysis involved defining the main parts of each task and understanding students' cognitive engagement with each task and exploring the demands of the tasks.

My third level of the analysis, which was more subjective, performed subjective inference that was focused more on discourse analysis. At this point, I addressed the following aspects: educational aims, roles of students and teachers, and task difficulty and process competence.

In summary, in analysing the tasks I carried out objective content analysis by focusing on the constituent structure of the tasks and their components. In levels Two and Three, I engaged in discourse analysis to know what students were expected to do with the tasks and to draw subjective conclusions regarding the tasks' education goals and the place of the teachers and the students in those tasks' objectives.

Analysing the Assessment Rubric. For the rubric, I used content analysis as a method to assess the alignment between the assessment rubric and the writing tasks. Content analysis is used to assist me in analysing and classifying both the rubric as well as the tasks.

The first step of this content analysis involved examining the assessment rubric and identifying the key components or criteria it used to evaluate student writing. These elements are grammar/vocabulary, structure, coherence, and development. Each of these criteria was treated as a distinct unit of analysis, allowing for a detailed and systematic categorization. Content analysis is particularly suited to this task because it involves the

categorization of different aspects of the content. By breaking down the rubric, I was able to analyse each criterion and compare it to what is required in the writing task.

Next, I looked back at the analysis of the tasks that I have already done. I extracted key points I needed to examine the alignment between the rubric and the tasks. These points included defining the skill or competencies that students had to demonstrate while engaging in the task, for example, argumentation, clarity, organization or supportive evidence. Using content analysis for this part of the study allowed me to objectively categorize the skills expected from students based on the writing tasks. This method ensures that all key components are systematically identified, avoiding any subjective bias.

Then I examined the alignment between the rubric and the tasks. For instance, if a few criteria in the rubric were deemed irrelevant to the task, or if few task requirements were defined in the rubric, this would be a case of misalignment. On the contrary, if there was correspondence between the specified and actual requirements, it would be reasonable to say that all the criteria were satisfied.

This type of analysis uses both quantitative methods and qualitative assessment to analyse alignment. In this way, by deductively determining these patterns, I could provide objective proof regarding the alignment of the task and the rubric. Therefore, using content analysis in this stage of the study was appropriate.

In summary, content analysis allowed me to explore the alignment between the assessment rubric and the writing task. By breaking down the rubric criteria and task demands into categories and identifying patterns of alignment or misalignment, I was able to offer clear insights into the effectiveness of the rubric in assessing the writing task. Before conducting the actual study and following the data analysis, I carried out a pilot study, which I present below.

4.8. Piloting the Study

A pilot study is “a small-scale trial of the proposed procedures, materials, and methods, and sometimes also includes coding sheets and analytic choices” (Mackey & Gass, 2015, p. 52). The aim of the pilot study is to anticipate any issues with the

instruments before using them in the actual study (Mackey & Gass, 2015). In this research, I aimed to assess the usefulness of the semi-structured interview questions that I prepared for both teachers and students at the university. My main goal was to confirm that the participants understood the questions and the wordings so that any changes could be made before starting the main data collection stage of this research.

In March 2021, I conducted a pilot study at a university in Saudi Arabia. Ethical approval was obtained, and two teachers and two students were recruited. The purpose was to test interview questions, with no intention of including this data in the main study later. Teachers I personally contacted showed interest in participation, and students were informed by their teachers and given the option to join. Interviews were conducted online via Teams, which proved successful for recruitment and data collection.

Based on the findings obtained from the pilot study and doing an extensive literature study and engaging in thoughtful consideration, I made the decision to choose complexity theory as the fundamental framework for my research. The decision was made to establish a strong basis to understand the context, curriculum change, teachers and students and their dynamics.

Doing online interviews was deemed to be successful in interacting with the participants. Therefore, I had no issue in switching to online settings due to the restrictions of the pandemic then. Interview questions for both teachers and students were modified based on the main factors I intended to focus on. For example, I modified questions to fit the framework of the research. I added four main foci: context, teaching and assessing of writing, factors, and policy at the context (Appendices E & F). In the next section, I present the data collection procedure of the actual research.

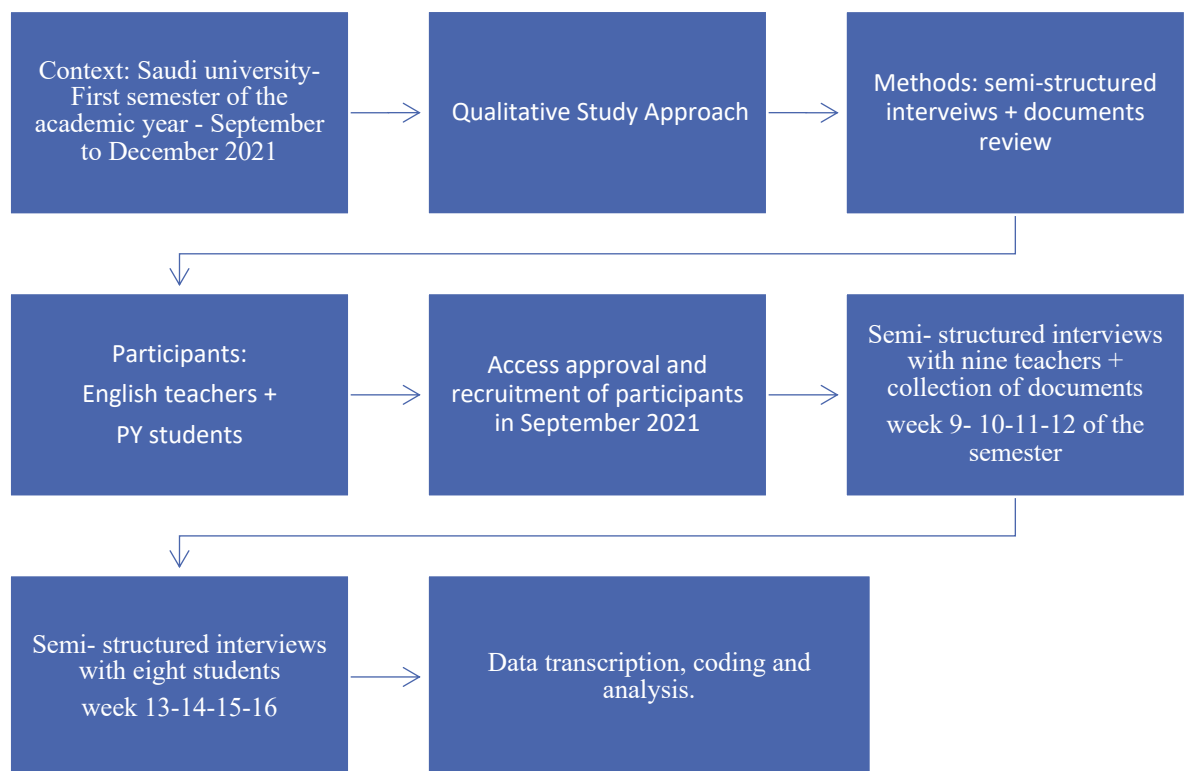
4.9. Data collection Procedures

The semi-structured interview was meant to be face-to-face, but the exceptional circumstances imposed by the Coronavirus Pandemic required that they be held virtually using the Teams videoconferencing application. Had the interviews been conducted on site, it would have been at the university in Saudi Arabia or in a public place where the participants felt comfortable. The actual plan I followed in the data collection stage is shown in Figure 1. The data collection took place from week 9 to week 16 of the semester

(September to December 2021). From week 9 (two months from the beginning of the academic year) teachers were interviewed first as they were already familiar with the context, materials, and their practices. After that, students were interviewed from week 13 which meant they should have had by then enough time to reflect on their learning experiences in their writing classes.

Figure 6

Stages of Data Collection



4.10. Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

The stage following the data collection is the data analysis, where the researchers make sense of the data by transcribing, interpreting, and coding the data and present it in a discussion (Creswell, 2007). The researchers start looking for themes during the data collection and continue revisiting the data in the analysis stage. Choosing a specific method for analysis of the data is important for the credibility of the study (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Therefore, in this research I followed a thematic analysis approach in interpreting the data.

Thematic analysis is defined as the process of looking at the data to identify and present the final analysis in themes or patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis in qualitative research is widely used by researchers due to several advantages. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis provides an overview of a large set of data as well as a detailed description when applicable.

Moreover, commonalities and differences among the data could be highlighted through a thematic analysis. It is known to be suitable for a wide range of disciplinary approaches including social studies and psychology as well as different theoretical and epistemological views.

Thematic analysis consists of six stages that the researcher goes through to identify themes in the data. The analysis process starts with the raw data, for example the interview transcriptions, where the researcher familiarizes themselves by reading and getting an initial idea of what has been written. Braun & Clarke (2006) identify six stages to conduct a thematic analysis as follows:

Table 5

The stages of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Stage	What does it involve?
1- Transcription of the data and Familiarization with the collected data	The researcher has to start transcribing the data collected from interviews for example to begin the thematic analysis. Transcription process should be accurate and maintain the original meaning of the interviewee's dialogue. The researcher then has to read and reread the data, make notes, and form an initial idea for further exploration.
2- Forming the initial codes	The researcher in this stage starts to identify "codes" which consists of a word or group of words given to a text to classify it. Data then is extracted related to each code.
3- Exploring themes	The researcher starts to look at the identified codes and categorize them into themes.

4-	Revision of themes	The researcher goes through two levels of revision: checking the relevancy between the theme and the codes and between the theme and data
5-	Defining the themes	The researcher analyses the themes, connects them to the overall analysis and finally names each theme accordingly.
6-	Presentation of the themes in a report	In this final stage, the researcher makes the connection between what has been found in the analysis in relation to the research question and the existing knowledge of literature.

4.10.1. Transcription and Familiarization Stage

The data analysis stage began with transcribing all the interviews. Each interview was transcribed immediately after it was conducted, ensuring that the information was fresh in my mind. A specific transcription website called (Happy Scribe) was used for this task, and I carefully checked each sentence to ensure accuracy.

For the Arabic interviews, I translated the transcriptions into English, focusing on the general ideas and views of the students. This kind of translation is called free translation where the researcher focused on the main ideas instead of word-by-word translation (Nida & Taber, 2021). I found this method useful and applicable, focusing on the content of the transcriptions, not on the way transcriptions were worded. Next, I added all transcriptions to NVivo for the coding stage. There was a total of 17 full transcripts, consisting of nine teacher interviews and eight student interviews. Each interview was analyzed individually, following a systematic coding process. I read through each transcript, reviewed my notes, and highlighted key sentences.

I started to make initial codes from the teachers and students' transcriptions. In these transcriptions, I noticed differences and similarities in their answers, and I tried to highlight those key observations in this round of reading. These initial codes served as the foundation for further analysis, enabling the identification of common themes and patterns in the data. The thorough transcription and coding process allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research findings and limitations.

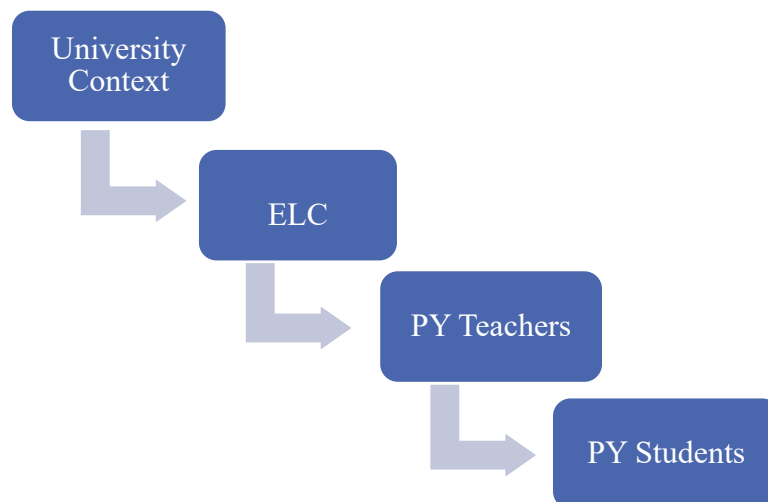
4.10.2. Coding Stage

After gaining a sense of the collected data, I identified sentences and statements that were related to my research questions. This process is defined as coding or generating codes that are relevant to the research. According to Clarke and Braun (2013) codes are sets of sentences that the researcher considers useful to the data analysis. Creswell (2007) identified several steps for the coding process. These steps start with minimizing the amount of text to a specific set of codes. The tables below show a sample of the initial codes from the teachers and students' data.

First, I developed an initial framework based on the research questions that I intend to answer. I have four main components in this study: the university context, the ELC, the teachers and the students. All these components were explored in relation to the main investigation of this study which is writing curriculum change at the preparatory year. The figure below shows the initial framework of this research reflecting four levels in the system.

Figure 7

The Initial Framework of the Research



After creating the framework, I started reading transcriptions for the purpose of finding codes. I started with teachers' transcription keeping in mind the four elements in

the research (see Figure 2). In this way I could focus on teacher's interactions with the university context, ELC, their practice and their students.

For the coding, in the beginning I was trying to capture data that are relevant to the research questions and the initial framework I created. Then I started reading all the data line by line to find codes. I considered codes that were interesting and relevant to capture for the study. This consists of inductive codes in qualitative research where the researchers focus on the categories and themes found in the data set without being limited to pre-defined themes and codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). I too have attempted to use inductive coding while reading the data set. I focused on applying one code to each phrase of data set to keep my analysis consistent. Once I had all the codes which was an extensive list of different codes, I reread and merged codes into one. Using NVivo for analysis helped me in managing the numbers of codes, modifying them, and having a final list of codes.

In table 6, I provided a sample of this coding process of the teachers' data. For students' data I followed the same procedure. I read through the transcriptions after translating them into English and moving all the data to NVivo software where I analyzed the data of this research. Table 7 shows a sample of students' data coding.

Table 6

A Sample of Teachers' Initial Codes

Data Extracts	Initial Codes
<p>Teacher: I prefer because without without model, they would feel challenged because they didn't use to write in their language. If they didn't use, the student didn't use or anyone didn't use to read or to write in their language. Believe me, it's really hard to write on the other language. If they keep reading in their language, they found their reading easy. They could read easily in other languages, but they didn't do it in their own language and their first language. Believe me, it's hard for them to apply it in the other language in English language. That's why I would start with them with the basic things. I didn't have any problem.</p>	<p>Views about the model paragraph</p>
<p>Teacher: I think it's really important to have the rubric because all the students in the PY learn the same book, so we should have Rubrics. Still, to be fair. Yeah, that's why to be just for fairness. That's why I think I didn't have any comments about the Rubric because it's good.</p>	<p>Fairness of assessment rubric</p>
<p>Teacher: This semester, I didn't like the assessment in one way, they didn't give us participation marks. I didn't like it. I would write about it at the end of the semester because this is my class. I'm teaching the students. I know how my students are. I hate this new rule. We are as teachers are not giving any marks. We are are flexible about this aspect. That's all. They are not flexible because they took from us the ten marks. At least I should have 20 marks.</p>	<p>Lack of flexibility</p>
<p>Teacher: Yes, I think that. But if you ask me to follow my own way. So I prefer the process and the genre approach because it started with steps because I like the ideas of brainstorming, letting the student to think, to generate their own idea, to have that kind of creativity. But maybe because we are more standardized. And we are follow system. So they want us all to follow this process or product approach.</p>	<p>Tension between policy and teachers' preferences</p>
<p>Teacher: You know the common mistake sometimes of the first language interference because of the Arabic language. So I always ask them, don't think in Arabic, think English, write in English. They have</p>	<p>Issues in students' writing</p>

<p>this kind of inappropriate vocabulary. That weird grammar they use more lots of and. Of course, punctuation and translations.</p>	
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Table 7

A Sample of Students' Initial Codes

Data Extracts	Initial Codes
<p>Student: Later on in our next year and the year after? Maybe all of my years in college, all of my studies will be in English if I stayed in the medical field, but I don't know about the others. In medical school, everything is in English, so you have to know how to write in English, but later on you're going to have some assignments will have most of your grades. So if your writing skill is not really that good, it will affect you really bad. Yeah.</p>	<p>Value of learning English at the PY</p>
<p>Student: it has two sides. In the first semester I felt that I was imitating just for the sake of getting full mark. But I don't think I want to learn writing this way.</p>	<p>Disagreement with current practice</p>
<p>Student: I would love to choose my topic. just the freedom to do that.</p>	<p>Freedom in practice</p>
<p>Student: my level in English was below average. I was always trying to focus on my overall level in English more than my writing in particular. But to be honest I have improved since I began my higher education studies.</p>	<p>Reflection on English level</p>

4.10.3. Themes Stage

This process involved focusing on the previous stage where I have already found the codes and subcodes in the transcriptions. In this stage, the purpose is to categorize the codes into broader themes as Braun and Clarke (2006) highlights that this process consists of categorization and collation of codes into themes. In this stage, I already had a list of codes which were more specific about the data. I needed then to regroup codes into broader themes. The purpose of these themes was to capture commonalities and relevancy with the research questions. For instance, I chose the theme “Teachers' understanding of pedagogical practices in teaching writing” for all codes that included what teachers have

shared about their teaching on writing at the context. The figures below showed the initial themes in this research.

Figure 8

Teachers' Initial Themes

Initial themes (Teachers' Data)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers' understanding of pedagogical practices in teaching writing.• Teachers' views of the assessment practices in the system.• Teachers' perceptions of the influencing factors in their context.

Figure 9

Students' Initial Themes

Initial Themes (Students' Data)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students' awareness of their current writing experience.• Students' understanding of the instruction and assessment.• Students' reflections on the context and their transiting experience.

4.10.4. Reviewing of Themes Stage

The aim of this stage is to review the themes from the data. To apply this review, I followed two levels as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first level consists of focusing on the texts attached to each theme to enhance the texts' coherence to the themes. The second level was mainly about reading the whole data set to make sure that the themes were well reflected and captured. For this stage, I went back to the preliminary themes I had in the previous stage, and I started to make notes and be reflective whether the themes made sense. I found that I needed to review the themes and made a connection between the themes and the theoretical framework (complexity theory). Because I chose to look at different elements in the context, I needed to use certain terms to reflect the complex system perspectives. For example, I decided to use the verb "navigate" in most of the themes to indicate the interactions between the elements in the context.

4.10.5. Naming of Themes Stage

In this stage, themes were already created, and it was important to define them in a more coherent manner. The aim of this stage, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is to give these themes their most accurate definitions and integrate them in the presented analysis of the data. During this stage, I reread the themes and tried to make sure that each theme was presented in and supported by the data set. I also focused on the connections between themes and subthemes (see Chapters 6 & 7). In the figure below I present the final themes from the analyzed data for both teachers and students.

Figure 10

Final Main Themes of this Research

Navigating Roles Evolution in the Context
Navigating Teaching of Writing
Navigating Policy Changes at the ELC
Navigating Learning of Writing: Product-Based Approach
Navigating the Final Writing Task
Navigating the Assessment
Navigating the Textbooks
Navigating the Context

4.10.6. Reporting Stage

The final stage of the data analysis is writing the qualitative research results. This stage as Braun and Clarke (2006) claimed, is a non-linear process where the researcher is already familiar with the data and is ready to write the findings of their study. In this report, the researchers provide the data to the readers with enough evidence from the data set to ensure the research's validity. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I present the findings from the teachers and students' interviews including the themes and supporting extracts from the data set.

To conclude, in this section I presented the data analysis steps including the focus on thematic analysis. I followed the stages of TA to identify initial codes, initial themes, and final themes. I described each stage supported by evidence from the data analysis. In the next section, I present the validity of the research including certain elements I focused on with the process I followed.

4.11. Validity of the Research

In qualitative research it is important to ensure the validity of the study and its data. Validity is defined as the integrity and trustworthiness of the research framework, methods of data gathering, and techniques of data interpretation, all of which are essential for securing precise and dependable conclusions (Kitto et al., 2008). Maxwell (1992) defines validity in qualitative research as how well the findings reflect the phenomenon under investigation.

Whittemore et al. (2001) suggest that validity is influenced by various characteristics, such as credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity. In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined a framework consisting of four essential dimensions to assess the validity of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

To conclude, the purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the process I followed to ensure the validity of this research and the analyzed data. In this research, I focused on certain criteria to validate the collected data and ensure its validity as presented in the next section.

4.11.1. Credibility

Credibility indicates whether the findings of the research accurately reflect the data from those the participants and correctly interpret their original perspectives (Polit & Beck, 2012). According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004), credibility is tied to the research's focus and reflects the degree of confidence in how effectively the data and analytical processes align with the research objectives.

One possible way to ensure credibility is using triangulation which is a methodological approach designed to reinforce the credibility and trustworthiness of research findings (Cohen et al., 2017). Triangulation includes the use of multiple sources

to draw conclusions, thereby enhancing the reliability of the research results (Casey & Murphy, 2009). In this research I ensured the credibility of the data by combining the perspectives of teachers and students in answering the research questions (see Chapters 6 & 7). I used this type of triangulation to achieve a sense of credibility in how I present the topic from different sources.

Another way to ensure credibility is by the persistent observation in conducting the research which means paying attention to the features and elements regarding the research problem (Linclon & Guba, 1985). In this research I included details about the research problem including my reflection on the context when I was part of it before conducting the research. I also identified different related aspects of the study to make it well developed. Finally, I was flexible in modifying the framework of this research to suit the progression of the research questions and focus.

4.11.2. Confirmability

Confirmability concerns with the extent to which other researchers could confirm the findings of the research study. It is about demonstrating that the data and interpretations are not made up by the researcher but have been clearly found in the data collected (Linclon & Guba, 1985).

To achieve confirmability, Richards (2009) claims that the data collected should be available and accessible to the readers. This requires the researcher to be transparent with how the research process was performed from data collection to analyses and interpretation as this allows the reader to see the steps the researcher has gone through and be able to verify the findings. Shenton (2004) states that transparent representation of data helps reduce potential biases introduced by the researcher. When the readers have access to the raw data and are given information of how the analysis was conducted, they are able to have verifiable data to interpret the validity of the interpretations and conclusions. This in turn establishes trust in the research process and findings. In this research, I provided the process of data analysis in this chapter (see 4.9) as well as supporting the final themes in the subsequent chapters with data extracts to ensure that confirmability of the research.

4.11.3. Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is the extent to which the findings can be applied or generalized to other populations or contexts (Richards, 2009). Enhancing transferability could be achieved when researchers provide enough information about the context in which their research was conducted (Shenton, 2004). This includes providing a rich description of the context of the fieldwork, the characteristics and demographics of participants, the cultural context, or any other elements of the research setting that may have affected the results or outcomes.

In my research, I provided a rich description of the study's context, conditions under which the phenomena develop and the characteristics of the site and people. This is provided in Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis. The purpose was to provide the readers with the necessary background to determine if the findings can be transferred to situations or populations beyond those in this study.

4.11.4. Dependability

This fundamental principle directs attention to stability and consistency of findings over time, ensuring that the research process and conclusions are credible and dependable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It involves an audit trail, by making sure that participants critically evaluate the findings, interpretations, and recommendations of the study and that they are all supported by data, ensuring that the final report is credible and could be audited by others. The purpose is to make the content of the final report trustworthy and credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this research, I tested the interview methods before conducting the actual study with the teachers and students (see 4.7). By piloting the study, I was able to receive feedback from those who participated in the pilot, beside feedback from my supervisors. Together, these notes have shaped my thinking and research direction. Additionally, I followed up with teachers and students who participated in the actual research for them to validate the notes and data I have transcribed and analyzed. Beyond the participants, I validated the results in relations to the existing literature review (see Chapter 8) as well as presenting the limitations of the research (see 9.4).

4.12. Ethical Considerations

As a researcher there are several issues I must consider and address before beginning this study. First, I received ethical approval from the committee at Lancaster University as well as from the Committee at the site of the research. Then, I provided information sheets and consent forms to all the teacher and student participants to inform them of the nature of the study, the decision to participate and the fact that participation would not in any way interfere with the teachers' teaching or the students' studies. As a full time, PhD student, I was not involved in teaching or assessing at the Center during my data collection. Though access to the study context was feasible and I did not anticipate any issues in this regard, both teachers and students were given a clear idea of the aim of the study as well as assured that their identities would be protected. I ensured that they understood that their identity is protected throughout the research and that they have the option to withdraw from participating in the research.

There was no potential risk regarding participation in the study, but some of the participants may feel uncomfortable sharing their perceptions and opinions. I assured them that all names used in the study are pseudonyms. They were given the option to refrain from answering any question they think is too sensitive or embarrassing and to be interviewed in another location if they wish. Individuals participating in the interviews may or may not speak English. For those who do not speak English or would not feel comfortable conversing in English about any given theme, the researcher conducted the interviews in Arabic and provided a translated transcript (in English).

Participants could withdraw from the study within four weeks of completing the interview by notifying the researcher via email or telephone, but after that period, destroying their recorded data is not possible. All collected data were stored in an encrypted, password-protected folder on my password-protected personal computer. I used encrypted external memory devices, and audio recordings were stored until the thesis is examined and destroyed after that point.

4.12. Positionality of the Researcher

While conducting this study, it was crucial to acknowledge my position as the researcher. I had the privilege of engaging in interviews with the participants, both

teachers and students, establishing a close connection with them. Although I had prior experience within the study's context and had developed personal and professional relationships with some of the teachers, the research shed light on the distinctiveness of each individual and the differences between the participants and me as the researcher.

Indeed, when undertaking a research study, it is essential to recognize the influence and biases inherent in the researcher, which are shaped by their personal life experiences. These elements are fundamental components of the research process (Foote & Bartell, 2011). Throughout the research, I tried as a researcher to be self-aware of each stage of the study. Before doing this research, I had limited knowledge about the changes at the ELC, even during conducting the study I was concerned about being able to capture important details related to the curriculum change and the context. However, I kept an open mind about learning and asking questions whenever I needed.

By nature, I practice reflection and writing my thoughts, and this habit has developed during writing my research. Reflexivity has its place in qualitative research where researchers can question and analyze their thoughts in every stage of the research to avoid biases and influences of one's prior thoughts on the research (Ide & Beddoe, 2023; Olmos-Vega et al., 2022).

Using reflective journal was one way to stay on track with my thoughts and perspectives. I maintain an electronic journal specifically to reflect on the research. This journal helped me shape the research and deepen my thoughts. These reflections and inquiries found their place in my analytical memos, results, and discussion of this research.

4.13. Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I have outlined the research methodology, emphasizing the use of qualitative research methods. The research site was also described, providing insight into the specific teachers and students who participated in the interviews. Furthermore, a detailed account of the data analysis process was provided, focusing on the thematic analysis applied to analyse the interview data. Ethical considerations were addressed, highlighting how the identities of the participants were protected and emphasizing the

measures taken to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, the chapter touched upon the procedures implemented to securely store the collected data.

Overall, this chapter provided an overview of the research method and choices I have made throughout the process of data collection and analysis. In the next chapter, I present the findings of this research including with the materials analysis, teachers' perspectives and finally students' perspectives.

Chapter Five: Setting the Scene for Curriculum Change-Material Analysis

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set the scene for the curriculum change at the site of the study in the first section of the chapter, and the materials analysis in the second section. In (5.1.1) I presented an overview of the curriculum change at the ELC, followed by the adapting and implementing of the changes in (5.1.2) which is supported by extracts from the teachers' interviews.

In the second section of the chapter I focused on the materials analysis. In (5.2) I presented the analysis of the writing tasks (the model paragraph which is assigned with the task formed by the ELC, and the textbook task). In (5.2.1) I analysed the model paragraph task following the three levels of analysis from Littlejohn (2022).

To clarify, data in this chapter include extracts from teachers' interviews discussing curriculum change (5.1.1), and writing tasks provided by the ELC, writing tasks in the textbooks, and the assessment rubric (5.2).

5.1.1. Writing Curriculum Change at the ELC

The English Language Center (ELC) has also undergone several phases of change since its establishment (4.3.1). The most recent and notable initiative was introduced by the newly appointed director, who had recently completed her Doctorate Studies in the United Kingdom. Such academic qualifications have reshaped the perspectives of Saudi scholars and teachers towards English Language teaching (Alshahrani, 2016). The new director began implementing new policies at the center, with the aim of gradually leading the ELC towards a new era of development and high-quality teaching.

Of relevance to my research are the two major skills that were reintroduced and modified: writing and listening. Notably, the focus on teaching and assessing writing is significant. As mentioned in the introduction of the research, writing instruction at the university had been largely neglected. From my personal teaching experience, I observed minimal emphasis placed on writing. Additionally, participating teachers in the research have shared their own experiences regarding writing instruction in the Preparatory Year

(PY) and the evolving nature of writing practices under different policies, with no sustained efforts until recently. In the next section, I presented the adapting and implementing stage of the curriculum change.

5.1.2. Adapting and Implementing

First, it is important to trace the trajectory of this curriculum change before exploring how teachers engage with and perceive assessment in their teaching practice (see Chapter 6). It is worth mentioning that most of the data from the interviews in this section was provided by Suha and Sama, both were former administrators at the ELC and active members of the administration committee now (see 4.5.1).

According to Suha, the focus on writing began approximately eight years ago when she was part of the administration system. The director at that time aimed to introduce changes. However, Suha stated that these changes were not suitable for the context, resulting in the discontinuation of those writing practices. She explained:

Writing is being ignored. So, we started the idea. But we started if you want harshly, about five paragraphs per semester, there was a final exam. It was a lot of writing. Everything has to be done in class. It was very demanding. The teachers were not happy. The students were not happy. They improved a lot. And we could see that from their final writing exam. But the teachers thought that it was very demanding. It was a lot and they couldn't deal with or cope with that amount of work.

After those years, there was a noticeable lack of emphasis on writing. As an English lecturer, along with other teachers in the study context, I personally observed this neglect. However, changes gradually began to take place at the ELC. Suha also shared the emergence of the changes for writing. She stated:

So, when we started thinking again two years ago that we want the administration wanted to add writing. I told them that they have this experience. So please, if you want to do it, do it slowly. We started thinking that maybe 2 tasks per semester is kind of fine. Doable. We started then thinking of how many units should be maybe excluded in order to allow time for writing because writing will take time of

teaching. And we started having this balance. In the beginning, it was only teaching writing with model paragraph without the final exam for two semesters.

The new administration placed a strong emphasis on implementing gradual changes. After introducing two additional writing tasks and assessing the effectiveness of this change, the administration started to deliberate on their next course of action. Suha reported:

...And then last semester we thought that this is time to start having a final exam in order for the students to stop copying, to start working on their skills. And when the students know that there's a final exam, they will work on, that the wash back effect. So last semester there was writing task in the final exam, and this semester as well, there's going to be a task. So, this is how it started. We are taking it step by step. And as I told you, this idea of the model paragraph, this is something that we all [the administration team] agreed on.

The assessment of writing plays a significant role in this era of change. In the past, an assessment rubric was employed during that period of transformation. In the interview, Sama explained the development of the assessment process and its integration into writing practice. She has a PhD in assessment practices and her experience has helped in suggesting changes to the assessment of writing. Both teachers took the initiative to introduce the practice of assessing writing in the context where they taught. They actively participated in decision-making processes.

The adapted rubric had been previously used for nine years at the Language Center of the second institution. It was specifically designed to match the English proficiency level of the students and the length of the essays, which differ from the context of this study. Although this rubric had been implemented for only one academic year in the past, there was a gap of three to four years without any writing assessment. The reintroduction of writing assessment took place two years ago under the new administration at the ELC.

Suha discussed this significant change and her role in presenting the adapted rubric along with the writing materials. It was crucial to modify the rubric to align with the nature of the changes occurring at the ELC, which were gradual and practical. Suha elaborated on the process of modifying the rubric as follows:

For example, let me give you an example this semester, because in the previous feedback from the second semester last year, the teachers said that they didn't like the idea that grammar and vocabulary were included under one category. For them, it should be two separate categories. So, this semester we decided to divide them into two categories based on the teacher's feedback. And I kind of think that it's working better now. I agree that grammar and vocabulary are two different aspects. They shouldn't be included under one category.

In conclusion, English Language Center (ELC) has actively worked towards enhancing students' writing skills and effective communication in English within the national context of the introduction of EMI and the focus on improving tertiary education. The collaboration among policy makers, educators, and former administrators has led to the gradual introduction of writing tasks and the adaptation of an assessment rubric tailored to the unique site of this research. These efforts reflect commitment to providing a quality education and preparing students for academic success in English.

5.2. Analysis of Tasks

In this section I start by analysing the writing tasks used at the ELC. First, I explore the model paragraph task in line with the three levels of analysis (4.7.6). I then present the writing tasks from the textbooks.

5.2.1. Task one: Model Paragraph

In this section, I present the writing materials that are used among teachers and students at the university. First, I chose to focus on the model paragraph that was given to the teachers to follow in their practice. This model paragraph is used in this research as a template for what the teachers use in their classrooms, following the ELC rules. According to the teachers who participated in the research, the model paragraph functions as a tool for students to imitate the structure of the sentences and produce a written task. Figure 11 shows a sample of the model paragraph used by teachers and students.

Figure 11

A Sample of Model paragraph (ELC, 2021)

From: -----

To: -----

Subject: London Sales Conference

Hi _____

Guess what! I'm going to London next week for a sales conference. The timetable for the first day is really good. In the morning, we're going on the London Eye and a boat trip on the Thames. After having lunch at the Gallery restaurant at 1.00 a.m., we're attending Sales Director's presentation on last year's sales. At 3.30 p.m. we're having discussion on sales strategies in region groups. In the evening, after the dinner in Chinatown, we're going to see the musical Billy Elliot. I wish we could go there together. Hope to see you soon!

Take care!

Your friend

The task related to this model paragraph is taken from the textbooks. For example, the task is "writing an email" which is taken from one of the units in the textbooks, however it is modified to be shorter than what is required in the textbook. The students here are required to write maximum between 70-120 words. Details of implementation are given in (5.1.2)

Level one (what is there). The model paragraph used by teachers and students consist of simple sentences structure. The models normally are in the format of a paragraph, lacking clear sections: introduction, body and conclusion.

Level two (what is required from users). To analyse the task according to level two description, the first question deals with what is required of users (teachers and students). The task focus on two main steps: 1. teachers show students the model paragraph. 2. students write their paragraphs following the same structure as the model.

The second part deals with what is the learner expected to do. According to the task, learners are expected to study and understand the model paragraph, then replicate its structure and style in their own writing. Students are encouraged to produce error-free sentences, focusing on correct grammar and coherence. The task seems to be individual, as it does not mention group work or collaboration. Finally, the content involves the model paragraph provided by the teacher, which serves as the template for the students' writing. This model is created by ELC committee, focusing on sections of the writing tasks in the textbooks.

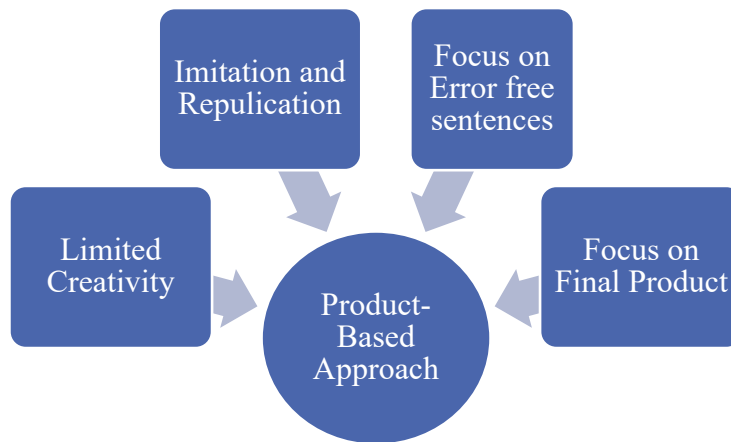
Level three (what is Implied). This level focuses on three main sections: deducing aims, principles of selection, and sequence. The aim of the task is to teach students to adhere to a standard format, as indicated by the emphasis on replication and correctness. Principles of selection which is the choice of a model paragraph that suggests a focus on showcasing a specific writing style and structure that students are expected to follow. The sequence starts with analysing the model and ends with producing a similar written piece.

Moreover, according to the task, teacher acts as a guide and provider of the model, setting clear expectations for students to imitate. The teacher is an authority figure, setting the standard for correct writing. On the other hand, learners are expected to be passive recipients, focusing on replication rather than creation. They are expected to adhere strictly to the model provided, with little room for individual input or creativity.

Finally, the approach emphasizes the final product over the writing process. It requires learners to focus on accuracy and adherence to a given model rather than developing their own ideas or engaging in a creative process like brainstorming. The limited emphasis on creativity suggests that learners' process skills, such as planning, drafting, and revising, are not a focus in this task. Figure 12 shows the results of the analysis of task one: the model paragraph.

Figure 12

Analysis Model Paragraph Task



The analysis reveals a product-oriented approach to writing instruction, with an emphasis on imitation and error-free writing. It implies a structured, teacher-centered classroom dynamic, where the goal is for students to replicate a standard model. The approach limits opportunities for creative expression and process-oriented skills, indicating a narrow focus on the final product. From the teachers and students' perspectives I was able to draw more data on the model paragraph and its implications. Teachers in the study expressed their views of this kind of practice and reflected on the use of models (see 6.3) and students' views are presented in (7.2).

5.2.2. Task two: Textbook Task

The textbooks used at the context are from international publishers, particularly Oxford University Press. The ELC strives for quality teaching (ELC, 2022). A contract has been made with Oxford University Press publications to provide textbooks (the Milestones textbooks) and other online materials for teachers and students. The academic writing tasks in the textbooks aim to systematically improve students' skills by focusing on sentence structure and essay writing, collaborative work and skills such as drafting and editing (OUP, 2022).

The task selected for the analysis reflects the textbook's approach to developing communicative skills. This kind of activity, which focuses on collaborative problem-solving, appears throughout the textbook. Furthermore, similar activities and tasks exist

throughout the textbooks, promoting the development of both language abilities and critical thinking. The choice to examine this task in depth arises from its fit with the textbook's wider pedagogical aims and its frequent inclusion, making it an appropriate model for understanding the overall instructional design. Figure 13 shows a sample of a writing task from the textbook used at the ELC.

Figure 13

A sample of Writing Task from the Textbook (Milestones, 2016).

Write: an email to a student who is coming to study at your college for a few months. Include and, but so and or to join clauses.

6a - Work with a partner. Decide who you are writing to. Think about their age, nationality and where they are studying now.

6b - Choose three topics to write about in your email.

6c- Make a list of details for each topic. For each detail, do one of these things and include and, but so and or.

- add information.
- say why something happens.
- give a different idea.
- offer a different option.

6d- Make an outline for your email by numbering these parts in the order they should be included. Then use your outline to write the email.

- describe your college.
- say what student needs to do next.
- review and revise and read the Focus on Process Writing.
- say why you are writing describe topics you chose.

Level one (what is it). The task is from Milestones textbooks, asking students to write an email. it contains four main parts requiring students to go through steps in their

writing. These steps include working with a partner, choosing a topic, making a list, making an outline. The main instructional steps ask students to write an email using connectors to join clauses.

Level two (what is required from users). While teachers are required to take students through the different steps used in the process approach, students are required to follow these steps in their writing practice:

1. Follow different steps in a process-based writing approach.
2. Engage in collaborative planning with a partner.
3. Consider audience awareness.
4. Prepare outlines or structures for writing tasks.
5. Choose a topic from three provided options and elaborate with detailed writing.

The learners are expected to follow a process-based writing where they are expected to follow a series of steps to complete writing tasks. These steps include collaborative planning by working with a partner to brainstorm and plan their writing, sharing ideas and perspectives. It also involves audience awareness where learners understand the characteristics of the intended audience to tailor their writing appropriately. Moreover, learners enhance their organizational skills by creating outlines or structures to organize their thoughts and content effectively. Finally, learners have the choice to topic selection and Elaboration. They select one topic out of three and write in detail, connecting ideas freely.

The tasks in the textbooks involve collaboration with a partner, especially during the planning phase. Students also can engage with teachers by asking for feedback on their outlines. The content of the tasks differs based on the textbook topics in each unit.

Level 3 (what is implied). This level deals with what is implied specifically deducing aims, principles of selection, and sequence. First, the aim is to develop students' writing skills by emphasizing the writing process, including planning, collaboration, and audience consideration. It also aims to promote organizational skills and the ability to express detailed and coherent ideas.

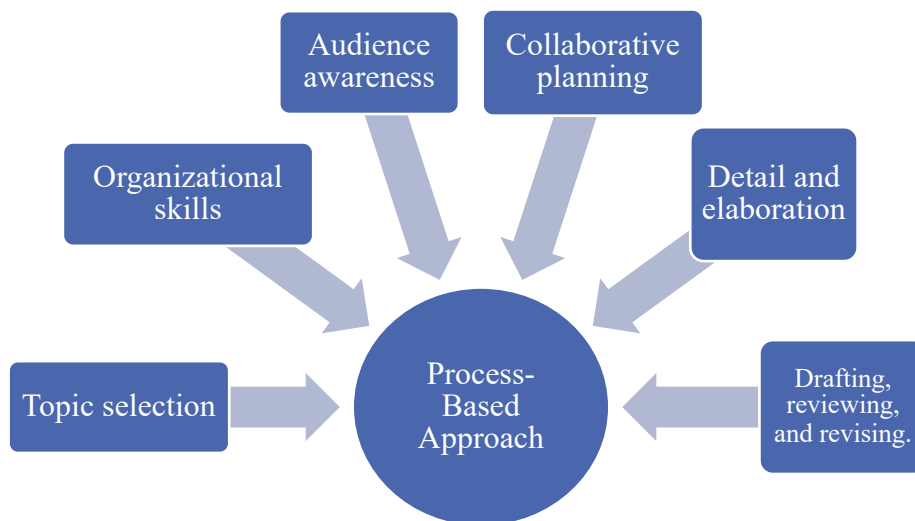
Second, principles of selection and sequence highlights the use of a process-based approach which indicates a focus on the steps leading to the final product, encouraging thorough preparation and reflection. The choice of topics and the freedom in writing suggest a degree of flexibility and personalization in learning.

Deducing teacher and learner roles from the tasks showed that teachers act as a facilitator who guides students through the writing process and provides topics for selection. The teacher also emphasizes the importance of understanding the audience and organizing content. Learners are active participants, engaging in planning and decision-making. They collaborate with peers, consider the audience's needs, and organize their writing. They have some autonomy in choosing topics and expressing their ideas.

This approach requires students to engage in various stages of writing, from brainstorming to drafting and revising. It emphasizes collaborative skills, audience analysis, and the ability to organize thoughts clearly. The tasks also demand critical thinking and creativity, especially in the selection and elaboration of topics. Figure 14 shows the results of analysing the task from the textbook.

Figure 14

Analysis of Textbook Tasks



To conclude, the structure of the model paragraph task and the textbook task demonstrates the existence of two types of writing instruction. The model paragraph task is product-oriented, aimed at working through imitation, writing without corrections and

working within the limits of a given framework designed by a teacher. Such an approach is teacher-dominated, where students only need to reproduce a graded prototypical model, not developing any process competencies.

However, the textbook task from Milestone focuses on audience, their profiles, and organizational aspects. Students are provided with opportunities to write at all the levels including prewriting, writing, and editing with some control over the topic. This promotes creative and critical thinking and participation with the teacher taking a more of a guide role instead of being the one in charge. As such while the two tasks present different ways of addressing the same situation where the model paragraph is corrective and replication focused, the textbook task is more flexible, communicative and expressive.

From the teachers and students' perspectives I was able to draw more data on the textbook tasks and its implications. Teachers and students expressed the negative impact of using a model and demonstrated the need for freedom and innovation in their classrooms. The process approach used in the textbooks are what needed at the ELC, according to teachers and students' perspectives (see 6.3 and 7.2).

5.3. Analysis of the Assessment Rubric

In this section, I analysed the assessment rubric used at the ELC. The introduction of the rubric is discussed above (5.1.2). The purpose of this section is to first analyse the rubric alignment with both writing tasks. Then, I present a comparison between the three materials. The assessment rubric is used to assess students' writing tasks by teachers. Table 8 shows a sample of the assessment rubric; the entire assessment rubric is provided in Appendix M.

Table 8

A Sample of the Assessment Rubric Criteria (ELC, 2021)

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

The rubric as shown in table 10 has different criteria for teachers to assess students writing tasks. Each criterion is linked to three different levels. This table below shows the indication of each element in the literature. The rubric outlines criteria for evaluating written assignments based on several key elements: *content, grammar/ vocabulary, mechanics, coherence, development*. Teachers are required to assess students based on the achievement of these elements in the writing task. For example, for the content element, teachers have four score to give to students, ranging from "very good knowledge" to "completely unrelated". Each category has different levels of performance, ranging from excellent to poor. The rubric helps assess how well a piece of writing meets these criteria, providing a structured way to evaluate and give feedback on student work.

5.3.1. Assessment Rubric Alignment with Task One: Model Paragraph Task

In this section, the focus is on a sample of a model paragraph used at the ELC and its alignment with the assessment rubric that teachers used at the ELC. I looked at each criterion in the rubric and how well aligned it is with the task. Since the model paragraph focuses on producing error free sentences, the analysis here focuses on how aligned the assessment rubric with the model and its objective which is expressed by teachers in the study and the ELC. The table below presents the analysis indicating good alignment and partial alignment in each section.

Table 9

Analysis of Task One

Rubric Criteria	Description of Model Task Requirement	Alignment with Assessment Rubric
Content	Focus on imitating a simple model paragraph; paragraph writing rather than essay writing.	Limited alignment. The rubric focuses on content depth, while the task focuses on imitation.

Grammar/ Vocabulary	Error-free sentences, correct grammar, and vocabulary usage.	Good alignment. The rubric's focus on grammar and vocabulary aligns with the task's requirement for accuracy.
Mechanics	Correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	Good alignment. The rubric's criteria for mechanics are relevant to the task's focus on error-free writing.
Coherence	Replication of the model's coherence and structure.	Partial alignment. The rubric assesses coherence but may need a specific focus on adherence to the model's structure.
Development	Emphasis on replicating the model rather than developing new content.	Limited alignment. The rubric's focus on development may not align well with the task's emphasis on imitation.

The table indicates that the work stresses copying, implying that students are required to mimic a given style or model rather than creating fresh material in detail. The rubric's emphasis on subject depth may not entirely accord with this goal since it does not appropriately measure how effectively students follow the model they are expected to mimic.

The rubric may need to incorporate criteria to properly assess the correctness of the model imitation. Furthermore, the rubric's focus on grammar and vocabulary is critical, since these components are directly tied to the task's accuracy requirements. Imitation tasks need exact language usage to correctly reproduce the model's style, tone, and structure; therefore, alignment is critical.

The focus on mechanics, including punctuation, spelling, and syntax, is relevant to ensuring error-free writing. In an imitation task, maintaining mechanical accuracy is crucial to reproduce the model's style, making these criteria appropriate and aligned with the task's objectives. While the rubric assesses coherence, it may not fully address the need to adhere closely to the structure of the model being imitated.

The task requires students to follow a specific format or organizational pattern, so the rubric might need to place additional emphasis on how well students adhere to this

structure to ensure complete alignment with the task requirements. The rubric's focus on development might not align well with the task's emphasis on imitation, as the latter may prioritize following specific elements over original elaboration or argument development. The rubric may need to shift its focus to evaluate how accurately students replicate the model's content, style, and structure, rather than how they develop their own ideas. In the next section I present the textbook task's alignment with the rubric.

5.3.2. *Assessment Rubric Alignment with Task Two: Textbook Task*

In the section I present the analysis of the assessment rubric alignment with the textbook task. I followed the same process of analysing task one above. The two tasks differ on many levels as discussed in (4.7.5). Consequently, the analysis of each task led to different results. To clarify, this task is a typical task in the textbook which follows the process approach, including brainstorming and discussing with peers. Therefore, the purpose of this analysis is to explore how aligned the assessment rubric with one sample of the writing tasks presented in the textbooks.

Table 10

Analysis of Task Two

Rubric Criteria	Description of Textbook Task Requirement	Alignment with Assessment Rubric
Content	Follow a process-based writing approach, including collaborative planning, audience awareness, and detailed writing.	Partial alignment. The rubric's focus on content depth may not fully capture the process-based, collaborative, and audience-aware aspects of the task.
Grammar/ Vocabulary	Produce error-free sentences and correct grammar while following a structured approach.	Good alignment. The rubric's focus on grammar and vocabulary is relevant, as it supports the overall clarity and correctness in the writing process.

Mechanics	Ensure correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in detailed writing.	Good alignment. The rubric's mechanics criteria align with the need for error-free writing in a process-based approach.
Coherence	Structure writing with clear organization, considering audience awareness, and following a process-based approach.	Partial alignment. The rubric's general coherence criteria may need adjustment to better assess adherence to the process-based approach and audience consideration.
Development	Create detailed and coherent writing, with a focus on elaboration and topic selection.	Partial alignment. The rubric's development criteria may not fully capture the task's emphasis on detailed elaboration, topic choice, and process-based writing.

The analysis showed that the rubric partially aligned with the task since the rubric's focus on content depth may not fully capture the process-based, collaborative, and audience-aware aspects of the task. This indicates that while content depth is important, other dimensions of the task are equally significant and may require further emphasis in the rubric.

Moreover, the rubric's emphasis on grammar and vocabulary is justified because these elements are crucial for ensuring that the writing is clear and correct. Proper use of grammar and vocabulary contributes to the readability of the final piece, which is critical in any writing process.

Furthermore, the mechanics criteria, which include aspects such as punctuation, spelling, and syntax, are well-aligned with the goal of producing error-free writing. This alignment supports the overall quality of the writing, which is essential in a process-based approach. The general coherence criteria in the rubric may not fully align with the specific needs of a process-based approach, which often requires a strong focus on the logical flow of ideas and clear consideration of the audience. The suggestion here is that the

rubric might need to be adjusted to better evaluate these aspects, ensuring that the writing not only flows well but also meets the audience's expectations and needs.

The rubric's criteria for development may not entirely capture the emphasis on detailed elaboration, topic choice, and the process-based nature of the writing task. This indicates that while the rubric may address basic development, it might not fully account for the need for thorough explanation and careful selection of topics that align with the intended process-oriented learning objectives.

In summary, the suggested improvements to the assessment rubric improve the alignment of tasks and learning goals, as specified in the constructive alignment framework (see 3.3.2). By concentrating on how well students satisfy the requirements of each task, whether through a product or a process-based approach, the curriculum becomes more cohesive and successful in supporting student engagement and learning. This alignment is crucial not just for attaining desired educational results, but also for promoting reflective practice within educators as they modify their teaching practices to better suit the need of their students (Biggs, 1999).

5.4. Summary of the Chapter

The analysis presented in this chapter revealed and contrasted the differences between the approaches taken in writing at the English Language Centre (ELC) with respect to the model paragraph task and the textbook task. Using Littlejohn's (2011) three levels of analysis showed that model task focused on the product approach, while the textbooks task focused on the process approach.

As far as the tasks with respect to the ELC's assessment rubric, while the stated rubric covers some components of grammar, vocabulary and mechanics, there were still some modifications necessary with respect to the other unique aspects of each task. With respect to the model paragraph task, the focus of the rubric should be more about imitation, that is the students' ability to copy certain stylistic features. With respect to the textbook task, the focus on the rubric should be again writing, but here it is writing as a process: plan, draft, revise and focus on the reader. Additionally, this chapter provided an insight into the limitations of assessments that do not fully align with the writing tasks.

Therefore, by using a rubric that better reflects the educational aims of all the tasks, teachers will be able to give more precise and appropriate assessments of students, which will make writing classes more beneficial.

Chapter Six: Teachers' Perspectives

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce themes and data extracts from the teachers' interviews. Teachers navigated the curriculum change at the ELC and have witnessed how certain policy changes have impacted their roles and practices. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to shed light on teachers' views based on their interaction with the context, materials, and policy.

First, I present teachers' navigation of their roles in the context and whether they evolved or were influenced by the context (6.2). Second, I focus on teachers' views of the product-based approach used at the site and its drawbacks on students' development (6.3). Third, I outline teachers' perspectives on the policy changes at the ELC and how these changes have impacted teachers on different levels (6.4). Finally, I detail teachers' interaction with the assessment rubric and textbooks and how these tools have impacted teachers' practices (6.5 & 6.6).

6.2. Navigating Role Evolution in the Context

In this study, I identified how teachers perceived their roles in the context in an era of change. I aimed to explore how roles of these teachers have evolved and what factors impacted their evolution. In this section, I present nine teachers' perspectives about their roles in the context:

- Policy Adherence: Salma and Dana
- Role Flexibility: Basmah, Shatha, Sama and Amal
- Professional Evolution: Suha, Ghada and Reema

These teachers highlighted the impact of the standardization in the context, their prior learning/teaching experience, and students' needs in the classrooms. In the next section, I give details of each group of teachers supported by their own words from the data set.

6.2.1. Policy Adherence: Salma and Dana

Two of the teachers (Salma, Dana) in the preparatory year system demonstrate strict adherence to the established rules, lacking a willingness to take risks that may involve disobeying the rules and potentially putting their students at risk. Their role and professional practices are notably impacted by their involvement in the preparatory year, characterized by reduced flexibility compared to previous years at the university. These teachers prioritize accomplishing specific goals (following writing instruction as given by the ELC) rather than pursuing their own preferences in teaching. It is important to note that the term *"teacher"* as these participants used it, refers to a traditional teacher who adopts a teacher-center approach.

To start, Dana talked about her role during the time of change in the classrooms and how she connects it to the higher-level management. She said, *"I'm a teacher because as I'm teaching in the center, we have rules to follow. We have things. I mean not only rules, but we are unified [standardized]. Our students have the same exams. So we have rules and they are little bit strict."*

In this statement, Dana discusses her role as a teacher in the context of the classroom and how it relates to higher-level management. Dana highlights that being part of the preparatory year system has influenced her role as a teacher. It suggests that the system itself has shaped her teaching practices, expectations, and responsibilities within the classroom. This could mean that the curriculum, assessment methods, and overall educational objectives of the preparatory year system have influenced the way Dana approaches her teaching role.

Dana was not the only teacher who felt this way. Salma was born and raised in the United States and as a teacher with a different background in learning English had different views on how teaching a language is supposed to be, she felt restricted. She shared:

I'm given a book that I have to adhere to. I have to follow it exactly as they tell me to. As the ELC tells me to have to follow their pacing [teaching specific number of units [per week], I can't go too far off of the topic. At least that's what

I feel. I don't know about what other teachers are doing, but this is why I consider myself a teacher because I'm just teaching what is in the book.

In conclusion, this group of teachers in the preparatory year system adhere strictly to rules, prioritize specific goals over personal preferences, and demonstrate limited risk-taking. Their roles and practices are significantly influenced by the system's reduced flexibility. From this first group, I present next the second group where teachers adapt their roles dynamically.

6.2.2. Role Flexibility: Basmah, Shatha, Sama and Amal

These teachers adeptly switched roles based on the specific situation, displaying a keen ability to read their classrooms and understand the unique needs of their students. Basmah, for instance, emphasized her role as a facilitator in teaching writing. She said, *"...and sometimes I'm a facilitator, especially in writing. I try to help the students to write instead of just giving them instructions and tell them what to do."* She acknowledged that while her role might shift depending on the lesson or activity, her primary objective was to guide and support her students. In addition to providing clear instructions, she actively worked to alleviate their anxieties and encouraged them to overcome any writing obstacles they encountered. Shatha added, *"Being a teacher means that you can play all the roles. It depends on the situation."* Both teachers strived to create an environment where their students felt empowered to express themselves freely and produce written work to the best of their abilities.

Moreover, Sama and Amal talked about their evolving roles in the context and how they were impacted by their students' needs. The profiles of these teachers briefly are that Sama has made decisions about assessment practices at the ELC and is a teacher who I felt to be someone who thinks outside the box, and Amal is an English lecturer who had experience with how the teaching of writing was five years ago in the ELC and how it is nowadays.

Sama called herself a "joker." She saw her role as someone who sought to have a positive impact on her students. The classroom for her is a "safe space." Sama commented:

I have different roles. My main role is a Joker. I just like to make this space safe space for my students. Sometimes it just makes things like because I want them to feel comfortable in the classroom. That's the first thing because our kind of classroom or our course is a high-stake course. It means they have to study very hard. They have to think about grades all the time because of the system. So I know they are worried all the time and every move they have in the classroom is guided by their thinking about their grades and all that.

Similarly, Amal focused on the psychological state of her students. She called herself a "motivator." This teacher puts herself in her students' place. She knows how it feels to be under pressure, worried about grades and GPA. She emphasized that PY students are going through a transitional phase, and teachers should be able to help them throughout the year. She shared that she liked to observe her students in her classes, sense their level of anxiety, and try to remind them of what is important.

6.2.3. Professional Evolution: Suha, Ghada and Reema

Suha and Ghada reflected on their personal experiences as learners and how that has impacted their roles as educators. First, Suha talked about her journey from being a traditional teacher to adopting a more facilitator role in the classroom. She realized the differences in this generation of students which prompted a shift in her mindset about her role. She observed that students today possess distinct preferences in terms of how they want to be taught and how they absorb knowledge. Initially, Suha had been following the same strict and authoritative approach she had experienced as a student, assuming it would work effectively with the current generation. However, she soon recognized that this outdated style was no longer effective or engaging for her students.

Acknowledging the need for change, Suha became influenced by her own learning experiences and recognized the necessity to modify her teaching methods. She realized that spoon-feeding and strict control over students' learning were no longer suitable approaches. As a result, she embarked on a transformative journey, constantly seeking opportunities to improve and adapt her teaching techniques. Suha's commitment to growth and her willingness to evolve as a teacher highlight her dedication to providing

the best possible education for her students. In her own words, she expressed the motivation behind her shift in roles and her continuous pursuit of improvement.

I would say maybe four or maybe less than that three years ago, I actually pushed myself to change my mentality about teaching. It wasn't easy. It wasn't easy at all. All the time you would find me, like going back there. Yes, teaching lecturing spontaneous. But then I remind myself that this is not working. Some students are bored. Some students are not following. So I'm adapting. Trying. I can't say that I'm a full 100% facilitator, but I'm trying to be in that role trying. Maybe. I would say that when I started teaching nine years ago, it was 100% teaching. Now it's more like maybe 80% teaching, 20% facilitating. I'm trying.

Ghada's journey as an educator took a transformative path as she discovered the importance of adjusting her role to meet the unique needs of her students. Through her experiences, she came to understand that her initial rigid teaching methods and role were not effective in the modern classroom setting. Looking back, Ghada openly discussed the challenges she faced. With no teaching experience before pursuing her Master's Degree, she encountered difficulties during her practicum. Her reliance on traditional teaching techniques from her own English education hindered her ability to engage students effectively. This led to lower course scores, prompting her to realize that change was essential.

Reflecting on her earlier years as a student, Ghada recognized how deeply ingrained her former mindset was. She admitted her resistance to change, even when confronted with criticism from teachers and supervisors. This resistance stemmed from her background as a student accustomed to a teacher-centered environment. However, the pursuit of her PhD began to reshape her perspective.

Motivated by her ongoing studies, Ghada's viewpoint shifted. She acknowledged the rapid evolution of education and the dynamic needs of her students. The methods she had once relied upon were no longer adequate. Embracing a new approach, Ghada emphasized, *"You have to give the students opportunities to use the language inside of the class. You have to show them how to amend their mistakes by themselves. You have to teach them how to learn the language by themselves."*

Ghada carefully considered her students' needs and adjusted her role in the classroom accordingly. Depending on the demands of the course, there were times when she preferred to assume the traditional role of a teacher, utilizing all available materials, and ensuring the necessary content was covered as per requirements. However, Ghada also recognized the significance of bridging the gap between the classroom setting and the real world. Ghada commented, *“I want you [students] to use the language inside the classroom because this is your chance. At the end of the semester, I want you to feel that you improved, not at least too much, but at least two levels or one level. At least you use the language. That's why this is our role as a language teacher.”*

Reema passionately discussed her stance in the classroom, emphasizing her commitment to avoiding a "teacher-centered approach." She firmly believed that such an approach hampers student interaction and engagement. Recognizing the challenges associated with breaking away from conventional teaching methods, Reema courageously chose to take a different path. She commented, *“I urge my students to take part in the classroom. I like my classroom to be student centered approach. I like my students to get involved in every single part, to be more interactive. I mean, the teaching process is interactive, not only from my part. I don't want my students to be receivers, and I am the one who is feeding them. No, I like to get them involved.”*

Reema was determined to create a classroom environment that fostered active participation and collaboration among her students, valuing their perspectives and encouraging their involvement in the learning process. Her unwavering dedication to innovative teaching strategies demonstrates her repeated belief in the importance of student-centered education.

6.3. Navigating Teaching of Writing

6.3.1. Balancing Standardization and Innovation: Product-Based Approach

All the teachers in the context of the study received the same instructions on how to teach writing to the PY students. Some teachers follow exactly what is asked by them, while others recognize that they diverge. In this section, I present teachers' perspectives about their teaching of writing. The instruction of academic writing for the PY students

includes following a product-based approach, performing two writing tasks in one semester, and using assessment rubric and textbooks.

Teachers spoke about their writing instructions and whether they adhere to the model in their classrooms or implement their own extra work to improve students' writing skills. Salma's approach to teaching aligns with Shatha's perspective in significant ways. Both teachers recognized the standardized nature of their teaching environments and the importance of specific writing tasks. Shatha described the instruction of writing as a "product approach" followed at the English Language Center (ELC), where students imitate and transform given models into texts. Shatha's awareness extends beyond this approach due to her master's degree in curriculum and teaching approaches. She acknowledges the ELC's focus on producing "error-free texts and guaranteeing marks."

Salma mirrors this emphasis by concentrating solely on the two writing tasks and the final exam. Salma emphasized, *"my main focus is on the two writing tasks that they will have for the final exam."* She acknowledged the need to adhere to instructions and explained,

We are given a model and we are given a guiding table and we teach this with all the power that we have, all of the knowledge that we have so that they can perfect their writing so that they can produce something very similar to this model for the final exam if it was to show up on the final exam. So, I'm not really looking at any other writing sections from the book.

Two of the teachers showed a sense of creativity and initiatives in their practice. Dana and Basmah, despite their unique teaching styles, shared some common practices in their classrooms. Both teachers recognized the instructions they had to follow; however, they also implemented their own approaches to improve students' writing skills. Dana stated her focus as, *"how to write directly and to avoid as much as possible the errors"*.

Moreover, Basmah and Dana drew inspiration from their own learning experiences. Dana's challenges during her academic journey drive her to introduce essential research skills early. Dana commented,

I suffered in my master's with anything about research. I graduated from my university, and I was one of the good students, but I still don't know anything about research. So, I suffer really in my master's and then my PhD. So why not give them just tips? Very small and very short introduction to the research because they will need these skills in their studies, especially medicine. I told you I am teaching medical students, so they need that presentation skills and research skills.

Basmah followed Dana's approach in the classrooms. She explained that first, she likes to encourage her students to read and search for the information before writing. In this way, students will likely develop their research skills by reading, choosing relevant information, and practicing paraphrasing. She also added her interest in free writing which was based on her prior learning experience. She commented,

I like free writing because before the Masters, I studied in an English language institution to get the IELTS course. So I learned from this experience. I was observing and I knew that I'm going to need those activities and I need to apply them in the future. So this is one of the activities that helped me to improve my English, to use the free writing, because when they write, they don't think about the spelling, they don't think about the grammar, they don't think about the punctuation. They can write anything they want. And the purpose of that is to generate ideas, to find ideas.

Ghada had this idea to make writing as easy as possible. She said, *"I didn't have any specific philosophy, but I always say to my students, when you write something, use simple words, be very clear and that will lead you to be creative in your writing.....I always tell my students SCC simple, clear, creative."*

Sama was the first teacher to introduce in the interviews the concept of *"reflection"* as part of her practice. She emphasized the importance of reflecting on what needs to be done in class before each lesson. Unlike some teachers who focus solely on the prescribed tasks, Sama takes a different approach. As a self-proclaimed *"free-spirited"* teacher, she does not adhere strictly to rules or limitations. For instance, she encourages

her students to engage in daily writing practice, integrating writing into various tasks and exercises. Sama believes that the intrinsic process of learning how to write is crucial, emphasizing the importance of practicing writing more than focusing solely on grammatical rules. She explained:

So I use different tasks where they have to do some writing because it's like integrating writing as part of the process. This semester, for example, I started using Telegram [instant messaging application]. I asked them to write three sentences about themselves or write three sentences about their favorite food. So we are applying writing on grammar exercise. But I want them to write. So I want them to practice writing as much as they can, more than they practice the grammatical rules because I think the intrinsic process of learning how to write is very important.

Amal, on the other hand, believed that teachers should teach students how to manage their time, self-assess, and practice these skills, ultimately leading to greater student autonomy in all areas of language learning. Amal stated: *"Teachers have to teach students how to manage their time and how to self-assess, and this takes practice, but it also leads to student autonomy. I think this skill could be useful in all areas of language learning."* She emphasized the communicative approach in teaching language skills, especially writing. She encouraged her students to consider the audience when completing writing tasks. For example, she asked them to share their writing with classmates or family members at home to obtain readers' opinions and engage in discussions about their writing. Furthermore, Amal highlighted the importance of developing student autonomy, a crucial skill in the 21st century.

Teachers also shared their visions of how to improve the current instruction of writing. Reema advocates for treating writing as a separate skill, focusing on practical benefits. She commented, *"I think that it should be like a separate skill. I want to teach them writing as it is. I mean, effectively to gain benefits and to use it. For example, in the next year they are going to write lots of articles. They are going to do research and reports. So it's a shame that they are going to make such silly mistakes. So from my opinion, I suggest that writing is going to be a different skill. I mean, directed, focused on writing, not only just to write one paragraph or a general paragraph."*

Suha's perspective resonates with Reema's by emphasizing the need for more time dedicated to writing instruction, suggesting that adding more tasks and expanding to higher proficiency levels could better prepare students. She said,

and actually, if you ask me, I would say that maybe we need more time for teaching writing. I know it's not easy because the book is very demanding. We have different tasks, and we only have 16 hours a week, which are not enough, especially when you are teaching beginners. Maybe we need more time dedicated just for writing. Maybe we need to add more tasks. Maybe we need in the future to look at more advanced levels. Maybe we need to improve the rubric all the time, as I told you, based on the teacher's feedback.

Sama underscored the importance of consistent practice, proposing a weekly writing routine to build students' confidence and skills, and increasing the numbers of tasks. Sama pointed out, *“But I think writing should be like part of students, like weekly practices, at least write one paragraph per week. If we really want them to improve their language skills, we should expand on the number of tasks.”*

Salam suggested a comprehensive approach by teaching essay writing from start to finish, giving students choices for assessment, and echoing the need for alignment with real-world contexts. She commented in this regard,

I know that the ELC is trying their best to provide a good curriculum for the students, but if we're only assessing them during the year on four samples of writing for an entire year, I don't think that's enough. I don't think that's enough practice for them. And like I said, they're only going to focus on that one thing. So I would suggest that they have weekly writing, maybe a portfolio of their writing so that they can see throughout the entire year how well they are doing if they themselves have improved or not.

Basmah further supported this by expressing a desire to integrate essay writing throughout the semester. She said, *“I would like to start with writing an essay from the beginning of the semester until the end of the semester.”* Collectively, these perspectives

emphasize the significance of teaching writing as a practical skill that should be adaptable, comprehensive, and aligned with students' needs and future endeavours.

6.3.2. Drawbacks Of Product-Based Approach

All the teachers are united by several key similarities in their perspectives on writing instruction. The nine English teachers expressed concerns and criticisms about the current approach to writing instruction. Each teacher identified limitations and drawbacks within the existing method, highlighting the need for change and improvement.

A central theme in teachers' views of the current approach is the **washback effect**. Basmah, while critical, acknowledges the pragmatic necessity of the prevailing method due to its alignment with final exams. Basmah added that her role in preparing students for final exams and ensuring they grasp the mechanics of exam-oriented writing. She said, *“because we have final test. So I don't necessarily agree with the type of writing and with this procedure. But I have to do this one that I have to do it because they have final exam and I'm responsible to deliver this to the students to make sure that they understand they know how to write for the final.”*

Suha, on the other hand, strategically aligns her teaching with exam content, aiming to prepare students to write in their final writing task. She explained, as a member of the teachers who participated in making the curriculum change in the context, that choosing the writing tasks and models were based on the final exam content. She commented, *“and we [admins and team of teachers] started thinking about the final exam because when we were selecting the tasks, we were having the final exam in the back of our head, we need to select something where we can write the final exam about.”* Suha's views emphasized that the goal of teaching writing to PY students is to perform at the final writing exam and ultimately getting high grades.

Reema emphasized that the writing instruction increased this notion of students' focus on grades more than learning proper writing. She believed with the use of model learning how to write effectively seems to take a backseat to the pursuit of marks. She said, *“the problem is that our students are only interested in marks and in grades. Yeah. This is the thing. That the only thing they care about. They are not there for learning how*

to write. [they ask] Am I going to take the full Mark? Are you going to cut mark from me? This is the only thing”

Sama, Shatha and Salma adopted a more critical stance, denouncing the method as **ineffective and reducing students to mere imitators**. Shatha commented, “*it's not useful because at the end I didn't feel that I have taught them how to write because they are copying. I'm doing what they were doing in the school, how they learn, they memorize the text and then they write it down. They don't understand what's going on.*”

Sama shared her primary goal is for students to become proficient writers, not just to adhere to a set of rules. She added that this product-based approach is “*defeating to the purpose of introducing writing.*” She explained her views by adding,

Actually, I think it's ridiculous that if we ask them to follow the same model because the model is very short and limited. It means they only have to change words. And they are University students. So they should be able to write. And I want my students to be able to write, not to follow the rules, because I always tell them you will get the results you want. If you learn how to do it, it's easier to learn how to do it than to memorize or just to copy something.

This practice of imitation might lead to **plagiarism and lack of originality and creativity** which was highlighted by the teachers. Salma, Reema and Amal raised concerns that the existing method might inadvertently lead students to learn the mechanics of plagiarism. Salma said, “*I don't think it's appropriate at all. And I've mentioned that to the ELC during our course report that they're not learning anything. They're learning basically how to plagiarize. That's what I feel. I mean, they're not thinking for themselves. I tried going off of the topic a little for the writing assignment that I was just grading for them.*”

Amal added about the impact of the product-based approach on hindering students' creativity by saying, “*the current use of models can be ineffective for students, doing more harm than good.*” Amal believed that this overdependence on models inhibits students from exploring their own ideas and dampens their capacity for critical thought. Thus, adopting a more individualized approach that encourages independent thinking and

creativity becomes imperative to surmount these limitations and nurture comprehensive development in writing skills.

Beside the drawbacks of the current writing instruction, teachers agreed on issues that were found in students' writing. The common issue is applying the grammar rules in the tasks. These mistakes differ from the sentence level to the mechanics such as the right use of punctuation in a sentence. Reema shared, *“common errors, mainly punctuation, specifically commas, full stops. I mean, the very basic mistakes. I mean, how to start a new sentence in the capital letter, how to finish it. What is a sentence?”*

While Suha stressed that students usually forget to have verbs in their sentences, Sama took advantage of these common mistakes to motivate students to get marks. She stated,

I think punctuation is number one, like, mostly repeated capital letters. While we teach these things all the time. Now I keep telling myself like, this is the easiest marks you can get. I play with what they like. I know they think about marks. So today I told them this is the easiest way to get your marks is that when you finish writing, they know the rules. But when they do the writing, they sometimes forget them. This is what I did last year. Also with my students. For the first four, you remember to capital letters, subject, six verb agreements.

Shatha on the other hand, noticed the interference of Arabic in students' writing. She encouraged her students to not think in Arabic when they write to avoid translating into *“weird grammar and inappropriate vocabulary”*. Basmah believed that there were two types of common errors in students' writing. She stated, *“the most important one is the subject agreement course, and the second one is capitalization. They have a problem with punctuation. Some students put commas between the sentences, and they just put a full stop at the end of the paragraph. Those are the common mistakes.”*

In summary, these teachers voiced concerns about the current writing instruction's efficacy and impact on student learning. However, their individual perspectives diverge on the level of acceptance of the method, proposed strategies to foster creativity, approaches to assessment, and observations on plagiarism and originality. Despite these

differences, their shared commitment to enhancing writing instruction for the betterment of students' learning experiences remains resolute.

6.4. Navigating Policy Changes by the ELC

6.4.1. Teachers' Agency in the Context

In this section, I present how teachers navigate the policy placed by the ELC during the *Curriculum Change* that has influenced their perspectives about their teaching of writing in university settings. Teachers discussed the policy of students' marks division (explained by Salam) and how they had no control over grading students' participation or any additional practices. If teachers decided to place emphasis on a specific aspect of a skill, it was entirely their own initiative. Consequently, students did not receive grades for these areas. All nine teachers agreed on the importance of having the autonomy to make decisions within their teaching practice.

Regarding this, Salma explained that teachers previously had ten marks allocated for participation, quizzes, or any additional projects. However, this policy has been revised, and teachers are no longer permitted to assign these marks. Instead, grades are now solely based on evaluations for the midterm, final exam, writing and listening assessments. Salma perceived this change as a lack of trust in the teachers. She said, *“that means that you [ELC management] don't trust your teachers. And I think it should have been a decision. They should have had a meeting, and they should have made a decision based on the meeting. Ask your teachers. How do they feel? Don't impose this on your teachers.”*

Salma also expressed her belief that teachers at the ELC are capable of effectively managing their classes and workloads if they were granted more agency. On this regard, Shatha emphasized, *“we need some more freedom. We have different groups. We are talking about 35 individual and individual differences. What is applicable for this group. It's not applicable for other groups. So we are looking for more freedom. That's it.”*

Salma's curiosity led her to question whether other English institutions had similarly stringent policies for teachers. Her remarks were intriguing because, within this context, the current administration is actively seeking to adapt and learn from other

institutions with extensive experience in teaching writing. Salma said, *“I always wonder about other universities. I have some friends that are in university, but I've never asked them how strict are they with? You know, with your flexibility, are you able to go off of the topic a little bit or are you able to move away from the textbook and bring in outside sources? I've always wondered about that.”*

Moreover, Shatha and Basmah expressed their belief that the division of marks not only impacted students' participation but also their motivation to ask questions and be curious in the classroom. Shatha further shared that at times, she felt like she was talking to herself, emphasizing the negative effect it had on her as a teacher.

Both Shatha and Salma believed that a teacher's close interaction with students, understanding their needs and limitations, entitles them to make decisions in their classes or, at the very least, be involved and consulted when unexpected changes occur. Shatha also expressed her views by saying: *“...and this semester they drag all the responsibilities from our hand. We don't have any mark, actually, in our hand. We have nothing. The Mark distribution completely is in the student hand. That's why maybe they don't participate because they know that participation has no marks. It could be.”*

Basmah reflected on the evolution of writing instruction from the past to the present. She noted that two years ago, there were no specific instructions for teaching writing, which allowed teachers to have more control over their teaching methods and content. It was seen as their personal responsibility to effectively teach students and prepare them for their future studies. However, Basmah observed that the current approach to teaching writing has become standardized for all teachers, resulting in a loss of teachers' agency. The fixed nature of the teaching methods and content has limited the freedom and flexibility that teachers once had in shaping their instruction.

6.4.2. Teachers' Perplexity Regarding the English Course

The final factor raised by the teachers is the issue of lack of clarity. They expressed their doubts and confusion through questions such as: What is the purpose of teaching this method? Why are students assessed based on the rubric? What are the specific goals

of the course? Sama commented in this regard, *“I think going back to what's the purpose is very important.”*

Sama added an important factor occurred in the context during this era of change, *“also, the issues with the placement with the University, like they didn't do the placement for two years. It's affecting the way English is taught in the ELC because students are mixed levels and some of them are not happy. They don't need the course and it takes time. Those who need it the most are neglected and affected.”*

This confusion was also evident in the remarks made by Shatha and Basmah regarding the lack of clarity and miscommunication between the administration and teachers. Shatha said, *“the picture from the ELC wasn't clear they gave us the tasks. Okay, let them [students] do this and that. And then they said, okay, we will have a meeting to elaborate more on the topic. So even us as a teacher, when we sit together, we don't understand. What do they want? They want us to give them the model and they ask the girls to copy it.”*

Basmah herself was uncertain about the purpose of the course. While she believed that teaching English should prioritize skills, she observed that students were being trained to memorize and perform. Basmah, along with other teachers, emphasized the need to eliminate this practice and establish a clear and focused purpose for the course that is shared among all stakeholders.

Additionally, some teachers discussed the integrated system employed in this context, which involves teaching language through a content-based approach. Sama shared the following perspective:

The integrated system isn't working for us because we're not using it correctly. Had we been using the integrated system like Oxford [the publisher of the coursebooks being used in the ELC] wanted, I think we would have benefited a great deal, but because we are using it incorrectly, we're getting very poor results. And if the students are passing their exams and doing well on assessments. That's not because we're doing a great job. That's because they have the answers. Whenever I ask them

any comprehension questions or any questions from the book, they have the answers. They have the teacher's manual.

Reema also acknowledged the integrated system but drawing from her experience teaching in different cities across Saudi Arabia, she suggested that more time should be allocated for the teaching of writing. She said, *“for example, if you have 16 hours, we can devote, 4 hours or 3 hours to be for writing only. We can also provide additional materials. Hours to be devoted for writing so students can take it more seriously.”* Reema believed that allocating more time for teaching writing would help alleviate the tension experienced by both teachers and students.

Suha echoed the sentiments expressed by the other teachers, but she expressed her optimism for further improvements in the future. Despite being one of the key individuals involved in implementing the curriculum change, she believed that it was not the destination. During the interview, she expressed a positive outlook, stating,

It's not proper writing in the sense of creative writing. But I think that with this level of students with this context, we don't have any other options. Maybe in the future, with the feedback that the administration is getting from the teachers and from the students with more experience that the administration is getting as well in managing the writing tasks. Maybe in the future we can find more creative ways of assessment of writing. But until that happens, I think this is a huge step. it's not the end. We know that there is a long way ahead that we need to take. But the good news is that the administration is willing to take it, of course. And this is very important because if the administration is not willing to take it, then you can do nothing.

Changes in policy at the ELC included external factors that led the ELC to switch to an online settings due to the situation of global pandemic. In the next section, I present teachers' reactions and experiences with this switch to make the necessary adjustments in future reforms, particularly in line with Vision 2030.

6.4.3. Teachers' Reactions to Online Settings

During the study, nine participating teachers shared their perspectives on the switch to online teaching, highlighting the significant impact of the changed classroom settings on their teaching practices. It was important to consider teachers' experience with the online classes since it was part of changes in the context that might have impacted teachers.

Indeed, teachers believed that the physical environment and instructional format had influenced their approach to teaching writing. Figure 15 outlines the reported consequences of the classroom settings as voiced by the teachers in the study.

Figure 15

Consequences of Online and Hybrid Classroom Settings Reported by Teachers

- Challenges in maintaining student engagement.
- Difficulties in individualized student support.
- Limited opportunities for in-person interaction.
- Increased reliance on digital tools and resources.
- Adjustments to lesson planning and delivery.
- Adapting assessment and feedback methods.
- Addressing technical issues during remote instruction.
- Balancing the needs of in-person and online students.

Online classes entail teachers delivering lessons to students without the ability to visually see them, following the rules of the Saudi education system. As a privacy measure, teachers and students are not permitted to activate their cameras, resulting in audio-based communication. Written comments exchanged through the designated website used for the lessons serve as the primary form of interaction between teachers and students. This mode of lesson delivery presents various challenges for both teachers and students. Specifically, three interviewed teachers, Suha, Sama, and Salma, highlighted two crucial issues encountered by teachers during online classes: a lack of trust and a lack of focus.

Sama, an advocate for creating a safe and inclusive learning environment, expressed her concern regarding the lack of trust that arises in online classes. According to her, the virtual setting often leads to a sense of disconnection, leaving students feeling lost. Sama emphasized that teachers are unable to identify which students are actively participating or listening during the online sessions, further contributing to the challenge of building trust between teachers and students. She expressed, *“I hate online because our online model is this like, you open your laptop, and you speak to yourself. I don't think we can actually judge this experience. We can judge it when we look at other countries where they have clear rules. But, I mean, most of us lost control of the situation because it's online.”*

Sama highlighted a crucial point regarding the uncertainty teachers face regarding the authorship of students' assignments during online lessons. This issue directly relates to the level of trust between teachers and students. Sama expressed her concern about the challenge of verifying the authenticity and individual effort put into the tasks when there is limited visibility and direct supervision in the online learning environment. She commented, *“if someone else is writing for them [students] or they're copying it's a waste of time. We can just end the class and go do something useful.”*

Salma drew attention to the trust factor within her student group. She recounted an incident during one of her online classes when a student accidentally turned on her microphone while watching a movie, highlighting the lack of focus and engagement that can occur in online settings. This incident reinforced Salma's belief that both students and teachers may not be fully satisfied with the online learning environment due to these challenges.

Furthermore, Salma and Suha shared their experiences regarding the importance of establishing a connection with their students. Suha expressed that capturing students' attention was a significant challenge during her online lessons. On the other hand, Salma mentioned that she adapted her activities to cater to the students' needs in the online setting. However, she expressed her disappointment at not being able to observe her students' reactions, as the absence of visual cues hindered her ability to gauge their understanding and engagement. She commented,

They're [students] able to interact with each other, but not being able to see the other person. Just like right now, me and you not being able to see each other. I don't think there's as much of a connection to the other person, especially if the person is trying to learn from you. I think that it's important for me to have eye contact with my students, to make sure that they are paying attention, make sure that they're understanding me.

Beside issues teachers faced with the online settings, increasing in the numbers of students in each class posed challenges for teachers. Teachers' views of class size is presented next.

6.4.4. Teachers' Struggles with Class Size

In addition to experiencing communication challenges with students, the teachers acknowledged that it would be unfair to place blame solely on the students for these issues. They recognized that the recent increase in class sizes, both in online and in-person settings, has posed significant difficulties for teachers. With compassion towards their students, three teachers, namely Shatha, Suha, and Sama, shared their perspectives on these challenges.

Shatha and Suha expressed the belief that having many students in a class is unfair to certain individuals among the student body. They recognized the challenges and limitations that arise when dealing with a high student-to-teacher ratio, acknowledging that it can impede individual attention and personalized instruction. Shatha said:

You know, according to the time and the number of the students, I feel that the weaker students [students with low English levels] are the victim. I'm trying my best to help them, but there is no time and the number of the students nowadays we have like, 35 students. We used to have like 20 girls maximum.

Suha highlighted the considerable amount of time she had to dedicate to providing individual feedback on students' writing during her office hours. She mentioned that the number of students she had directly impacted the duration of these sessions, often resulting in extended office hours to accommodate everyone's needs. She said, *"it is a lot*

of work. You can't imagine. I'm not sure if there is maybe another easier way of doing it, but for me until now, I don't feel it's working with the ELC."

Sama shared her first-hand experience of how the number of students has influenced her teaching practice. As an outlier among the teachers, she deviates from the norm by incorporating additional writing practices beyond the standard two tasks. Sama's approach demonstrates her commitment to enhancing students' writing skills by offering supplementary opportunities for practice and development. She commented on the following:

Now we have 35 students in each group. Like this semester they [administration] ask that we give four quizzes out of five. It means, like every three to four weeks, you have to do a quiz and then we have the listening for midterm and final exam. And then we have 35 writing to correct for first task and second task, and then 35 is for two speaking tasks. This is just the basics. So if you can collect all of that this semester, we will do at least 600-700 something. 700. Without the extra writing I used to do and all of that I still ask them to do. But sometimes I can't go on the Blackboard and look at everything. So I just collect examples from their writing.

In conclusion, this study has revealed the significant influence of both external and internal factors on the context of teaching for the participating teachers. The discussions of the teachers shed light on the impact of external factors, specifically unplanned policy changes, on their teaching practices. These changes, particularly in the classroom setting, have had notable consequences for the teacher-student relationship within the context.

6.5. Navigating the Assessment Practice

6.5.1. Rubric Applicability and Usefulness for Short Writing Tasks

First, all nine teachers were required to use the assessment rubric provided by the ELC. However, during the interviews, different views and perceptions regarding the

assessment practice were expressed by the teachers. Five teachers (Suha, Sama, Reema, Ghada, and Dana) conveyed a positive attitude toward the assessment practices at the PY.

These teachers viewed the assessment rubric as a **valuable tool that facilitated fairness in evaluating students' work**. According to these teachers, the rubric ensured consistent assessment standards, provided clear expectations for students' written tasks, guided the marking process, and allowed for effective communication of feedback to students. For instance, Reema shared her view, “...*because I can give the students a good judgment, objective judgment that all of them are going to be equal at the end in assessment.*”

Sama, on the other hand, viewed assessment as a **crucial tool for transparency, understanding, and improvement in the learning process**. She believed that it is important each teacher personally introduces the assessment rubric to their students in the classroom, ensuring that students are well-informed about the assessment criteria. To Sama, this transparency is beneficial because students can clearly comprehend the reasons behind their grades and identify areas for improvement. She also believed that the rubric serves formative purposes as well, allowing students to reflect on their learning and progress.

Sama commented, “*also, it's very important because it's clear to the students now when every teacher is required to go to her classroom and explain the rubric to show it to her students. So it's very convenient because students now they know every detail about the assessment, they know why they got this grade and what they have done and what they can improve. So it can be used for formative purposes, like they can reflect on their learning.*” In short, these participants considered the rubric to be fair, accessible, and time-efficient, resulting in a manageable workload for teachers.

Additionally, the **teachers discussed the applicability** of the assessment rubric to the writing tasks assigned to students. The rubric consisted of five main categories: content, grammar and vocabulary, mechanics, coherence, and development. The assigned task involved writing a short paragraph of 70-120 words. Teachers like Suha, Sama, Reema, Ghada, and Dana, expressed satisfaction with the rubric's effectiveness for this type of task. Suha shared her opinion, stating:

I would say that they are effective for our purposes because always remember that we are not dealing with generating ideas. We are dealing with basic paragraph writing, basic level. So at that level, I think the components of the rubric are fine. Although some of the teachers think that organization is not relevant with such a short paragraph. But I think it is important.

Reema added that certain aspects of the rubric, such as grammar, mechanics, and development, are relevant and can be effectively applied. In the ELC, continuous improvements are taking place to ensure that the rubric is applicable and **serves as a useful tool for teachers' practice**. In this regard, Sama, with a PhD in Assessment Practices, discussed the rubric's applicability and her role in ensuring its reliability. Regular checks for consistency were conducted by collaborating with other raters each semester. Sama actively contributed her expertise and expressed her positive views: *"the findings [of the reliability check] were consistent. We only had an issue with one part of the rubric, and this semester it was fixed. So I think it's good because we have a system now. And as someone who is interested in assessment, [it's] very important that we assess that we have a system that our system is systematic and it's reliable, like it's valid. It gets checked and it's consistent."*

6.5.2. Drawbacks of Assessment Rubric

Some teachers expressed their concerns about the assessment practice in the context. For example, Salma holds a critical perspective on the current assessment approach. She talked about her dissatisfaction with the method of deducting points for specific grammar and vocabulary mistakes. Instead, Salma preferred a holistic approach, grading based on the overall quality of the writing rather than tallying individual errors.

She also emphasized the importance of assessing a student's writing, considering factors like a well-structured introduction, supporting details, effective use of linking words, proper punctuation, and capitalization. She added that these aspects collectively define a good writer, rather than meticulously scrutinizing each individual word. Salam commented, *"If I feel, for example, that I can't understand any of her sentences because of her lack of grammar, then yes, I'm going to minus the point. Okay. What I'm looking*

for is I should be looking for a nice introduction, a clear introduction supporting details. I should be looking at linking words. I should be looking at punctuation and capitalization. That's what makes a person a good writer. That's not for me to start in checking each individual word."

One of Salma's concerns was that she found the rubric to be nonsensical. According to her, it was neither applicable nor realistic to penalize students for their mistakes. She believed that such a practice would have a negative impact on students' motivation. Salma further questioned, "*...so if the teacher herself is making mistakes that some of the students are making, why are we judging the students so harshly? Why are we grading them in this way?*"

Furthermore, Basmah and Shatha shared how they felt that the assessment rubric was not in alignment with the writing tasks. Basmah specifically mentioned her confusion about the rubric's criteria for development when the tasks lacked specific details. She explained:

The first one [task] is about an important city, and we talk about the city from the beginning. We don't have an introduction sentence and a topic sentence, etc. And the second one is an email. So, I made some changes. For example, the topic sentence in the email is the reason for writing this email. So, if the students wrote the reason for writing the email, I give her marks. If she didn't, she will lose marks.

These teachers valued a comprehensive assessment that looks beyond isolated errors and prioritizes the development of fundamental writing skills through continuous teaching and improvement.

6.6. Navigating the Textbooks

6.6.1. Quantity Over Quality

The feelings of rushing significantly influence how teachers approach and prioritize teaching writing within this context. These feelings lead to a focus primarily on two tasks (Appendix O), which are not in alignment with the length of the textbooks. The

writing materials used in this context are the textbooks employed for each semester. Typically, two textbooks are used per semester, each containing 11 units. This curriculum approach necessitates teachers to complete both textbooks within the semester, along with managing other teaching and assessment responsibilities for various language skills. Consequently, the pressure to cover the required quantity of content often takes precedence over ensuring quality teaching in writing, as well as in reading, speaking, and listening.

Several teachers highlighted the impact of time constraints on their teaching experiences. Shatha expressed feeling constantly rushed due to the requirement of covering two textbooks, emphasizing that quantity often takes precedence over quality. She said, *"Two textbooks, It's too much now. I'm teaching for 13 years. All the time, I have that feeling that I'm in a hurry. We have a lot of information, grammar, writing, speaking, whatever. So we are concentrating on the quantity, not in quality all the time."*

Ghada and Dana echoed this sentiment, indicating that more time would allow them to enhance students' writing skills through more comprehensive classroom activities. Ghada commented, *"It takes time to complete the required units. If we had more time, we could do more in the classroom to improve students' writing skills."* Similarly, Dana believed that one textbook would be sufficient, stating, *"Both textbooks are wonderful, but sometimes we don't have enough time."*

Basmah presented an alternative perspective, suggesting that the textbooks could be supplemented with additional materials to address students' specific needs. She emphasized the importance of a separate grammar book to address challenges with sentence structure. She mentioned, *"I think that we need to have more than one book, one maybe for reading. Grammar book which can be with the writing. We can make, for example, create our own material based on the recent book."*

Regarding the fit between the textbooks and the writing practice, Suha found the language in the textbooks suitable for academic preparation. She stated, *"the language used in the textbooks is academic language that supports students' preparation for their coming years."* In contrast, Sama criticized the textbooks for not aligning well with the Saudi context, the university's needs, and students' requirements. She said, *"Either you*

want them to focus on general English or you want them to focus on academic English. The book wasn't designed for Saudi. The book wasn't designed for this university, the book wasn't designed for our students, didn't speak to their needs. Just like a publisher wanted to sell something."

In summary, teachers underscored the challenges arising from the number of textbooks and the importance of aligning materials with implemented writing practice. Teachers' sentiments encompass feeling rushed, desiring more time for skill enhancement, seeking supplementary materials, and expressing concerns about textbook suitability for the specific context and student needs.

6.7. Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I presented data related to teachers who participated in this study. I started with teachers' evolving roles in the context and factors impacting their perceptions of their roles in the classrooms. Three main groups of teachers were identified: teachers who adhered to the policy (6.2.1), teachers who modified roles based on students' needs (6.2.2), and teachers who evolved professionally into different roles (6.2.3).

I then outlined how teachers perceived the prescribed practice from the ELC, and the drawback of these practices (6.4). Some teachers adhered to the policy in teaching students while others attempted to create their approaches based on their experience. Teachers also discussed the drawback of the current practice using a model paragraph in limiting creativity, promoting plagiarism and the washback effect.

Next, I reported teachers' perceptions of the policy at the ELC (6.5), highlighting themes such as teachers' agency, autonomy and flexibility, lack of clarity and miscommunication between teachers and policy makers. Teacher also shared their views about the online setting experience at the context, pointing out themes such as issues of trust and contact, student engagement and large class sizes.

Following that, I laid out teachers' perceptions of the assessment practice and of the textbooks (6.5, 6.6.). Some teachers perceived the assessment practice as useful and fair, while others viewed it as rigid and misaligned with the writing tasks. Teachers

stressed the theme quantity over quality, indicating that the workload of using two textbooks in their teaching. In the next chapter, I present students' perspectives.

Chapter Seven: Students' Perspectives

7.1. Introduction

In this section, I present the data collected from the students who participated in this research. Building upon the previous chapter (Teachers' Perspectives), which focused on teachers' viewpoints on teaching academic writing, this section explores the perspectives of students.

To address the research questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted separately with a total of eight preparatory year students. These students are enrolled in English courses specifically designed to prepare them for their future university studies. The purpose of this chapter is to present students' views of their writing learning experience, and factors influencing their learning.

The preparatory year students are in their first year of higher education and are enrolled in these English courses to enhance their language proficiency and prepare for their future university studies. While they may not have the same level of understanding as their teachers, they possess unique perspectives as learners, and they are the focus in the context. Their experiences and feedback regarding their academic writing journey can shed light on the effectiveness of the teaching methods, the impact of the writing materials used, and the overall learning experience.

In the next section, I present the main themes and their sub-themes in relation to PY students in the context. The first theme includes *navigating learning of writing* and the implications of writing tasks (7.2). Next, the second theme highlights *navigating the final writing task* and its washback effect on students' learning (7.3). The following themes are *navigating the assessment practice*, *navigating the textbooks*, and *navigating the context*, respectively (7.4, 7.5 & 7.6)

7.2. Navigating Learning of Writing: Product-based Approach

7.2.1. Useful Tasks and Limiting Tasks

Under this theme, I present students' perspectives on the writing tasks and model paragraph used in their English classes highlighting their emphasis on achieving high marks. While discussing these tasks, an opposition between two attitudes emerged. One group, consisting of Sara, Leen, Amjad, Asma, and Rawan, expressed the belief that the model paragraph is valuable. However, their perception of usefulness is not centered on skill improvement; instead, they view the model as a means of imitation and ensuring a safe approach for the final exam. Their primary goal is to obtain marks, recognizing that similar paragraphs will be required.

The perspectives shared by this group of students offer valuable insights into the use of guided writing tasks and models in the English Language Center (ELC). Sara and Leen expressed a sense of reassurance and direction when engaging in guided writing. Sara specifically emphasizes the clear structure and guidance provided, making her feel more confident and less lost in her writing tasks.

Sara commented, *“At the university I feel that guided writing is what we have to do. We are guided to write. We don't feel lost. even in the final exam everything is there. We just connect ideas.”* This highlights the perceived benefits of the guided approach in terms of clarity and reduced anxiety.

Rawan and Asma both positively acknowledged the valuable role that the provided model paragraphs play in their writing process. Rawan described the model as an invaluable template that not only guides her approach but also effectively facilitates the task, making it feel less daunting in terms of length. According to Rawan, *“I think it's better than just asking me to write. It's like a template that you go on. We don't feel [it is] very long.”* Asma echoes this sentiment by highlighting the challenge of writing without models due to the existing dependence on them. In Asma's words, *“I think it would be hard to write without models since we are so dependent on it.”*

Amjad's perspective adds an interesting dimension to the discussion. She added, *“I support the models. I feel that it works better for me. But I am open to try free writing at times. I like the modelling. It's easy and it helps us. I make less errors this way.”* While acknowledging the benefits of models in terms of reducing errors and providing ease of use, Amjad demonstrates an openness to exploring different approaches. She recognizes that the use of models aligns with her learning style and yields positive results. Indeed, both Asma and Amjad shared their willingness to engage in free writing and acknowledges the importance of striking a balance between the two approaches.

Another group of students asserted that the writing materials pose restrictions, stifling their creativity and impeding their growth in honing their writing skills. In contrast to the first group, students such as Amani, Bushra, and Nada conveyed their dissatisfaction with the model paragraph, deeming it as *“limited and specific”* (Amani). They yearned for the freedom to write without constraints and explore alternative approaches, considering their status as university students. Amani shared her encounter with the model by expressing,

The problem with the approach we have now is that it's not a topic that we have the freedom to write about, they give us sentences that we need to connect together. it's confusing. I don't like the model. It's sometimes, the vocabulary there I can change them but I am not given this chance to use my own writing. I feel obligated which I don't like at all.

Bushra raised a crucial point regarding the purpose of learning through modeling and being *“guided.”* She acknowledged the pressure faced by PY students, as their performance (GPA) during this year determines their future field of study. Bushra expressed, *“[modelling] has two sides. In the first semester I felt that I was imitating just for the sake of getting full mark. But I don't think I want to learn writing this way. It doesn't help me to improve.”*

This group of students wanted more control over their writing education. However, the guided approach they experienced in teaching writing for PY students did not give them the freedom they desired to explore ideas and experiment with their writing. Amani remarked, *“In writing email, I have to memorize things. it feels like high school*

practice. I would like to be taught with more freedom. I mean giving us the topic. I want to write my own sentences and be assessed on that.”

Nada and Bushra also felt constrained by using models. They strongly desired the flexibility to select topics related to their studies. This freedom, in their view, means being able to write without set word limits or predetermined subjects. Nada's preference for unrestricted writing was clear: *“I think writing freely is the best. I wish we can have some kind of this freedom to write. Even the topic I wish we could choose.”*

Another aspect that students shared was what they found difficult in their writing tasks. Rawan shared her experience by saying, *“It's usually the spelling that is like the biggest problem I have to deal with. My grammar and vocabulary are not the worst because I do use my English a lot and try to use it a lot. And I read in English a lot, so it's not so bad. But when it comes to spelling, because I don't practice writing in English a lot. So spelling is the biggest issue.”*

Sara believed that finding the right vocabulary posed an issue for her in writing. she added, *“Finding the right word to use in a sentence has always been really difficult for me, and it's something that I've been trying to work on for as long as I can remember, and I'm hoping to eventually get better at it.”* Most students (i.e. Amjad, Leen, Bushra and Amani) agreed that using grammar was one of the main struggles that had when they write.

In conclusion, the students' perspectives on the writing tasks and model paragraphs used in their English classes reveal a divergence of attitudes. While some students appreciate the guidance and structure provided by the model, others feel restricted and desire more freedom to explore their own ideas and writing styles. A balanced approach that integrates guided writing with opportunities for independent expression could better cater to the diverse learning needs and goals of the students. In the following section, I discuss how students perceive the assessment of writing as a crucial element in their overall learning journey.

7.3. Navigating the Final Writing Task

7.3.1. Washback Effect

The addition of a final written task was included in the **curriculum change** for PY students. Students were aware of what to expect in the exam and could easily achieve full marks on the writing tasks based on their personal efforts. As mentioned earlier, teachers believed that the final writing task duplicated what students had practiced throughout the year.

Students shared their experiences regarding the final written tasks, shedding light on the impact of this policy on their mindset towards writing and the ultimate outcomes of the English Language Course (ELC). Leen, Sara, Nada and Amjad emphasized the importance of the final written task in assessing their progress by the end of the semester and as a tool for motivation. Nada argued, *"I don't prefer to have a writing task on the final exam, but I think, in general, having a writing task at the final exam can motivate students to work on their writing skills, which I think is really important and good for them."*

Conversely, Rawan considered the final task as merely an opportunity to secure full marks since students had already practiced the required tasks with their teachers during classes. Rawan shared,

I don't think the final writing is any different for us because it's the same thing we wrote for the assignment. We just wrote it again as a final. So, it didn't make much of a difference whether we had it or not, unless maybe for students whose level is lower than mine. It did affect their grade because it was worth five marks. It was a lot.

Amani and Asma held similar views regarding the accessibility of the final writing tasks. According to Amani, *"It was easy. What was difficult for me was to connect the sentences we had."* Despite being taught in the same way as all PY students, Amani still lacked confidence in her approach to the final exam. If Amani were provided with the chance to write without being constrained by specific instructions, would her perspective shift by the end?

On a different note, Asma held a more optimistic view of her final task, asserting, *"It is the easier part of the final exam, to be honest. I have enough time to do it. I don't feel pressured."* In opposition to Asma's perspective, Bushra conveyed apprehension concerning the final task. This concern was particularly due to the task being new for her as a recent entrant into this educational context. Elaborating on this, she remarked, *"It was not about the content. I was worried because of the grades, the novelty of it."*

7.4. Navigating the Assessment Practice

7.4.1. Feelings of Stress

This theme explores students' experiences as they receive writing assessments, highlighting the overwhelming stress they encounter during this process. First, Bushra connected her teacher's efforts in explaining the assessment rubric to her level of stress around being graded for writing. She said, *"if the teacher didn't tell me about the rubric, I would be nervous. but the way we are taught it was helpful."*

Additionally, Amani discussed her experience with the stress she feels when being assessed, stating, *"I am nervous when I write academically, and I stay this way for days because I know there is assessment. I know there is a teacher who is going to assess my writing and grade me based on my written task. So if I get low grades, I get very discouraged. This is my nature."*

Amani was not the only one who felt this way. Rawan used the same adjective (*nervous*) to describe her feelings about assessment. She added, *"it made me nervous sometimes because everything is counted, every little mistake has to be counted. So you have to be extra careful."* Amjad shared her views on assessment in a contradictory statement. She believed that being assessed helps her acknowledge her mistakes and improve her writing, but at the same time, she expressed fear regarding her grades being affected by the assessment rubric.

Asma shared her experience with assessment by saying, *"In the beginning, I was worried about my marks, but now my confidence is higher, and I feel much better."* Asma believed that she needed time to become accustomed to academic writing and assessment.

Finally, Leen was the only student who expressed relief regarding writing assessment. It was interesting to observe the different perspectives students held regarding this aspect of their learning. Leen shared, *"I don't feel anxious for the assessment. I am totally fine. I discuss with my teacher about my mistakes and why this not that."* Leen found it useful to see her mistakes and the marks provided, as that was how assessment was given to students.

Overall, these varied perspectives highlight the significant role that writing assessment plays in generating feelings of stress among students, underscoring the importance of providing clear guidance, supportive feedback, and opportunities for growth to mitigate anxiety and enhance the learning experience. In the next section, I explore the students' attitudes towards the textbooks they were required to use during their academic writing studies at the PY.

7.5. Navigating the Textbooks

7.5.1. A Sense of Familiarity

During the interviews, students discussed their experience with using two textbooks per semester, totalling four textbooks in an academic year. They echoed the teachers' sentiment that handling two textbooks in one semester was overwhelming.

Students expressed a sense of familiarity with the textbooks, emphasizing that they felt these materials were familiar to them. They found the language used and the activities to be relatively easy and straightforward. Sara stated, *"I like them [textbooks] because they provide us with visuals. It helps. It is informative, full of grammar rules and activities. Even for my practice, I used the textbooks."*

Rawan and Nada also perceived similarities between the textbooks they used and their high school textbooks. Nada found using familiar textbooks to be *"less intimidating and more relatable,"* while Rawan remarked, *"They're not really that much different than our schoolbooks that we took in high school. So I think that was a good thing for us as beginners in our first semester. It was a good thing because we already know how the book works. It was not something like from another universe."*

Leen and Bushra held positive views about the textbooks but did not explicitly link their feelings to familiarity. Instead, they viewed the textbooks as new sources of learning in a different context. Leen initially felt overwhelmed by the number of units in the books, describing the experience as "*chaos*." However, she found the textbooks more accessible as she advanced in her studies.

In contrast, Amani held a negative attitude toward the textbooks. She commented, "*It's not very useful. It's not our level, to be honest. It is complicated. And we have to study two books. It's too much. I mean, in the first book, we have 10 units, and the second has 11 units too. I feel for the teacher too. She has a lot to manage.*" These diverse perspectives provide insights into the students' experiences and attitudes regarding the use of textbooks in their academic writing courses.

Preparatory-year students experienced a transition in their education experience. They were new to higher education and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), and they also had to cope with the pressures of the first year, prepare for their studies, and adjust to becoming independent learners compared to their previous experiences in schools. Therefore, in the next section, I present how students navigate the context.

7.6. Navigating the Context

In this section, I present the sub-theme alongside extracts from the students' perspectives. This provides a comprehensive exploration of students' insights, shedding light on their experiences and perspectives related to the context.

7.6.1. Transitioning and Preparatory Year Demands

To start, students openly talked about their prior and current experiences with learning how to write. In exploring their perceptions of the context, students shared their views about several points, including prior learning, the impact of the PY Curriculum, classroom settings, and ideal writing environment.

First, students discuss their prior experiences with writing and their English language proficiency, with some acknowledging improvements upon starting university studies. Some students felt unprepared for university-level writing due to their high school

education. For example, Rawan and Nada provided insightful perspectives on how their perceptions of their English language proficiency improved upon starting their university studies. Rawan reflected, *"I always knew that it [my writing] wasn't the best compared to my speaking or reading skills. It was not really the best. But when we started studying and everything was in English, I realized that it wasn't an issue."*

Similarly, Nada held the belief that her writing skills were adequate for her university studies, attributing her improvement to her high school English teacher. Nada expressed gratitude towards her teacher, stating, *"My teacher was strict about teaching and focusing on writing."* As Nada embarked on her undergraduate journey, particularly in the medical field, she recognized the significance of enhancing her writing abilities.

On the contrary, Bushra and Sara, experienced a minor shock when they began their university studies. Bushra expressed her realization that her prior writing education in schools had not been sufficient, stating, *"When I entered university, I felt that I knew nothing about writing."* Sara also shared her perspective, highlighting the significant improvement she achieved with her teacher's guidance. She stated,

My level was so below the average. With my teacher, I have improved a lot. I learned how to write well and how to organize my text. In the beginning, everything was hard for me. But to be honest, now I feel more confident. My teacher taught me to write simple sentences to avoid making mistakes.

Second, students shared the impact of the PY Curriculum on their learning experiences. The PY curriculum includes numerous subjects to prepare students for their university studies, with English courses spanning the entire academic year (first and second semesters). These English courses significantly impact PY students' GPA, as they encompass 16 hours of their weekly schedule. Students shared their experiences regarding this workload and its impact. Nada expressed,

I think what was really difficult for me were the other subjects. As students, we focused on those subjects and assignments, so we didn't give as much attention to the writing tasks or writing skills, as much as we focused on

getting the full mark. So, I think the workload from other subjects is really affecting us.

Conversely, Bushra shared her positive perspective on being a PY student and the associated demands. She commented, *"We have a lot of hours, but I never looked at it in a negative way. All I do is attend and learn. I don't think of them [other subjects] as hurdles. No, I am learning, and I give every subject its time and effort."* Similarly, Asma believed that studying in an EMI context has been beneficial for improving her language skills in general.

Rawan shared her views about the impact of the hours at the PY, focusing on having 4 hours of English classes per day. She stated, *"at first, I thought it was too much. Because we had Like 4 hours lecture every day, which was a little too much. But maybe after a few weeks I realized that it was helpful because 4 hours a day of only English was really helpful."*

Third, students express their experiences with online learning reflecting some of the teachers' challenges (see 6.4.3), including technical challenges and difficulties receiving teacher feedback. Many students prefer face-to-face classes for better understanding and participation. Students shared their perspectives on the different classroom settings and how it influenced their learning of writing and overall engagement in classes. They expressed that learning online had been a *"confusing experience"* for them, particularly in relation to writing practices. Technical issues and the need to learn specific tools to submit writing tasks, combined with communication challenges with their teachers, contributed to their perception of the online learning experience. Rawan described online participation as *"hard work."*

Another common sentiment among students was the desire for teacher feedback, which they found more challenging to receive in online classes compared to traditional classrooms. This lack of easy and convenient feedback created frustration, impacting their motivation and participation. Rawan and Bushra expressed a preference for participating in face-to-face classes due to the nature of online classes. Rawan shared her experience, stating, *"Yes, sometimes it's frustrating because the first lecture I went to classes and I understood everything, then the rest of the lecture was online before the exam, and I*

realized I only understand some of the things, but the other things I don't. So, it's kind of confusing."

Bushra emphasized that reduced focus in online classes led to less participation, saying, *"I prefer to study in class. I am against online classes. I want to see my teacher and interact with her. My focus is much better. In online class, I am not focused, so I don't participate. I have to go back to the recordings and watch them again. It's also a waste of time."*

Amani and Amjad shared the same opinion as Bushra, emphasizing the importance of understanding better to participate and share their writing with their teachers. Amjad explained, *"I participate more when I am in class. The teacher is there, and I can engage with her. But online, I feel discouraged to participate. Maybe the atmosphere at home doesn't help either."*

Regarding face-to face setting, students shared their views about the ideal writing environment. Some find writing at home less stressful and more time flexible. Others favoured the classroom environment due to immediate teacher interaction and a focused learning atmosphere. Amani and Bushra expressed their belief that writing in class is a more beneficial approach for them. They value the immediate availability of the teacher, enabling them to receive prompt feedback based on the teacher's style. Bushra stated, *"I like to write in class because the atmosphere is all about learning. I can ask the teacher since she is there or even my peers."*

On the other hand, Rawan, Nada, and Amjad shared the view that writing at home is less stressful for them. They appreciate having more time, resources, and a conducive environment to reflect on their tasks. Rawan explained her preference, saying, *"I'd rather do it [task] at home because, as I said, I struggle with spelling a lot. So it takes a long time for me to write, then sit back and find any mistakes, which there's always so many of them. So it's easier at home because I have a lot of time. I'm not told you have to be fast."*

7.7. Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I presented students' perspectives of their learning experiences of writing at the PY including their interactions with the writing tools, teachers' practices,

and the context. Some students believed that the writing practices they received were limiting, while others saw the writing tasks as useful in improving their skills (7.2.). Washback effect was a common theme among students since there was a clear impact of their classrooms practice on their final exams (7.3.). Moreover, students perceived assessment practices to be as stress-inducing factors, while finding textbooks to be both familiar and easy to follow (7.4, 7.5.). In the final section, students shared their experience under the umbrella of the PY, highlighting the demands of the courses at the PY and the classrooms settings (7.6.). In the next section, I discuss the findings of my research in relation to existing literature and the theoretical framework of this study.

Chapter Eight: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

This study investigates student and teacher perspectives on university-level writing instruction, focusing on a Saudi Arabian university where English writing skills were not previously prioritized but have recently become emphasized, particularly in terms of proficiency and writing assessment. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings considering the literature review and the theoretical framework: a complex adaptive system.

This chapter is divided into four main sections: the first section discusses elements within CAS which includes context and curriculum change at the ELC (8.2.1). The second section focuses on agents within CAS teachers and their interactions with the context (8.2.2). This third section highlights students' interactions with the context (8.2.3). The fourth section discusses agents' interactions with curriculum change (8.2.4).

CAS. In this research I applied a complex adaptive system perspective to explore how teachers and students navigate curriculum change at the university under the ELC policy. In this thesis, I define Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) as a system in which different elements interact dynamically, exhibiting emerged behaviours and patterns. Findings of the research about teachers and students' perspectives within the educational system align with key concepts of complexity theory. The system's dynamics involve interactions, diverse perspectives, and adaptation.

To restate, the significance of this theoretical framework lies in understanding the emergent behaviours and interactions among the components within this educational system (see 3.7.5); however, this framework has several disadvantages including being descriptive and not providing plans for action (Morrison, 2008), which could be seen in some cases of this discussion.

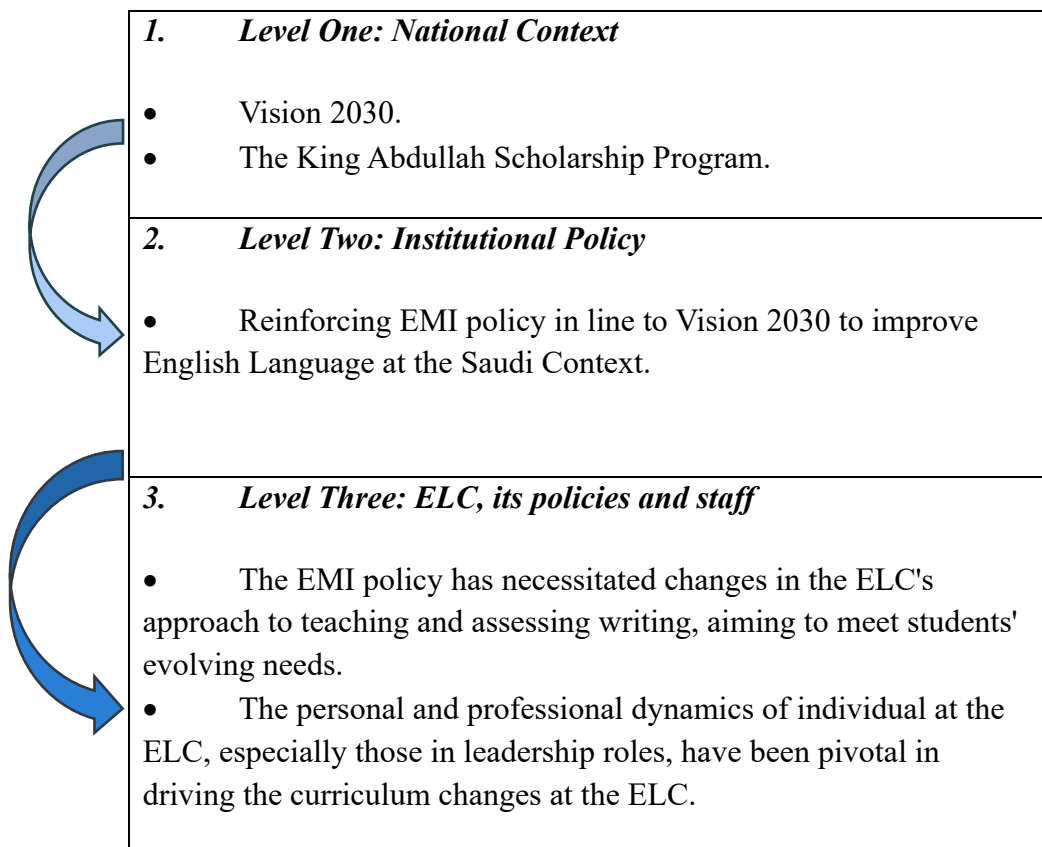
8.2. Dynamics of Agents and Elements within CAS

8.2.1. Curriculum Change and Context

The findings of my research at the English Language Center (ELC) shed light on factors that have influenced the ELC and its curriculum change (see 9.2). Under the ELC administration, the curriculum change initiative focused on enhancing writing instruction and assessment practices. First, Davis and Sumara (2006) assert that educational institutions could be viewed as complex systems, where changes in one area can have an effect throughout the entire system. This perspective aligns with my analysis of how Vision 2030, the adoption of English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI), and the influence of high-quality educator shave collectively impacted the ELC initiative's decision-making process. The interconnectedness of CAS could be seen on three levels (Figure 16).

Figure 16

Three Levels Showing the Interconnectedness of CAS



Vision 2030. Vision 2030 targets improving English language education including the enhancement of curriculum focusing on the four skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking as well as fostering innovation, creativity, and critical thinking in classrooms (see 2.4.2) This vision has impacted institutions in the Saudi higher education to improve their outcomes in line with the Vision (2.6).

EMI Policy Reinforcement in Alignment with Vision 2030. The national initiative Vision 2030 directly impacted Saudi higher education institutions in expanding the policy of EMI. The reason behind this policy was to achieve some of the EMI goals which include competing to be among the top universities worldwide (see 2.6). In fact, Saudi universities strive for better ranking and reputations among international universities (as evident in Aldawsari, 2022; Alharbi, 2022; Alkhateeb, 2022; Elyas & Al-Hoorie, 2023; Zumor & Abdesslem, 2022). In particular, the site of this research is one of those universities which has been working on recognitions that could be achieved through enhancing the outcomes of the university.

Adaptation of Teaching and Assessment Methods in Response to EMI Policy. One entity in the university is the ELC which has a responsibility to improve quality teaching and outcomes (ELC, 2023). The ELC aims to improve English language outcome which was manifested in the curriculum change of the writing component. Moreover, the ELC policy confirmed that the goal of teaching writing is to prepare students for EMI university studies (ELC, 2021). The ELC, after years of uncertainty with implementing a sustainable writing practice, finally in 2020 introduced changes that are still in place (see 1.1).

Leadership and Change. Besides being influenced by external factors, the ELC was also impacted by the internal dynamics of its professional staff. Policy makers and teachers at the ELC had a major impact on driving changes at the ELC (see 5.1). One main factor that has led these individuals to aim and implement changes was their experiences abroad through the KASP. Indeed, the impact of KASP could be translated in providing educators with academic opportunities, leadership skills and personal growth (Alsqoor, 2018), which was evident at the ELC level where initiated changes and leadership positions at held by women until this moment (see 4.5.1 and 5.1).

To conclude this section, it is crucial to highlight the interconnectedness of this CAS, indicating how different levels operate to provide insights for improvements. These insights include recognizing how the national context like Vision 2030 could influence higher education policies as EMI. This interconnectedness underscores the importance of aligning educational policies with national goals. The alignment ensures that universities could contribute effectively to national reforms. The ELC has taken its first steps by doing this curriculum change of writing and more could be done in the future.

8.2.2. Teachers and Context

The findings of this research highlighted teachers' navigation of the curriculum change in relation to their roles in the context and their responses to the changes. In this section I discuss the emergent of agents of change within CAS, and their potential impact if supported by the ELC policy makers.

Then, I discuss the impact of the top-down policy exists at the ELC which has influenced teachers on professional level and classroom level. The purpose of this section is to discuss how agents and elements within CAS interacted and how to understand this interaction differently for a better educational outcome.

Agent of Change Potential Impact. While some teachers showed characteristics of being agents of change, other teachers did not demonstrate qualities of this first group. The latter group preferred to adhere to policy, and they indicated that the context (PY) have impacted their decisions in their classrooms (see 6.2.1). In this section, I focus on the emergence of agents of change due to their potential importance in future changes at the ELC.

Although most of the teachers at the ELC were not given the opportunity to be involved in the curriculum change, they were able to demonstrate certain mindsets that could be of use when initiating future changes at the ELC programs, and consequently aligns with the national context Vision 2030. These teachers could be considered agents of change due to several key reasons based on the literature.

Teachers like Basmah, Shatha, Sama, Amal, Suha, Ghada, and Reema demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt their teaching methods and roles based on the

specific needs of their students and the evolving educational system (see 6.2.2 & 6.2.3). They embraced innovative approaches to create positive learning environments, showing a willingness to depart from traditional teaching methods when necessary.

These teachers exhibited a deep understanding of their students' needs and learning styles (see 6.2.2 & 6.2.3). By actively engaging with their students and creating safe, motivating, and participatory learning environments, they catered to the diverse needs of their students, ensuring their engagement and academic success. This aligns with the literature on the importance of teacher adaptability and responsiveness to student needs as key characteristics of effective change agents (Lukacs, 2015). Research suggests that teachers who are aware of their students' needs and adapt their teaching methods accordingly are more likely to promote positive educational outcomes (see 3.10.2).

Teachers like Basmah, Shatha, Sama, and Amal took on roles as facilitators and motivators, aiming to empower their students and create a conducive learning atmosphere (see 6.2.2). This aligns with the literature's recognition of the importance of positive learning environments in driving educational change (Tri, 2023).

Suha, Ghada, and Reema reflected on their personal experiences as learners and educators, emphasizing the importance of modifying teaching methods and embracing continuous improvement (see 6.2.3). They demonstrated a commitment to ongoing learning and professional development, essential qualities for driving positive change in educational settings. Their reflective practice and commitment to ongoing improvement align with the literature on the characteristics of change agents in education (Van der Heijden et al., 2015). Table 11 shows the potential impact of agent of change on different levels within CAS.

Table 11*Potential Impact of Agent of Change*

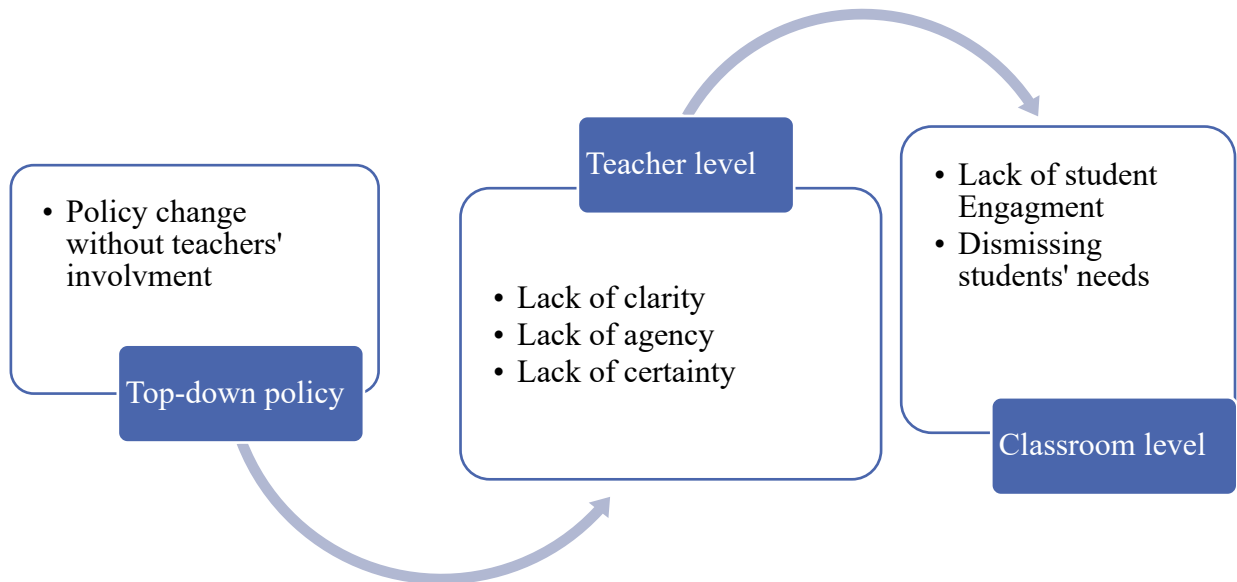
Quality of agents of change	Potential impact on levels (ELC, institutional PY level, national level)
Adaptability and innovation	ELC: Improves policy flexibility, student outcomes and engagement → University: Encourages PY curriculum alignment → National: Supports Vision 2030 goals, advances educational standards
Positive learning environments	ELC: Increases motivation and participation → University: Fosters inclusive academic settings → National: Aligns with goals of inclusive education
Student engagement, empowerment and motivation	ELC: Encourages active learning and critical thinking → University: Boosts academic performance and retention → National: Contributes to a knowledgeable workforce
Reflective practice and professional development	ELC: Leads to continuous teaching improvement → University: Supports ongoing professional development → National: Promotes a culture of lifelong learning

To conclude, the findings indicate that some teachers at the ELC were affected by both the institution's policies (see 6.2.1). However, this section advocates for recognizing and supporting agents of change identified through my research at the ELC, enabling them to contribute positively to future curriculum, culture, and national change. To end this section, it is essential to consider what if the ELC acknowledged the potential of these change agents instead of relying on the top-down policies discussed next?

Top-Down policy Impact. Teachers at the ELC have experienced a loss of agency in their teaching practices due policy changes implemented during the curriculum change without consulting teachers. The lack of teachers involved in decision making was the main reason for these different themes in the context: lack of clarity, lack of agency and lack of certainty (Figure17). The way to look at this point is to consider what if teachers took part in policy changes, and what could result from this involvement for the ELC and national level.

Figure 17

Impact of Top-Down Policy

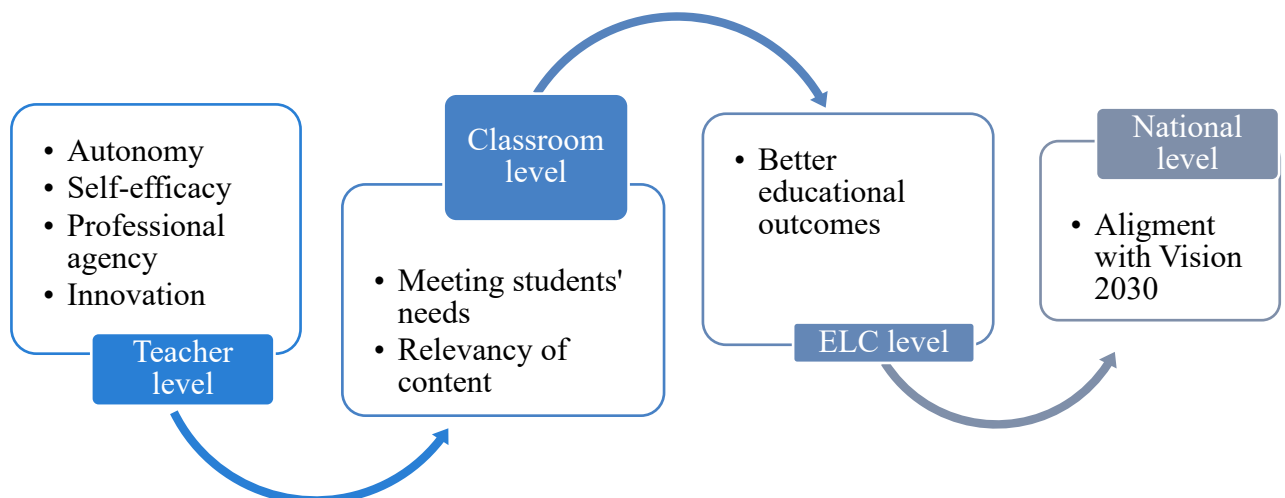


Teachers connected this sense of lack of agency in the classrooms with changes in participations mark policy which teachers were not consulting about (see 6.4.1). They also expressed their lack of clarity due to policy changes and the impact these changes had on them (see 6.4.1), and they were uncertain about the purpose behind certain teaching methods, the criteria for assessing students using rubrics, and the specific objectives of the course (see 6.4.2). Teachers' confusion about the relevance of the courses and the teaching methods are supported in research and proved to be resulted from the miscommunications between policy makers and teachers (Karakuş, 2021; Bano, 2022).

In contrast to the top-down policy at the ELC, previous research advocate for engaging teachers in curriculum change to empower them with a sense of ownership and control over the curriculum. Indeed, Poulton et al. (2020) and Gherzouli (2019) demonstrate that bottom-up approaches to curriculum change empower teachers, enhancing their autonomy, self-efficacy, and professional agency. Teachers who participate in the process feel more invested in the curriculum and are more likely to implement it effectively. Considering teachers' voice in the process of making decision could compensate for agency issues among teachers at the ECL and could take teachers from a place of lacks in their practice to a more powerful place (Figure 18).

Figure 18

Potential Impact of Teachers' Involvement in Curriculum Change



In response to teachers at the ELC, these teachers need to feel autonomous while at the same time supported by the administrations at the ELC. When these teachers have a voice in the curriculum change process, they would gain a feeling of ownership and control over their teaching practices, leading to enhanced professional growth. Teachers in the ELC believed that they had more contact to students, and they knew what their students needed in their learning. Involving teachers could lead to relevancy of context instead of teaching students just for the sake of high stakes exams.

Looking back at the national context Vision 2030 which promotes innovation and creativity, and critical thinking in education (see 2.4.2), engaging teachers at the ELC in future decision making could not only empowered teachers (Al-Dhuwaihi, 2017), but also meeting students' needs with teachers' innovation in practices. Teacher investment and motivation int their practices could result in better educational outcomes for the ELC and the university.

8.2.3. Students and Context

Students' experiences with academic writing at the university level uncovers a complex interplay of internal and external factors that shape students' learning journey, aligning with prior research in the field.

Prior Learning Impact. Students' prior experiences with writing and their English language proficiency influence their preparedness for university-level writing (see 7.6). Rawan and Nada acknowledged improvements in their writing skills upon starting university studies. Conversely, Bushra and Sara experienced a shock when they realized the gaps in their writing education from high school. The impact of high school education on students' writing proficiency varies, with some, like Nada, feeling adequately prepared, while others, like Bushra and Sara, feel unprepared for university-level writing. The significance of prior learning experiences echoes findings from (Altinmakas & Bayyurt, 2019; Ellis et al., 2007) emphasizing how students perceive their past experiences as significantly influential in their university learning, underscoring the importance of clear purposes for writing assignments.

PY Impact. The demands of the PY Curriculum, including English courses spanning the entire academic year, significantly impact students' writing experiences (see 7.6). Some students, like Bushra and Asma, embraced the demands positively agreeing with McMullan (2014) who conducted a study on Saudi university students' attitudes toward preparatory English programs, finding that students value the programs and see them as key to their success. Others, like Nada, find PY challenging. The workload from other subjects in the PY can affect students' focus on writing tasks and skills, potentially hindering their writing development.

Despite initial reservations about the intensity of English classes, students like Rawan acknowledge the value of spending significant hours on English learning. Rawan initially found the daily 4-hour English lectures overwhelming but later realized the benefits of immersive language instruction. Similarly, Asma highlighted the positive impact of studying in an EMI context, stating that it has been beneficial for improving her language skills overall. Researchers (e.g. Al-Asmari, 2013; Alharbi; 2022; Laouini, 2022) who assessed Saudi students' attitudes towards learning English at universities, confirmed similar positive attitudes among preparatory year students.

Looking at students at the ELC, it is essential to consider students' voices at the PY. This research showed the tension between prior learning and PY demands which could impact students' learning (see 7.6). The ELC has the tools (Agents of change), and the force (policy makers), which could support the notion of alignment. This alignment starts beyond teaching and learning of writing. Policy at the ELC could look at different formats for the English programs. One possible way is to focus on systematic development which aligns with Al-Ashry (2017) who proposes reforms of English courses by gradually focusing on the skills students need for their university studies. Practically speaking, the ELC could start the first semester using the product approach as students still benefit from it; however, in the second semester integration of approaches should be introduced in classrooms. Another suggestion could be aligning the courses' objectives with national reforms (Vision 2030) and focusing on writing courses to improve students' learning at the PY (Zaghloul et al., 2021).

8.2.4. Teachers, Students and Curriculum Change

Use of Models. In the findings teachers expressed their views about using the product-based approach which focuses on a model paragraph. This aim of this approach, as expressed by teachers at the ELC, is to provide error free sentences, aligning with the overarching goal of preparing students for standardized assessments such as final exams. However, teachers such as Sama, Shatha, and Salma argued that this standardized approach may lead to inhibiting students' creativity and critical thinking and fostering a culture of imitation and plagiarism (see 6.3.2).

The existing research highlights the product approach in teaching writing that although it emphasises producing error free text (Pasand & Haghi, 2013), could lead to enforcing practices such as memorizing sentences (Josifović-Elezović & Mitić, 2015). This suggests that while the product-based approach may result in grammatical accuracy, it may hinder students' ability to think critically, express themselves creatively, and develop original ideas in their writing.

Moreover, teachers' concerns about the drawbacks of the product -based approach reflect the tension between standardization and innovation among teachers. While some teachers strategically align their teaching with exam content to achieve desired outcomes: Washback effect (see 6.3.2), others advocate for a more individualized approach that prioritizes student autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking (see 6.3.1).

On the other hand, students' perspectives on learning using models resonated with the concerns raised by teachers regarding the limitations of a product-based approach in writing instruction (see 7.2.1). While some students appreciate the ease and reduced errors provided by models, others feel restricted by their use and desire more freedom to explore their own ideas and writing styles (see 7.2.1).

Some teachers have already demonstrated adaptive strategies to enhance students' writing skills. These strategies include incorporating research skills, encouraging free writing, and facilitating planning and brainstorming sessions, all aimed at empowering students with relevant skills beyond the standardized criteria (see 6.3.1).

From a CAS perspective, one of the challenges that face Vision 2030 for the education field is the rote learning culture that is common in the Saudi education (see 2.4.4). The current mandated practise at the ELC, which focused on modelling and imitation, could reflect this challenge of rote learning.

To align with Vision 2030 goals, and decrease the tension sensed at the ELC, a balanced approach could be integrated in future policy changes. Integrating elements of both process and product approaches can address the limitations of the product-based approach while fostering critical thinking and creativity (Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Pasand & Haji, 2013). Beside the integration of approaches, other effective practices (e.g. Ahmed et al., 2023; Aldossar, 2021; Alhujaylan, 2019; Alkhalaf, 2022; Alshenqeeti, 2020;

Alwaleedi, 2022; A Grami, 2020) could be tried by the ELC to reduce writing issues reported by teachers and students in the classrooms (see 6.3.2 & 7.2.1).

Assessment Rubrics and Washback. In this section, I discuss teachers' perceptions of assessment practices within the curriculum changes at the ELC. The primary focus is on the use of rubrics by teachers for evaluating students' writing tasks. The findings showed different perspectives among teachers regarding assessment practices at the PY.

Some teachers expressed positive attitudes toward the assessment rubric provided by the ELC, while others voiced concerns and highlighted challenges (see 6.5.1 & 6.5.2). These findings are consistent with existing literature on assessment rubrics in ESL writing instruction, which emphasizes both the benefits and drawbacks of using rubrics for evaluating student work.

The positive attitudes expressed by teachers such as Suha, Sama, Reema, Ghada, and Dana toward the assessment rubric align with previous research highlighting the benefits of rubrics in promoting fairness, transparency, and consistency in evaluation (see 6.5.1).

Teachers viewed the rubric as a valuable tool for setting clear expectations, guiding the marking process, and facilitating effective communication of feedback to students. Similarly, some students appreciate the guidance provided by rubrics in setting clear expectations and facilitating the marking process (see 7.4.1). This finding resonates with literature discussing the role of rubrics in providing structured criteria and standards for assessing student writing (Zhang & Weng, 2023). These positive attitudes confirmed the value of using assessment rubrics at the ELC not only to ease the evaluation processes but also to enhance student understanding of assignment expectations.

Concerns were also raised by some teachers, notably Salma, who preferred a holistic approach to assessment rather than focusing solely on individual errors (see 6.5.2). Some students, like Amani and Rawan, expressed anxiety and frustration about the rigid evaluation imposed by rubrics (see 7.4.1). This concern reflects discussions in the literature about the potential limitations of rubrics in capturing the complexity of

writing and the need to balance structured assessment criteria with a broader understanding of students' performance (Viñas, 2022).

Both teachers and students acknowledge the existence of the washback effect in the context of the final exam and writing tasks. Teachers Basmah and Suha expressed the necessity of aligning their teaching with the exam content, despite their reservations about the method (see 6.3.2 & 6.5.2). Basmah emphasized her responsibility to prepare students for the final exam, indicating the influence of assessment on instructional decisions. Similarly, Suha shared the strategy in selecting writing tasks based on exam content, demonstrating how assessment impacted curriculum planning and instructional methods.

Students Reema, Rawan, Amani, and Asma also recognized the impact of assessment on their learning experiences (see 7.3.1). While Reema highlighted how the focus on grades influenced her writing skills' improvement, Rawan believed that the final writing task as repetitive and predictable. Meanwhile, Amani and Asma's contrasting views on the final task showed how individual confidence levels and familiarity with the final exam format shaped students' experiences (see 7.3.1).

Additionally, Basmah and Shatha highlighted concerns about the alignment of the assessment rubric with writing tasks assigned to students (see 6.5.2), echoing challenges discussed in previous research regarding the need to ensure rubrics are aligned with assessment tasks to avoid confusion and dissatisfaction (Goodwin, 2019). The challenges and drawbacks identified by teachers at the ELC emphasised the importance of ongoing revision and enhancement of assessment rubrics to address potential issues.

Textbooks. Teachers' perspectives on the use of textbooks for teaching writing highlight several key challenges and concerns. Teachers expressed feeling rushed and pressured to cover a significant amount of material due to the requirement of completing two textbooks per semester, leading to compromises in the quality of teaching writing (see 6.6). Some teachers also indicated a need for more time in the classroom to enhance students' writing skills through extra activities and suggested supplementing the textbooks with additional materials tailored to address specific writing needs (see 6.6).

Additionally, there were differing opinions on the suitability of the textbooks. Some teachers found textbooks suitable for academic preparation agreeing with Al-

Nafisah and Al-shorman (2011), Khalid et al. (2014) and Tawalbeh (2018) who indicated that instructors generally perceive the textbooks used in Saudi universities positively, finding them suitable for teaching English to Saudi EFL university students.

Other teachers criticized the lack of alignment between textbooks, the Saudi context and students' needs (see 6.6) agreeing with Faruk (2023) who pointed out discrepancies between the goals and content of English textbooks used in Saudi Arabia, suggesting a need for better alignment to local cultural contexts and educational objectives. This highlights the importance of culturally relevant materials in facilitating effective language learning experiences for students.

Interestingly, students echoed the teachers' sentiment regarding the demands of the course, particularly in handling two textbooks per semester (see 7.5). Amani felt burdened by the requirement to study two books and empathized with the challenges faced by her teachers in managing the curriculum. However, students also expressed a sense of familiarity with the textbooks, finding the language and activities relatively easy and straightforward. This familiarity provided them with a level of comfort and aided their practice, despite the challenges posed by the workload (see 7.5).

Some students even held positive views about the textbooks, viewing them as new sources of learning in a different educational context (see 7.5). However, not all students shared this positive view. Some, like Amani, expressed a negative attitude toward the textbooks, finding them not very useful and too complicated for their level (see 7.5).

Back to CAS, considering teacher involvement in curriculum change would be the first step to respond to teachers and students' challenges with current writing practises and material. The ELC would not be aware of the teachers' perspectives unless all teachers were given the opportunities to share their stories and experiences within the framework of improvement and change.

Second step, misalignment has its place in the current practices where prescribed writing tasks from the ELC do not reflect what the textbooks require, and do not align with the assessment rubrics criteria. Working on alignment with the context and with the student is a requirement in future changes.

For the students, writing tasks should be targeting students' level at the university focusing on longer essay formats and avoiding the culture of imitation. For the context, there should be a system in place where the ELC re-evaluates its programs, getting students' feedback to ensure students' satisfaction and needs are met, aligning with suggestions by Al-Shahrani (2019) about making informed decision in curriculum change at the PY based on continuous evaluation.

8.3. Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I discussed the findings of the research considering the existing literature review. I presented the chapter in reflection on the complexity theory perspective starting with the dynamic of the elements within CAS: 1)- curriculum change and context where I discussed the impact of external and internal factors on the curriculum change at the ELC. 2)- I discussed teachers and context focusing on the emergence of the agents of change and the impact of top-down policy. 3)- I dealt with students and context, highlighting the importance of considering students' needs. and 4)- teachers, students, and curriculum change, focusing on current practice, and future vision for the ELC. Next, I present the final chapter in this thesis which summarized key points in my research.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1. Introduction

In the final chapter of the dissertation, I offer a thorough summary of the study focusing on answering the research questions, the research's limitations, implications, and recommendations for further research. Furthermore, I present my concluding remarks and a final reflection on the process of accomplishing this doctoral degree.

9.2. Overview of the Study

In this section I present an overview of the research including its aim, theoretical framework, design. I particularly focus on answering the research questions I posed in chapter one and shed light on in chapters 5,6,7. The purpose of this section is to give a clear summary of different aspects that I have already discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis.

First, the aim of this study is to understand how curriculum changes are navigated in a specific context and explore the impact of those changes on teachers and students, specifically to: (1) examine factors leading to the curriculum change in the context of the study (2) explore teachers' perceptions in relation to their writing instructional practices, and their roles in the context (3) explore the preparatory year (PY) students' experiences in learning academic writing, and (4) shed light on the educational and contextual factors influencing both teachers and students in relation to this topic at a university in Saudi Arabia.

Second, in this research I applied a complex adaptive system perspective (CAS) to investigate this topic. This purpose of this framework was to explore the topic of curriculum change at the university by looking holistically at different components in the system. In this case, I focused on the context, teachers and students, their interactions, and the consequences of these interactions in understanding the impact of the current changes at the ELC. I specifically chose to define CAS as a system in which different elements interact dynamically, exhibiting emerged behaviours and patterns.

Third, to conduct this research I chose a qualitative research approach due to the exploratory nature of the study. I used semi-structured interviews and materials analysis during the research data collection. I interviewed teachers and students at the university and reviewed relevant documents in their practices and in the context. Fourth, to investigate the transition process and impacts of the curriculum change in the English Language Center (ELC) from different perspectives of teachers and students, I asked four main research questions. I restate each question with the answers in the following section.

RQ1: What contextual factors influence the curriculum change at the preparatory year at the university?

The curriculum change at the English Language Center has been affected by internal and external factors. First, on a national level, the Vision 2030 initiative aims to improve Saudi Arabian language education to improve the quality of English globally, and this has impacted the higher education in KSA. With the expansion of an EMI policy, the language centers at Saudi universities like the site of this research had to modify their programs accordingly. The ELC seeks to improve English language skills to meet demands of the Vision 2030 and improve the outcomes of the EMI policy, specifically through improving writing skills. On an institutional level, the curriculum change was also a result of efforts among decision makers and teachers at the ELC, who were beneficiaries of the KASP scholarship. Together, these factors highlight the connection between the ELC curriculum change initiative and broader educational goals, policies, and the ELC educators' professional development.

RQ2: How do teachers and students interact with the context and what are the consequences of these interactions?

Teachers' interactions with the context have resulted in three key points. First, teachers perceived their evolving roles within the context. Although all teachers received the same policy and were under the same administration, and the PY system, teachers had different views of their roles within the context. Two teachers believed that the standardized system under the ELC and the PY have impacted them greatly in how they viewed their roles. These teachers expressed their adherences to policy and seeing themselves as "Teachers". Teachers in this context meant being in a top-down system,

receiving instructions and having no agency. In contrast, other teachers perceived their roles differently. These teachers believed that while they interacted with the context and its policy, they were able to adapt to students' needs. These teachers viewed themselves as motivators and facilitators. Overall, factors that have impacted teachers and the way they interacted with the context are 1- standardization in the context resulting in policy adherence and reduces flexibility for some teachers. 2)- Prior learning and teaching experiences shape teachers' perceptions of their roles within the system. 3)- recognizing students' needs in the classrooms.

Beside teachers evolving roles, teachers believed that policy changes during the curriculum change have impacted their sense of flexibility and agency in the context. This change in policy was concerning division of marks where teachers were no longer able to have marks in their classrooms for students' participation. This resulted in teachers' feeling excluded from making decisions as well as in motivating their students to engage in the classrooms.

Lastly, teachers perceived the lack of clarity as one key factor when they interacted with the context i.e. policy. Not all teachers were directly involved in the decision making for the curriculum change. They were not given the opportunity to share their opinions on what could work or not, drawing on their direct communication with students. This lack of involvement has led most teachers to the lack of clarity about the course objectives. I conclude that teachers' evolving roles and lack of agency and lack of clarity were the results of teachers' interactions with the context including the policy set by the ELC.

Students on the other hand shared their experience within the context of the PY. Under this question, there are contextual factors that I have found and discussed regarding students' interaction with the context. First, students believed that their prior learning of English language has impacted their current experiences at the university. This impact was manifested on how students perceived their level in English, how former teachers impacted their learning and how they faced difficulties in adapting to universities level.

The second factor the students talked about was the demands of the preparatory year. Since the students in the PY had to study other subjects as well as many hours of

English courses, they believed that this manifested in not being able to focus on improving writing, but only paying attention on grades over development of their skills.

RQ3: How do teachers and students interact with curriculum change and what are the consequences of these interactions?

Teachers as agents in the system have interacted with the curriculum change on different levels. They received instructions from the policy at the ELC, they provided instructions to students and interacted with students on the classrooms. Teachers talked about the standardized policy which include teaching writing to students based on using models and using an assessment rubric. Teachers' views of these practices differed based on prior learning and teaching experience, professional development, or the adherence to policy.

First, differences among teachers were seen in their adherence to policy. Certain teachers maintain commitment to the writing pedagogy by concentrating mainly on the prescribed writing tasks and final exams (for example, Shatha and Salma). In contrast, others like Sama and Basmah argued for a more adaptable approach by integrating writing into various tasks and exercises beyond the prescribed writing model. Interestingly, most teachers acknowledged the standardized nature of their teaching environments and the importance of specific writing tasks prescribed by the curriculum. However, teachers still voiced their concerns and criticisms about the current approach to writing instruction, identifying limitations and drawbacks within the existing method, such as its focus on imitation and exam-oriented writing. Despite their differing perspectives, all teachers shared a commitment to enhancing writing instruction for the betterment of students' learning experiences.

Another important interaction teachers had was with the assessment rubric and textbook at the context of this research. Like the writing instruction, teachers' views have differed once again in how they see the materials they use in their teaching. In the context of navigating assessment practices, some teachers (Suha, Sama, Reema, Ghada, and Dana) perceived assessment rubrics as valuable tools that ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency in evaluating students' writing tasks. They believed that rubrics provide clear expectations, guide the marking process, and facilitate effective communication of

feedback to students. These teachers also appreciated the rubric's formative role in student learning and its contribution to manageable workload for teachers. These teachers generally find the assessment rubric effective for short writing tasks, such as writing a paragraph of 70-120 words. They believed that the rubric's components, such as content, grammar, mechanics, coherence, and development, are relevant and can be applied.

In contrast, some teachers (e.g., Salma) hold critical perspectives on the current assessment approach, expressing dissatisfaction with deducting points for specific grammar and vocabulary mistakes. They preferred a holistic approach to grading based on the overall quality of writing rather than focusing on individual errors. Concerns are raised about the impact of penalizing students for mistakes, which may affect student motivation negatively. Another group of teachers like Basmah, Amal and Shatha expressed concerns about the alignment between the assessment rubric and the writing tasks assigned to students. They felt that the rubric's criteria may not always be applicable to the tasks, leading to confusion and challenges in assessing students' writing effectively.

The last component of materials studied was the textbook used by teachers and students. Teachers highlighted the pressure to cover so much content within a semester, often resulting in rushed teaching practices. This pressure stems from the requirement to complete multiple textbooks within a limited timeframe, leaving insufficient time for quality teaching and skill improvement particularly in writing. Teachers also expressed mixed views on the suitability of textbooks for teaching writing in the context. While some teachers found the language used in textbooks suitable for academic preparation, others criticized the lack of alignment with the Saudi context, university needs, and students' requirements.

Due to the importance of students' voice in this research, students shared their perspectives about their interactions with the materials as well. Students' perspectives on the materials used in their English classes, particularly regarding writing tasks, model paragraphs, textbooks, and assessment practices were diverse as well.

Some students (Sara, Leen, Amjad, Asma, and Rawan) appreciated the value of model paragraphs and guided writing tasks, primarily for their clarity, structure, and the assurance models provided in achieving high marks. They viewed models as templates

that guide their writing and reduce the complexity of writing tasks, especially in final exams. Other students (Amani, Bushra, Nada) expressed dissatisfaction with the use of model paragraph, feeling restricted in their creativity and growth as writers. These students added that they desired more freedom to explore their own ideas and writing styles, rather than adhering to predetermined models. These students perceived the model paragraph as limiting and specific, hindering their ability to express themselves freely.

Students also stressed the role of their final exam as a new element in the context. Students had mixed views on the final writing task's importance and impact. While some (Leen, Sara, Nada, Amjad) saw it as a motivation to work on their writing skills and assess their progress, others (Rawan, Amani, Bushra) perceived it as redundant, duplicating tasks already practiced throughout the year. Some students question its effectiveness in evaluating their actual progress and again asked for more freedom in their writing classes.

As for assessment practices, students (Amani, Rawan, Amjad, Bushra) experienced stress and anxiety during writing assessments, fearing low grades and the impact on their overall performance. They expressed nervousness and pressure, highlighting the importance of clear guidance, supportive feedback from teachers, to reduce anxiety and enhance the learning experience.

The final element of the material is the textbooks which students have varied attitudes towards in their classes. Some (Sara, Rawan, Nada) appreciated the familiarity and ease of use, finding the materials relatable and less intimidating. Others (Amani) found the textbooks complicated and not suitable for their level, expressing concerns about the workload and the suitability of the materials for their learning needs.

Overall, students navigate their learning experiences with a range of perspectives and attitudes towards the materials and practices employed in their English classes. These perspectives highlight the importance of providing diverse and adaptable approaches to cater to the varied learning needs and preferences of students.

9.3. Wrapping Up the Scene

My research focuses on *the dynamics of interactions* in a complex adaptive system of curriculum change at the ELC. This CAS perspective enables me to examine the levels

and interactions in the research context starting from the national and ending with the classrooms. Each level, from individual agents (like teachers) to broader institutional contexts, plays a crucial role in influencing and impacting changes. This *interconnectedness* ensures that changes at one level affects the entire system, creating a network of continuous feedback and adaptation.

At the national level, the Vision 2030 and the EMI policy had an impact on institutional policy, demanding higher educational standards and global competitive among Saudi Arabian universities. At the institutional level, ELC's adoption of new writing instruction and assessment showed policymakers' influence and the central role of teachers evolving through the KASP.

Within CAS, teachers emerged as key agents of change. Despite not being fully recognized, their roles and potential influence become apparent when they are given the opportunity to share their perspectives. This *emergence* highlights the importance of considering teachers as integral parts of the system whose contributions can lead to significant positive changes.

Teachers' interactions within the CAS revealed qualities that might otherwise remain hidden. When teachers are encouraged to share their insights and experiences, they demonstrate unique attributes and innovative ideas. Supporting these qualities can have profound impacts on the English Language Center (ELC) and its outcomes, ultimately feeding into the broader institutional and national educational contexts.

The interaction between teachers and policy at the ELC level had a direct impact on classroom dynamics. Teachers often express a lack of clarity, autonomy, and agency, which are crucial for effective teaching and curriculum implementation. Addressing these themes by involving teachers in policy-making processes can lead to more empowered and effective educators.

There is a noticeable tension between students' prior learning experiences, often characterized by rote learning, and the demands of PY. Understanding students' backgrounds and proficiency levels is crucial for designing effective transition strategies.

Students' experience and voices highlighted that the curriculum needs to reflect their needs, indicating a movement toward more balanced teaching.

Misalignments between various elements of the educational system, such as policy, practice, and materials, can create significant challenges. Ensuring that policies align with classroom practices and students' needs is essential for a cohesive and effective educational experience. To address these alignment issues, it is crucial to reform educational approaches based on teachers' insights and students' needs. Aligning tasks with assessments based on inputs from both teachers and students can lead to more relevant and effective evaluation methods. This alignment ensures that assessments accurately reflect students' learning and progress. Textbooks should be aligned with students' needs and the broader educational context, including national visions like Vision 2030. Choosing textbooks that align with the goals of the ELC and the national educational agenda is crucial for ensuring relevance and effectiveness.

By involving teachers in decision making and aligning elements discussed within CAS, both agents (teachers and students) could experience enhanced outcomes. This holistic approach ensures that the entire system functions more effectively, leading to better educational impact.

9.4. Limitations of the Study

This research primarily examined the experiences of female teachers and students within the context of curriculum change for the writing component of English courses at a Saudi Arabia university. However, it is worth noting that the perspectives of male teachers and students were not included, even though they may have encountered similar shifts in their practices and experiences. This exclusion presents a limitation in the study's findings.

Furthermore, the research focused on qualitative research methods only. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic, it would be beneficial to complement the qualitative approach with a mixed-method research design, using various instruments such as questionnaires. Using quantitative data alongside qualitative insights, a more well-rounded exploration of the subject matter can be achieved.

This study highlighted the context, teachers, and students to provide a full picture of the research, however it has not included the administration of the ELC. Due to the critical timing when the data collection was collected namely during the global pandemic, the admin staff were overwhelmed with unexpected changes and their participation was not possible. To fulfil this gap, I interviewed teachers who have had experience in admin positions and were in direct relation to the changes.

Another limitation of this study is the absence of classroom observations. If the research had focused on teachers' actual practices in the classroom, I would have intended to conduct observations. However, I opted to shift the focus of the study to align with the instruments I intended to use, namely interviews and materials analysis. The decision to exclude observations was further influenced by the global pandemic during that period.

9.5. Suggestions for Future Research

In this study, I hope that the findings and implications would contribute to the broader field of academic writing practices, curriculum change and similar contexts of this study. Future studies could take this research further.

Research in the field of teaching academic writing to preparatory year students could look at different dimensions to explore effective practices. One avenue of investigation could explore writing approaches and their effectiveness. This could involve comparing traditional methods with innovative techniques, such as process-based writing, genre-based approaches, or collaborative writing strategies.

Furthermore, focusing on classroom-level practices regarding assessment and feedback could add valuable insights. Examining how teachers evaluate writing tasks, provide feedback, and facilitate revision processes can contribute to enhancing teaching methods.

Researchers could focus on comparative exploratory studies between English institutions in Saudi Arabia which, shedding light on diverse pedagogical approaches to teaching academic writing. Contrasting writing curriculum structures, teaching methodologies used by teachers, and assessment practices between institutions could offer valuable perspectives for improving educational practices.

Additionally, investigating differences between the first and second semesters in the academic year could provide understandings of students' progress and instructional needs. This comparison could analyse variations in English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) tasks, topics, and instructional strategies across semesters.

Exploring complexity theory in relation to teaching writing on a classroom level could offer a holistic understanding of the dynamic interactions between teachers, students, and writing tasks. This approach could examine emergent patterns, nonlinear processes, and adaptive strategies in the teaching-learning environment, resulting in enriching pedagogical practices informed by complexity theory principles.

9.6. Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I presented the final sections of this thesis. I began with a comprehensive overview of the research, focusing on explicitly answering the research questions, followed by limitations of this research, and suggestions for future areas of research. In the final section I reflect on my journey through the PhD writing.

9.7. Reflection on the PhD Journey

Writing has a special place in my heart. Through writing I find myself. Through writing I know myself. This journey was a life changing experience for me on many levels. Something that I think most PhD candidates would agree with. This journey taught me one thing that I am always grateful to find within: Patience. If it was not with all the patience I found in my heart and reminded myself of every day, I would not be able to write those words today and the thesis as a complete project. In the first year, I needed patience to tackle the uncertainty I felt. Not only I was trying to find myself as a scholar, but I was also trying to myself as an independent woman in the UK. Then Covid-19 hit, and all the uncertainty doubled for all of us. Thankfully, I had two supervisors whom I am forever thankful for. They facilitated every step of this process. They were extra compassionate. They were available when needed. My way to the third and fourth year came with their challenges. From milestones in the program, from anxiety, from research data collection, from being human, I kept reminding myself that I was here to finish no matter how hard it got.

Back to why I love writing, during these years here, I had the courage to start sharing pieces of my writing to public. I never thought I would be able to do it. Be vulnerable. But once I did, it was the best decision I have ever made. I will never stop sharing. My love for writing only grew stronger. I thought if the price of this journey and all its lessons was for me to be courageous, then I made a good decision.

This passion for writing made me enjoy those difficult days of writing this research. And I am here feeling every word in this thesis. To me, I dedicate this journey of transformation, this garden of experiences, these flowers of joy. Finally, I look forward to contributing to my country and my university in Saudi. I look forward to collaborating with those agents of change at the ELC, and maybe I become one myself. Hopefully, together we keep navigating and progressing in the right direction.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form and Research Information Sheet to the Head of the English Language Center (ELC)

Research Title: Saudi University Teachers and Students Navigating Curriculum Change in Academic Writing: A Complex Adaptive System Perspective

Researcher: Maha Alzahrani, Linguistics and English Language department, Lancaster University.

Research Information Sheet to the Head of the English Language Center (ELC)

I am a PhD student at the Linguistics and English Language department, Lancaster University. I am currently conducting a study about the perceptions of teachers and students regarding their academic writing teaching and learning during the preparatory year. This research is supervised by Prof. Karin Tusting and Dr. John Pill.

Please accept this letter as my written request for your permission to involve teachers from the ELC to participate in the data collection stage for my research. I would like also to inform students to take part in the study. This study will focus on A) teachers' perceptions of their teaching and assessment practices for teaching writing B) students' perceptions of their learning experience and any difficulties they may face in learning how to write academically. I specifically need your consent to contact teachers and students to participate in individual interviews. I will also need your consent to collect additional documents such as assessment rubrics, writing policy document- if any, and any relevant course documents.

What happens if you give your consent for me to conduct this research?

All participants who volunteer for this study will be required to give written informed consent. The teachers' and their students' participation in this research may provide valuable information to improve the teaching of English as a foreign language writing in the higher education context in Saudi Arabia.

All participants involved in this research have the right to decline participation and withdraw themselves or any information provided from the research at any time before data collection

and analysis is complete. The participants can ask questions about the study at any time throughout their participation and have the questions answered to their satisfaction. Participants will be notified when data analysis is about to be completed. They can also decline to answer any particular questions. Participants will receive feedback or a summary of the research findings when the research is concluded.

Data gathered in this study will be kept confidential. My supervisors will have access to the data. Participants will not be mentioned by name in any written or oral presentation of the findings. Participants will be known by pseudonyms. If there is information that they prefer to keep in confidence or information that might jeopardise confidentiality, that information will be deleted from the transcripts. All audio and transcript files will be kept on password protected systems and deleted five years after the research is completed. All hardcopies written materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed five years after the research is completed. The data will be pooled, and findings discussed in an aggregated manner with no reference to educational facility.

How will I use the information shared with me and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the data shared with me for research purposes only. Findings of the research will be used in the dissertation, and they may be submitted for publication in an academic/professional journal, presentations at academic conferences and teacher training events at my university in Saudi Arabia. When writing up the findings from this study, I might quote some of the interviews. I will only use anonymised quotes, so that although I will use your exact words, participants cannot be identified in my publications.

How my data will be stored?

Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information. The audio recording data will be kept until the thesis is examined and then destroyed after that point.

What if you have a question or concern?

Please contact me or/ and my supervisors.

Maha Alzahrani Email: m.alzahrani@lancaster.ac.uk	Prof. Karin Tusting Email: k.tusting@lancaster.ac.uk	Dr. John Pill Email: j.pill@lancaster.ac.uk
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Research Title: Saudi University Teachers and Students Navigating Curriculum Change in Academic Writing: A Complex Adaptive System Perspective

Researcher: Maha Alzahrani, Linguistics and English Language department, Lancaster University.

Head of ELC Consent Form

Please Tick each box to signal your agreement to participate:

- I have been given the information about this project and I understand the explanation of this research project.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that students and teachers will be individually approached for their informed consent.
- I agree to the participation of the teachers and language learners in this research under the conditions set out in the information sheet.
- I understand that information will not be used for any purpose other than what consent is given for.
- I am assured that any information given will be treated with respect and confidentiality, and that the participants will not be identified in reports or publications.
- I give consent for Maha Alzahrani, PhD student at Lancaster University, to invite students and teachers at _____ to participate in her research project.
- I would like to receive feedback from this project by being sent a summary of the research via email: Yes/No

Email address _____ Signed _____

Date: _____

Questions for the head of ELC. (To be added to the context of the study+ to help me make connections to data where possible)

1- What are the objectives of teaching writing at the ELC? (Please provide documents if available)

2- What prompts you as policy maker to make changes in the way academic writing is taught to PY students?

3- What informs the creation of the assessment rubriccs?

4- Can you briefly explain the outcome that the ELC aims for by the end of the year? In general, and for the writing skills? (Documents/ if you have this written somewhere, that would be helpful)

5- Can you tell me about the overall assessment of writing at the ELC? I noticed that it is only 5 %, is there a reason for that?

6- Is there any plan to do more changes/ modifications to teaching writing policy?

Please take your time (a month or so) in answering the questions.

If you have any question, please don't hesitate to ask me. I have limited knowledge of the changes at the ELC. So, I might misunderstand some points. Providing documents would help me to understand the context better.

Thank you so much. I appreciate your time and effort.

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet (For Teachers to participate)

I am a PhD student at Lancaster University, and I would like to invite you to take part in a study about teachers' perceptions and students' attitudes toward academic writing at the site of the study in Saudi Arabia.

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

The purpose of my research is to investigate academic writing practices at the tertiary level. Through this study I hope to be able to make several research-informed pedagogical recommendations to enhance current teachers' and learners' practices and experiences.

Why have I been invited?

I have approached you because I am trying to understand the perceptions of Saudi teachers regarding their writing instructional practices and the influencing factors that they perceive affecting their teaching of writing at the university. I would be very grateful if you agree to take part in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

An interview will be arranged with you to discuss issues related to teaching writing, the educational and contextual factors that teachers perceive affecting their teaching of academic writing. Interviews will take about an hour to be completed.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

Practitioners who take part in this study are contributing to a growing body of research on academic writing at the university level. This study is one of its first kind at the university because I am interested in exploring changes that took place in the recent year regarding teaching and assessing writing. So, your input will be one of the first sources to inform this type of research.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is completely up to you to decide whether you take part. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide not to take part in this study, this will not affect your career or disadvantage you in any way.

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw without having to give any reason. If you want to withdraw, please let me know, and I will remove your data from the study. However, it is difficult and often impossible to take out data from one specific participant when data has already been anonymised or pooled together with other people's data. Therefore, you can only withdraw up to 4 weeks after taking part in the study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part. Your data will be anonymised. All personal information such as email addresses, IDs, names, phone numbers will be removed. Interviews will take about 45 to 50 minutes to complete.

Will my data be identifiable?

If you take part in the study, only I, the researcher conducting this study, will have access to your data.

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g., your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the data you have shared with me for research purposes only. Findings of the research will be used in the dissertation, and they may be submitted for publication in an academic/professional journal, presentations at academic conferences and teacher training events at my university in Saudi Arabia. When writing up the findings from this study, I might quote some of the interview. I will only use anonymized quotes, so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in my publications.

How my data will be stored

Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal

information. The audio recording data will be kept until the thesis is examined and then destroyed after that point.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself at m.alzahrani@lancaster.ac.uk and/ or my supervisors:

Prof. Karin Tusting

k.tusting@lancaster.ac.uk Dr. John Pill

j.pill@lancaster.ac.uk

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:

Professor Uta Papen

Head of Linguistics and English Language Department.

Tel: +44 (0)1524 593245

u.papen@lancaster.ac.uk

For further information about how Lancaster University processes personal data for research purposes and

your data rights please visit our webpage: www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection **Thank you for considering your participation in this project.**

Appendix C: Teacher Interview Consent Form

Project Title: Saudi University Teachers and Students Navigating Curriculum Change in Academic Writing: A Complex Adaptive System Perspective.

Name of Researchers: Maha Alzahrani

Email: m.alzahrani@lancaster.ac.uk

Please read the following points before signing the form.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study and within 4 weeks after I take part, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 4 weeks of taking part in the study (before the data will have been anonymized), my data will be removed.

3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included, and all reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project.

4. I understand that my views may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information and any other personal details that appear in the email (e.g. IDs, names, phone numbers) will not be included, and I will not be identifiable.

5. I understand that my name/my email address will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.

6. I understand that any interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed, and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure. The audio data will be kept until the thesis is examined, and it will be destroyed after that point

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name:

Signature:

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I

confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____Maha Alzahrani

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University

Appendix D: - Student Interview Consent Form

Project Title: Saudi University Teachers and Students Navigating Curriculum Change in Academic Writing: A Complex Adaptive System Perspective

Name of Researchers: Maha Alzahrani

Email: maha.alzahrani@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study and within 4 weeks after I take part, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 4 weeks of taking part in the study (before the data will have been anonymized), my data will be removed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included, and all reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I understand that my views may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information and any other personal details that appear in the email (e.g. IDs, names, phone numbers) will not be included, and I will not be identifiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I understand that my name/my email address will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. I understand that any interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed, and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure. The audio data will be kept until the thesis is examined, and it will be destroyed after that point.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I agree to take part in the above study.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent _____ **Date**
 _____ Day/month/year

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University

Appendix E: Teacher Interview Questions

- Can you tell me about your background/ qualifications/ experience?
- How many years of teaching experience do you have in the ELC?
- I am interested to know what do you call your role at the classrooms/ ELC?
- Can you describe your approach/ your own philosophy in teaching writing?
- What prompts you to teach in this specific way?
- Can you tell me about the assessment rubrics you are asked to use in your teaching? How effective are they?
- Can you tell me about the common errors you find in students' writing when you assess their tasks?
- If you can make changes to assessment procedures, what would you prefer to see?
- How useful are the tasks assigned to the students?
- How useful are the textbooks used for teaching writing?
- Do you use any other extra resources? (Give an example)
- Would you suggest any changes to the tasks for teaching writing at the ELC?
- How much flexibility do you have in your teaching and assessment of writing?
- Based on our discussion you have been teaching for a period of time, can you tell me your opinion about the changes happening at the ELC? (Attitude toward teaching writing) (not applicable for all participants)
- Can you tell me about the challenges you face in your classes? (online/ in class)
- What can you say about the students' impact on your practice? (Levels of proficiency, motivation, attitude, apprehension).
- Finally, what's your goal of teaching writing to PY students- what do you aim your students to learn from you by the end of the semester/ year?

Appendix F: Student Interview Questions

Attitude toward writing

- In general, do you like to write in English? If yes, where do you write in English?
(University assignments – informally: social media, texting)
- How did you feel about your writing level once you started your university studies?
- Do you think learning writing is important for your academic studies?
- What do you find most difficult for you when you write in English? (Prompts followed)

(Forming sentences, generating ideas, using correct grammar, find the right vocabulary, understanding feedback from teachers or peers)

- What do you find easier to do when writing in English? (Prompts followed)

(Using correct grammar, writing simple correct sentences, writing ideas, Choosing the right vocabulary, understanding feedback)

- what do you feel about writing in English at the university? (Prompts followed) - do you like to write in English at class? Or prefer to do the task at home? Why? - do you feel anxious to write in class? And to receive feedback?
- do you discuss with your teacher your writing after getting feedback?
- do you let someone help you with your writing? Edit your work?

- Views on instruction

- How do you feel about the writing instruction your teachers use (prompts followed)?

(Using model, choose your topic, discuss with the teacher, brainstorming)

- How do you would like to be taught writing to prepare you for your university studies? -

Section two: influencing factors

What do you think affect your learning writing experience at the university? (prompts

followed)

- Level of English language- Prior learning experience - Attitude toward writing- English classes workload.

- PY subjects' workload- Teachers' instruction
- Teachers' activities and resources- feedback and assessment

- Related to context

- What do you think of the textbooks used in PY English classes? - What do you think of the writing tasks you have in classes?
- How do you feel about the assessment used for the writing tasks? - Do you prefer to have writing task at the final exam or not?

Appendix G: Email Invitation/ Letter (For Teachers to Participate)

I am writing to invite you to participate in my doctoral research entitled, Saudi University Teachers and Students Navigating Curriculum Change in Academic Writing: A Complex Adaptive System Perspective

The purpose of my research is to investigate academic writing practices at the tertiary level at the university. Through this study I hope to be able to make several research-informed pedagogical recommendations to enhance current teachers' and learners' practices and experiences.

Attached is a detailed participant information sheet for your reference. If you take part in this study, you'll be asked to volunteer in a one- to- one interview in which perceptions of academic writing for both teachers and students will be discussed further. Please be assured that any information you share will be anonymized and kept confidential. I might use your data or quote what you say, but you will not be identified as an individual when the findings of the study are presented or published.

Your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to a better understanding of academic writing at the university, teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes, and students' experiences with learning writing at the university.

If you decide to participate, all you have to do now is read the consent form provided in the link then sign it by writing your email address as your e-signature. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thank you for your time,

Maha Alzahrani

PhD student. Department of linguistics and English language
Lancaster University

Appendix H: Advertising for the Study (From Teachers to Students)

The teachers will:

- 1- Give a brief introduction about the purpose of the study: understanding the attitudes of Saudi Students toward their writing skills and classes and the influencing factors that they perceive affecting their learning of writing at the university.
- 2- Tell the students that a one -on- one 45 to 50 minutes, face to face or virtual interviews will be part of their participation.
- 3- Tell the students that the interviews will be audio recorded only and that all the recordings will be stored in an encrypted laptop.
- 4- Tell the students that their names will not be identified in the study or in any other future publications.
- 5- Tell the students that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw up to 4 weeks after taking part in the study. Also, participation will not interfere with their study reports, assessment, or evaluation whatsoever.
- 6- Tell potential students to contact me on my official email address if they need more information about the study and I, in return, can provide them with the information sheet.

Appendix I: Teacher Interview Transcription

INTERVIEWER

Can you tell me about your background, qualification and experience?

INTERVIEWEE

My education and background. I did my BA degree in English language BA degree with a minor degree in education. So it was five years and then immediately after that, actually, after two years, I got my scholarship. During those two years, I started my MA degree here in Saudi before I got the job. And then after two years, I got my job. So I stopped the MA degree here in Saudi. And I started in the UK at Nottingham University. I did my master's degree for one year in appliance linguistics at Nottingham University.

INTERVIEWEE

And then after I finished, I got a PhD acceptance. And they started there after immediately I spent like three and half doing my PhD again in applied linguistics, vocabulary teaching. So I finished my PhD about these and a half. And then I came back to Saudi before I went for the scholarship. I taught for about maybe one year and a half as a part timer and just maybe six months or less than that as a full timer. After I came back, I came back to Saudi in 2012 and I started teaching Immediately.

INTERVIEWEE

So I have been teaching here since 2012. So for almost nine years. Yeah. I took different courses EGP ESP, medical language, computer science.

INTERVIEWER

What about your experience, like for workshops. And I remember you do workshops for teachers.

INTERVIEWEE

And you mean giving workshops? Yeah. Yes. Actually, when I came back from the UK, I got an admin position in the ELC. So that was four years and a half. And then I decided to leave that position because it wasn't doing me any good. I was stressed out all the time and I wanted to go back to research. So I stopped doing that admin job and then started

teaching full time again did research as well. I started doing research. And about two years ago I started thinking of doing workshops.

INTERVIEWEE

So during the Corona time I did a lot of workshops online in different universities, different places, to teachers, to researchers. So different areas of researchers Applied linguistics, vocabulary acquisition, language testing. I think it was an amazing experience. It is always nice when you give those workshops, especially to teachers, because you also learn from their questions and especially when they are from different levels, like some of them are at school level. Some of them are at College level, different universities in Saudi Arabia and sometimes even outside. So it gives you this overall, if you like idea of what is happening here, what is being taught?

INTERVIEWEE

What are the methods of teaching that are common? Are there any misconceptions, maybe that we can deal with and so on. So I think it was an amazing experience, and I'm still doing those. But because I'm more focused on research now and because I got overwhelmed with everything, doing workshops is not easy so I decided that I would put it aside a little bit. So I'm doing maybe one or two workshops a year or a semester. But most of my time is research, basically. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

I agree with you about the online teaching or giving workshops. It's very time consuming.

INTERVIEWEE

It is, but I like I love it. And when I finish, I really feel satisfied. This sense of close relationship with teachers at different levels. I love it.

INTERVIEWER

Nice.

INTERVIEWER

So the second question, I think you covered that the teaching experience. You said nine years. So I'm just interested to know, what do you call your role at the classroom with your students?

INTERVIEWEE

Actually, when I started teaching nine years ago, or even before I went for the scholarship, I would call myself a teacher. I was very traditional, so very strict. No Laughing in class. I have to be in control of everything. Spoon feeding the students if you like, with all the information. But then I started recognizing that this is not always working, especially for students who are open minded. Things are changing quickly as well. Here in Saudi, students are changing a lot. I noticed that this generation they are different than us.

INTERVIEWEE

We were more patient for them. It's very difficult to be concentrated for more than maybe half an hour. After half an hour, you lose them if there are no activities, if you are just lecturing all the time, I would say maybe four or maybe less than that three years ago, I actually pushed myself to change my mentality about teaching. It wasn't easy. It wasn't easy at all. All the time you would find me, like going back there. Yes, teaching lecturing spontaneous. But then I remind myself that this is not working.

INTERVIEWEE

Some students are bored. Some students are not following. So I'm adapting. Trying. I can't say that I'm a full 100% facilitator, but I'm trying to be in that role trying. Maybe. I would say that when I started teaching nine years ago, it was 100% teaching. Now it's more like maybe 80% teaching, 20% facilitating . I'm trying. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

Nice, I think you have this change of mentality after the PhD like it's with the qualifications.

INTERVIEWEE

I actually started recognizing that teaching is not just lecturing. So I stopped thinking about this traditional way of teaching, and they started trying to be open to other

opportunities that are there and especially in the teacher's room, because we sit there together. So you listen to the experience of other teachers and you learn from them what they are doing, what is working and what is not working. So now I try my best and especially this semester, actually, because as I told you, the students are changing quickly. I noticed this year because they think of the Corona time they are used to teaching online teaching. So for them coming to face to face classes and sitting in a class for like 100 minutes is too much for them. It's very challenging in the beginning.

INTERVIEWEE

And actually, I remember that one class in the beginning of the semester. I looked at their faces and they were blank. Nothing at all. So I asked them, ladies, what's wrong? Is there something wrong? Is there something that they can do to help you to make it more interesting? But they were very shy and they wouldn't answer. So I decided to give them a questionnaire evaluation questionnaire, and they told them to be open, like, don't write your names, just be often with me. Tell me what is working and what is not working and what you are expecting.

INTERVIEWEE

So they told me that we want more activities, maybe games, activities, things that we can do online. So for the first time ever, this semester, I started using cahoots. I've heard about it a lot before, but I haven't used it before. But this semester I had to because these students traditional teaching is not working with them, not working at all. So I think it's working. They like it very much when we have games, I could see that maybe after four, five weeks into the semester, things are changing.

INTERVIEWEE

They are following more. They are not as bored as they were in the beginning of the semester. So as I told you every semester, I'm trying to adapt. If you like more of a facilitator role, it's not easy. I'm taking it slowly, actually, because this is not my nature, but I'm trying. And I think it's working slowly.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, I like that you ask the student about their needs and what they want.

INTERVIEWEE

Actually, I learned the hard way. So in the past I used to do those evaluation surveys at the end of the semester. Even if the administration is not going to do that, I will do it with my students. I like to learn from them, like, what is working, what is not working. But then I started thinking you are giving them the survey at the end of the semester. So maybe your teaching is not working since the beginning, but they didn't know how to say. So. This semester I decided to do it.

INTERVIEWEE

As I told you, I did it like two weeks after the beginning of the semester. And then I did it again one week ago, and I'm planning to do it again at the end of this semester. So I think this way you can see where things are working and where things are not working. It gives the students this impression that you are working hard to please them, that you are not there. Just as a teacher, you want them to learn. You want them to enjoy the class.

INTERVIEWEE

So I think I will do it every semester in the beginning. In the middle end of that, I think it makes a big difference, at least psychologically.

INTERVIEWER

I have a question why you were like, resistant to the technology in the beginning? Because you said technology.

I'm actually good with using technology so I use PowerPoint presentations in my classes all the time, especially in teaching grammar. I use videos sometimes if there are relevant videos to the lesson. But what I was resistance to is engaging the students more, not lecturing all the time, involving more activities, being more open to different things that students like in the class, like games that they told you like. It's my nature because my nature. I'm a very organized person. When you are very organized, you like to be in control.

INTERVIEWEE

You are the teacher, you are the manager. So things have to go by the rule by the book, everything should be in place. We should finish the class on time. Of course, I still start my classes in time and they finish my classes in time. But I try my best to be more flexible if you like adding more activities here and there, even if they are taking some time of the class. I think that's better than having students in front of you with very bored faces, blind faces.

INTERVIEWEE

They are not following because they are very bored. So it's not really being resistant to technology, resistance to technology. It's more being resistant to having or playing this role of a facilities.

INTERVIEWER

I think it happened to me, like when you see that the students are not engaging and are bored. It affects me.

INTERVIEWEE

A lot. Believe me, when I see it on their faces, I can see this immediately. And then it becomes very difficult for me to teach. There is this negative energy in the atmosphere. So you feel that they are bored, they are not following and you look at their faces. They don't even want to ask questions because they are too bored. So I learned that the hard way that as a teacher, you need to be flexible. It's not only about just food, feeding and putting everything in their brain.

INTERVIEWEE

It's not going to work like that. It's more about responding to their feelings, having this bond with them, giving them this feeling that I care for you. I know what you need, and I'm going to do my best to make it happen. I think this psychological bond is very important, specifically in language practice.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, I agree with you. I wanted to say because especially with languages, we have options.

INTERVIEWEE

We have options to do with language, because language is not easy. And actually, again, talking about the semester, we notice that all of the teachers that there is a big gap between the students. I don't know whether you know or not, but actually, since last year, the ELC is not doing the placement test because of the Corona situation. So the class is mix levels. You might have a class with 30 students where maybe five of them are very advanced. Maybe they have lived abroad. Ten or 20 of them are like middle, medium level, and five of them are beginners, basic beginners.

INTERVIEWEE

They know nothing about English and they can't even understand you when you speak in English. I don't know. For some reason. Last year it was working. It wasn't very bad. The gap between inside each group was not very clear and it was working fine. Although the students were of mixed levels. But I think the differences were not very huge. This semester is amazing. This gap between the students, some of them are bored because they know everything. It's that we are teaching, so they know what you are talking about.

INTERVIEWEE

The grammar presents, present continuous is super easy for them. Listening and reading is super easy for them. So it's super easy and they are bored. And you have like four or five students who are basic beginners. Believe me, in the beginning of the semester, one student wasn't following in the class and you could see that from her face. And when she did her first quiz, she took 1.5 out of five in the office hours. I have office hours online. In the office hours. I asked her to come to a private room and then I asked her what's happening?

INTERVIEWEE

Is there something wrong? I can see that you're always present, but you don't participate. And then in the quiz you took 1.5 out of five. She told me, teacher, believe me, I don't miss any of your classes. I said, okay, she said, but I don't understand a word. I don't understand English. I have a problem with listening, and you can see that on her face. She's trying, but she's not able to do it. So this semester, I think again because of the

Corona situation, because they have been online for one year and a half, because maybe they were pushed into University, even though some of them they don't have very good level in language or in other courses.

INTERVIEWEE

You have this huge gap in the group and it makes it even more challenging.

INTERVIEWER

You said that you noticed the gap this year or this semester, but you didn't last year, for example, is it because it's blended or what's the reason?

INTERVIEWEE

Maybe because the semester you see them face to face. Last year it was all online. So maybe in the online classes things could work. Even if some of the students are there silent, they are doing nothing. Maybe they are lost, but you can see their faces. But when it's face to face, then you can see their faces from their faces. You can understand who is following, who's not following, who's trying, who's not even trying. And another reason, I think, as I told you, is the Corona situation.

INTERVIEWEE

I think this teaching online that has been going on for two years, almost now didn't work well with them. Some of them, the language is very poor. They are lost.

INTERVIEWER

We need time, I think, to just go back to semi normal.

INTERVIEWEE

Yeah, it will take some time, I think. But the thing is, especially when you are teaching PY students. It's only one year. So you either do it this year or you don't do it . Almost. And so I told the students and the other one, who's also very weak in language. I told them that, look, you have those websites, you have this vocabulary left. Work on yourself. Watch more. Listen to English. More. One of them told me, the teacher, we don't have time. I said, Well, I'm giving you the solution.

INTERVIEWEE

If you want to use it, use it. If you don't want to, then you are not going to go in any place. You'll be just there watching your friends when they are following and they are listening. They are reading, but you are behind all the time. You are in the back. So some of them, I think, are responding. But for some of them, it's just not working. And most probably they will not complete this year.

INTERVIEWER

It's weird that they have social media and they use social media and Twitter and everything, they still they don't..

INTERVIEWEE

They use it in Arabic all the time, social media or even when they watch maybe movies, even when they watch some of them, they like American movies or TV series. But the thing is, they like to watch it with Arabic translations, so they don't focus on the audio. They focus on the Arabic language. So I told them that this is not going to work. If you want to improve your language, watch American movies, watch TV series, but you have to watch them in English with subtitles in English.

INTERVIEWEE

Otherwise your language is not going to improve. I know it's not easy, by the way, many second language, especially when you are busy with so many other things at the same time, is not easy at all, but there is no other solution. This is the thing.

INTERVIEWER

Even the motivation.

INTERVIEWEE

Exactly, believe me, some of them, they have the motivation, but they have this barrier, this psychological barrier, that English is too difficult. I have always found it difficult in school. The teachers always told me that your language, maybe it's not that good. So there is no way that I can do it. And I told the teachers the other time that some of the students

you feel that they gave up, they don't even want to try because they are super scared. They have this feeling that they are not going to pass.

INTERVIEWEE

This is not for them whatsoever, or however they are going to try. It's not going to work. So they just decided to give up, which is bad. But it's true.

INTERVIEWER

It's even hard for the teacher to adapt to different levels at the same time.

INTERVIEWEE

It is very difficult. It is very difficult. I'm trying my best, but because as I told you, I'm kind of a traditional teacher. I'm trying to change my thinking and I'm trying to be more flexible, but I still find it difficult when I have students at different levels in the same classroom. I find it difficult to deal with them. It's not easy. I'm trying. I read the other day that maybe when you have students of different groups, you can give different students different activities depending on their level.

INTERVIEWEE

But the thing is, we don't have time. We have units that we need to finish. We have a midterm and the midterm is unified. So you have to follow the pacing. If you are behind, then the students will be affected. So it's very difficult to give students different activities depending on their level. Time is not playing with us, as they say.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, true. I really enjoy this conversation.

INTERVIEWEE

That's a lot. Thank you so much.

INTERVIEWER

Me too, because I don't know a lot of the things that is happening now at the center. So I need to just understand the context a little bit. Can we talk about writing now? Can you describe your approach to philosophy?

INTERVIEWEE

Well, when I read this question, actually, I was thinking philosophy. What does that mean? I will tell you what I do, whether you call it the philosophy or not. This is what I do when I did try things when I teach writing. Actually, I like to teach with a model. So I give them the model. We study the model very well in terms of the grammar, the vocabulary, the structure, the mechanics, the title, everything, how the sentences are structured, how the sentences are linked. We look at the sample or the model answer very carefully and then I give them the task and I tell them that when you start doing your task, you need to keep the model always in your head in terms of the length, in terms of the grammar, in terms of the tenses and so on.

INTERVIEWEE

I always found this working, especially with beginners, because most of the students we teach are beginners, even if they are not beginners in the language. They are beginners in writing, as you know, in schools here in Saudi. They don't teach writing properly. So it's basically memorizing passages and then coming to the exam to write them down. So when I give the students a writing task, especially in the first semester, you can imagine it is super difficult for them. They are super scared and they are not sure.

INTERVIEWEE

Even if they can do it, they ask questions all the time. The teacher. Are we going to have something like that in the final exam? I say yes. Do we have to improve our skills? Yes. You need to work on your scale. Can we use websites? Yes, but don't copy. So I try to start with a model and then I try to give them instructions that are as clear as possible. So these are the two things that I think if we do in a balanced way most of the time I found that they work.

INTERVIEWER

What about in the past? Because I know that this is a new thing. That the model.

INTERVIEWEE

Actually, this idea of model paragraph and then having a task and the final exam has only started like maybe two years ago in the ELC. So it's not a very old thing. But even before the writing exam was included and this thing came officially from the administration, I used to give students writing tests all the time during the semester. They know that they have to do a lot of writing with me. We do it throughout the semester. Usually in one semester, I would do maybe four or five tasks of writing with the students.

INTERVIEWEE

The same idea. We start with the model answer. I give them the model, which is based on what they've been in in the book, but much easier. And then we study the model together. I give them the instructions very clearly, and then I give them the chance to show me the draft at least once. And if they want to show me the draft more than once, that's okay as well. During the office hours, we correct the draft. Then they do the final submission. And when they do the final submission, I always look for common mistakes.

INTERVIEWEE

After that. When I give them the feedback. This is a very important step. By the way, I've learned that feedback after writing is very important. You never forget whatever the teacher told you. That was a mistake. So I select the mistakes if you like the common mistakes that they made. And then I made my paragraph with the mistakes. I showed them that on the PowerPoint presentation and they asked them to correct the mistakes. Let's say six or ten mistakes in the paragraph, and they found that this worked all the time with them.

INTERVIEWEE

They never forget this mistake.

INTERVIEWER

I feel like you were doing a lot of writing even before this new shift.

INTERVIEWEE

Actually, it's very interesting that before they started this writing official writing task, if you like before that, I used to do more writing tasks. I don't know why this semester, maybe because the level of the students is very basic and because they know that the final exam is going to be on one of those two tasks. I'm trying to focus my attention only on those two before. In the past, I used to give them at least five tasks in the semester. This semester I gave them only one task in the beginning about writing simple sentences, and then we did the first writing task, the official one.

INTERVIEWEE

And then we have another one that we are going to do in book two. And maybe if I can, I will do a fourth task. Another reason why this semester is challenging, especially for writing, is that I have 33 students. The groups this semester are very big, usually in the past, I used to have 25, maybe maximum 27. So giving feedback wouldn't be that challenging. But this semester with 33 students with some of them having very basic knowledge of English and not mentioned writing. So I find it really challenging.

INTERVIEWEE

Maybe that's why I decided to limit the writing tasks to maybe see on maximum four.

INTERVIEWER

I have a question in the past when you teach them writing, do you try to teach them how to expand the sentence? Not just simple, complex, and compound.

INTERVIEWEE

Usually I explain the differences to them because there is one lesson in this book about the differences between simple sentences, complex sentences and compound sentences. Of course, we can imagine that I have faces in front of me with a lot of question marks. What is she talking about? Simple compound complex. But those things become a bit easier for them. Now, do I ask them to write complex sentences? Yes, based on the model. So for example, this model, this writing task that we did this semester, the first writing task called about describing a city.

INTERVIEWEE

So I told them, choose any city that you like in the world, write some notes and then write the short paragraph to describe the city now, because in the lesson it was stressed that they should use, because for the reason why this city is important, I told them that you need to use because at least one and they told them I explained that we have two closes when we use because the main clause and the supporting clause. One of them is the main and one of them is the additional information how to use because in the middle how to use because at the beginning.

INTERVIEWEE

So it worked, but only with the cause. So I would say that they are not able to write complex sentences with different types of conjunctions. No, it would be too much for them. I try, but I always, as they say, when I teach writing, especially when I know that the student's level is not very high. I touch my steps because it can get overwhelming. If you would start asking them to write compound sentences, complex sentences, it would be very difficult. So usually in the beginning I focus on writing simple sentences, subject verb objects.

INTERVIEWEE

I stress that each sentence should have a verb, and actually I tell them, don't complicate it. If the idea can be expressed in a simple sentence, then don't try to over complicate things because we haven't learned a lot yet about complex sentences. Yeah, this is what I do. But in the second book in the pre intermediate book, because they start learning time clauses using after. Using before using if, using when. At that level, maybe at the end of the second book, then maybe you can advance sentences, but not in the beginning, for sure.

INTERVIEWER

The next question is, I think we already know the answer for this. What prompts you to teach in this way with models?

INTERVIEWEE

Because of the level the students, as you know, they have been learning English for about ten years or maybe more in school, but nobody told them how to write. So for them,

writing is like an unexplored area. Believe me, this semester I had a student. Her level of English is not bad. She can't speak well and she can understand well when I told them that to choose the city and describe it and then come during the office hours, show me a first draft. I will give you feedback.

INTERVIEWEE

Believe me or not, she showed me a paragraph in Arabic and she told me, Teacher, I'm showing you and I was like shocked. Is that Arabic? She said yes because I wanted to show you the paragraph in Arabic, and then I'm going to translate. I feel the same because I knew that it wasn't a mistake. I'm sure somebody told her before in school that when you write, write in Arabic and translate it to English. Or maybe at least some teacher saw her doing that and didn't comment on that.

INTERVIEWEE

So the next day, actually, or maybe after a few days I dedicated half an hour of the classroom time just to tell them that writing is not translation. Can you imagine that when you translate from Arabic to English, you are going to have lots of mistakes in grammar, structure, mechanics. English is different in terms of the structure of the sentence.

INTERVIEWER

Even using the vocab.

INTERVIEWEE

Everything is different. I told them that when you translate, you are actually depriving yourself from the beauty of writing. Writing is the process of generation. Most of them. Writing is one of two things either translation. So they are good in writing in Arabic. They write in Arabic and they translate it to English. And you can imagine the amount of the number of mistakes that are there or copying Wikipedia. They find some sentences about that city, they copy paste. And for them that's writing. And believe me, I take some time in the beginning of the semester just to convince them that writing is not translation and writing is not copying.

INTERVIEWEE

And they are convinced this is what is really weird for me. They are convinced that writing is either translation, copying, it's one of the two and it's not bad even copying more than that. We are copied from a website what's wrong? Because of that, if you don't give them a model, they will be lost. Most probably they will go back to find something online to copy from the online results. Even with the model. By the way, in this first task I found copying because the submission is done on blackboard and on blackboard there is this feature for Plagiarism. It's called safe Assign. It will tell you as a teacher how much of the paragraph is copied from online websites and it will give you the website as well. Yeah, I told them this from the beginning this semester, but it seems that they didn't take it seriously. Teacher, are you going to know the website even they didn't delete it because if you think about it. Yeah. How can you know the website where I copied the sentence from? So when I did this first rating for the first task and they found that some of them had copied sentences exactly from our website as it is.

INTERVIEWEE

I can subtract Mark because this was the first time, and they said that it's not easy for them writing first time in their life. But I made it very clear in my comments that this sentence is copied exactly from this website. Next time, if you copy from our website, you will lose marks. So I'm sure that next time they will count to ten before they copy, they will think seriously about it. But again, I can't blame them because we all know writing is not easy. It's a very difficult process, even for me.

INTERVIEWEE

Now, after doing my PhD, when I start writing something in English, I have to force myself. It's not easy. Writing is not easy at all. So you can imagine those are students who have been taught English for, as I said, maybe ten years. But they know nothing about writing, and all they know about writing are misconceptions, all of them copying translation memorization. So it's not easy to overcome these if you want misconceptions. So I don't blame them. But I push them. I try.

INTERVIEWER

So do you agree with the policy? Because even from the administration, they suggest this. What is it? The models?

INTERVIEWEE

Yeah. I was actually part of this whole story. So when we started thinking of including writing assessments, we thought that we want I was part of this group who started this idea. So we started thinking that we want to include writing. Yes, for sure, because writing has been ignored. But we don't want to have a very big change at once. We want to have it like step by step, because I have an experience. When I came back from the UK and they took this admin position that I told you about, I had this idea that we should start teaching writing.

INTERVIEWEE

Writing is being ignored. So we started the idea. But we started if you want harshly, about five paragraphs per semester, there was a final exam. It was a lot of writing. Everything has to be done in class. It was very demanding. The teachers were not happy. The students were not happy. They improved a lot. And we could see that from their final writing exam. But the teachers thought that it was very demanding. It was a lot and they couldn't deal with or cope with that amount of work.

INTERVIEWEE

So when we started thinking again two years ago that we want the administration wanted to add writing. I told them that they have this experience. So please, if you want to do it, do it slowly. We started thinking that maybe 2 tasks per semester is kind of fine. Doable. We started them thinking of how many units should be maybe excluded in order to allow time for writing because writing will take time of teaching. And we started having this balance. In the beginning, it was only teaching writing with model paragraph without the final exam for two semesters.

INTERVIEWEE

And then last semester we thought that this is time to start having a final exam in order for the students to stop copying, to start working on their skills. And when the students know that there's a final exam, they will work on, that the wash back effect. So last semester there was writing task in the final exam, and this semester as well, there's going

to be a task. So this is how it started. We are taking it step by step. And as I told you, this idea of the model paragraph, this is something that we all agreed on.

INTERVIEWEE

Without the model paragraph, it would be difficult for the students to understand what to expect in the final exam. Yeah. So we came up with this idea and we started working on the model answers, and we did it this way.

INTERVIEWER

I think it's even difficult for the teacher to generate task.

INTERVIEWEE

That's very true. Especially that most of our teachers, I would say, including myself, are not very well trained on teaching. Writing and teaching. Writing is not easy. By the way, it's a very challenging thing. You need to give them a lot of time. You need to allow the process to develop different drafts, feedback on different drafts. It's demanding. It's difficult. So I think this idea of a model paragraph that is unified for everyone. Yes. Maybe some of the teachers argued that this is not writing. If you are writing based on a model, this is not proper writing.

INTERVIEWEE

Proper writing is generating ideas. I agree. But when we think about the level of the students that we have in the ELC, most of them are beginners or elementary level. If you ask them to generate ideas in English, it is super difficult for them to do that. Maybe in the future if we have a third level, because until now we only have an elementary. Maybe in the future, if we have an intermediate level, then maybe we can be more flexible.

INTERVIEWEE

We can give students more flexibility in terms of writing, generating ideas. But for the two levels that we are teaching until now, elementary and pre intermediate, then no, I don't think it's reasonable to ask students or teachers to write something from scratch. True, they need the model. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

I agree with you about teaching writing, even with the feedback, because you need to be careful what to say to the students.

INTERVIEWEE

Actually, the thing is when I teach writing because I feel the students I know how difficult this is for them. When I get the feedback, I'm very open, like full stop comma, capital letter, small letter. And even when they show me the paragraph the second time, there might be some mistakes, so I will connect them with them as well. Now, I recognize that this is not a good idea because when you are giving them everything, then they are not planning. You need to make mistakes in order for you to remember those mistakes.

INTERVIEWEE

So now I'm trying to stop myself. I give them the feedback very generally, if you like, maybe the first time, but then the second time, maybe if they repeat the mistake, I don't give them the feedback so that they learn that the mistake is being repeated. I agree with you. Feedback is a story on its own. You need to be balanced, not giving too much and not giving too little. Again, I'm trying to find my way and I'm not sure if I'm successful until now, but I'm trying.

INTERVIEWER

It's all about testing things and trying things.

INTERVIEWEE

Exactly. There is no other way. I think this is the only way that you can improve yourself. As a teacher. You should try things, see if they work. If they don't work, how can I improve them? It's a cycle or a cycle and you need to appreciate, as they say, each step in the process. It is a process of learning.

INTERVIEWER

Can you tell me about the assessment rubrics that you have?

INTERVIEWEE

This is story on its own. Actually, as I told you when I came back from the UK and they took this admin position, I thought that writing is not being assessed and this is bad. Writing is an important part of the scales. And at that time the ELC manager or director. I don't know if you know him Dr. Sultan Alshareef. He was from the English Department and writing was his speciality. This is what I did afterwards. So when I told him that I have this idea, do you think we can implement it?

INTERVIEWEE

He said yes, he was very curious about it and enthusiastic as well. So I had this idea. I wrote it into like a proposal and we started thinking about the Rubrics. We were not sure what to do with the it. So I went to King Abduraziz University that they have a very well established English language Institute there. They have a kind of writing exam. They have had it for years. So I had a friend who was teaching there. I told them, Can you give me the rubric that you are using for writing?

INTERVIEWEE

She gave me the rubric. So from there. So I started I looked at the rubric. I copied most parts of the rubric, but also I made some changes and adaptations. So this was if you like, the first draft. We implemented that draft last year when we did the writing final exam and it was fine at that time. Also, we did integrated reliability. So some of the sheets were randomly corrected by another teacher and the agreement was high. So we knew that the rubric was kind of working.

INTERVIEWEE

Then writing was not taught for maybe three or four years. Then afterwards they started, as I told you, when the director came, we started thinking again of teaching writing again. So they started thinking about a Rubrics. I told them, look, we had a Rubric before. Do you want to have it if you like it? They said yes, because also we didn't have much time to think about creating a rubric from scratch. So they looked at it. And some members were actually experts in testing. So they looked at it and they thought it's not perfect.

INTERVIEWEE

But as we don't have time to use and we will get feedback from the teacher, we will change it as we go along the way. So we use this. And every semester at the end of the semester, we will give the teachers a feedback form in which they would comment on the rubric. Do you think it's working? Do you think it's not working? Do you like the division? Do you think we should add more categories or maybe divide the categories with you and so on? So we have been improving it for the past two years.

INTERVIEWEE

For example, let me give you an example this semester, for example, because in the previous feedback from the second semester last year, the teachers said that they didn't like the idea that grammar and vocabulary were included under one category. For them, it should be two separate categories. So this semester we decided to divide them into two categories based on the teacher's feedback. And I kind of think that it's working better now. I agree that grammar and vocabulary are two different aspects. They shouldn't be included under one category.

INTERVIEWEE

So this is how it's working. It started with a sample that I got from King Abraham University. Then I worked in it with Dr. Sultan Al Sharif at that time. Then we used it again two years ago, and every semester we are trying to improve.

INTERVIEWER

It's a very good idea and a very good investment. From the beginning.

INTERVIEWEE

We didn't have any other options and developing a rubric is not easy and it can be tricky. It can go wrong very easily. So I think starting with something from an established Institute, I think helped us a lot.

INTERVIEWER

I don't know if you answered this, but how effective are they? I mean, the rubrics.

INTERVIEWEE

I would say that they are effective for our purposes because always remember that we are not dealing with creative writing. We are not dealing with generating ideas. We are dealing with basic paragraph writing, basic basic level. So at that level, I think the components of the rubric are fine. We have grammar, we have vocabulary, we have organization. Although some of the teachers think that organization is not relevant with such a short paragraph. But I think it is important. We have content and we have coherence thinking ideas together.

INTERVIEWEE

I don't think that with a paragraph that shows, like, 70 words. I don't think that you need more than that. Even the idea of having counting. I'm sure you had a look at the rubric right?

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, I have it.

INTERVIEWEE

Notice we have numbers of mistakes. And based on the number of mistakes, you start subtracting grades. Again, some of the teachers think that this is not working very well. How did you decide on the division between the mistakes by one to three is okay. More than three is minus one. And so on.

INTERVIEWER

What is some what is frequent?

INTERVIEWEE

exactly, how do you define those? And why did you define them this way? If you think different teachers, they might define it differently. But again, I think it's working because as I told you at the time of Doctor, when we did the integrated liability, it was working fine. Also, a few semesters ago, maybe two semesters ago, Dr. Samar Almossa was responsible for interior reliability. So she collected some sheets from teachers. She created a group of teachers or Raters. They did a second rating based on the same rubric.

INTERVIEWEE

And then we did interrater reliability, and it was high. So I think it's working for the level of paragraph writing. Now, if in the future we add essay writing or creative writing, or maybe academic writing, then maybe we need to adapt it substantially. But for the purpose of paragraph writing, I believe it is working. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

I think you answered this question. If you can change something in the assessment procedure, what would you prefer to see? I think you just said your answer for this.

INTERVIEWEE

Yeah. And actually, if you ask me, I would say that maybe we need more time for teaching writing. I know it's not easy because the book is very demanding. We have different tasks and we only have 16 hours a week, which are not enough, by the way, especially when you are teaching beginners. Maybe we need more time dedicated just for writing. Maybe we need to add more tasks to not enough. Maybe we need in the future to look at more advanced levels. If we start teaching the intermediate level, maybe we need to improve the rubric all the time, as I told you, based on the teacher's feedback.

INTERVIEWEE

But at least it's the first good step in my mind. At least we started because, as you know, even for the administration, by the way, it's a headache. And assessment of writing is not easy. It's always easier to say we don't have time. We don't have facilities. We are going just to have a final exam of multiple choice. So we are not going to assess writing. It's always easy to say that once you start the challenge of teaching and assessing writing, you are opening a door, a new door of challenges for the administration.

INTERVIEWEE

So it's not easy. I'm very proud of this administration that they took this idea on, and they decided to develop it semester after semester. I think we are doing fine. At least we started are we perfect? No, we are improving every semester. And I'm hoping that with the improvement of the rubric, with the feedback that we are getting from the teachers, things will improve even better in the future.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, of course. Can you tell me about the common errors now? We are shifting a little bit to the students.

INTERVIEWEE

Most of the errors that the students are making are related to one of two things. Number one, no verb in descendants. No, they have huge problems with verbs. And I think the root of that in the epic because in Arabic we have phenomenal sentence in English, we don't. In English, each sentence would have about it's not easy for the students, although I told them the school from the beginning of the semester. I told him that you need to be careful, especially in writing when you finish writing, read each sentence and make sure that every sentence should have verb.

INTERVIEWEE

But it's not easy, as you know. So this is one very common mistake. Another common mistake is related to mechanics. Comments, false stops, capital letters, very common, very common. You can't imagine how much and some even of the basic things they have mistakes with. Like, for example, they don't know that after a comma we should have a small letter. Some of them asked me the other day, but teacher, we have a comma. Shouldn't we have a capital letter after a comma? It's funny, but again, it tells you that they know nothing about traffic.

INTERVIEWEE

Nobody told them before. I feel for them. It's not the mistake. It's the fault of the teaching system and schools. I would say that these are the most common ones. Grammar related to books and mechanics, related basically to capital small letters. And also, by the way, mechanics spelling. Yes, they have a lot of problems with spelling.

INTERVIEWER

I remember when I was teaching one of the students wrote a sentence in her task without a verb and she came to me. She said, no, it's fine. I said, okay, write it on the board and ask your classmates and all of them said, no, you don't have a verb.

INTERVIEWEE

It's not easy for them to be convinced because you know why they are thinking in Arabic all the time. I always tell my students, stop thinking in Arabic. When you start thinking in Arabic, you are actually thinking you are putting yourself in a totally different mode. So you need to start thinking in English and then the sentences will be fine when you start thinking in Arabic. For example, in English, the student who is good, who is when they write it. If you are thinking that if you write the student good or the good student and you complete, it's not easy.

INTERVIEWEE

It's not easy. And I understand that stopping yourself from thinking in Arabic is not easy at all. It takes time, but you need to practice as a student. There's no other solution.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, I think they can learn these things from us just to shifting their mindsets about English and learning English.

INTERVIEWEE

This is the thing. At least I always tell my students that they can't do everything for you. I'm trying to give you the keys. If you use the keys, then good enough. You are going to succeed and you are going to improve your language. If you don't use the keys, then what can I do? Maybe you will pass the desk. Maybe you will get a high score. But the question is, did you improve your language? If not, then what are you going to do in the future?

INTERVIEWEE

So as a teacher, I think it came to me after years of experience that you cannot give the students everything. Don't spoon, feed them all the time, give them some flexibility, give them the keys, give them the headline. But then they should work on it. And some of them do, by the way, like, for example, one thing that my students always find difficult and also in writing, it's part of speech is that a noun? Is that a verb? Is that an adjective? What are the differences between them?

INTERVIEWEE

How do we use them when we write a sentence and so on? So for them, it's a whole new world. I don't think somebody told them about part of speech before in school. And it happens with me every semester. By the way, the teacher nobody told us before about part of speech. So one student this semester, she's a very good student. She decided. And she asked me, teacher, I want to write sentences. And under each sentence, I would write the father speech of each word and they want to do them as an extra task.

INTERVIEWEE

I will send it to your email and they want you to correct it for me. And she's improving because she's doing this and she decided to do it. I didn't foster. She decided to do it. And I'm sure she's learning from that. And she's doing a great job, by the way. So it's the key. The key is there. If you want to use it, use it. If you don't want to use it, then I can't force you.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, true. How useful are the tasks assigned to the student?

INTERVIEWEE

Because, as I told you, I'm part of this. So when we select the tasks, we look at all the tasks in the book and then, like it's a group of us, we decide which ones are number one most important, and number two doable like they are not super difficult. And number three can be applied in the final exam because in the final exam, I'm not sure if you have seen our final exam in the previous semester. It comes with guiding information. So you have guiding information. So, for example, describe the city, describe London.

INTERVIEWEE

The task will be please write a short paragraph to describe the city of London. Use all the information in the table in the Guiding Information table. In order to write this short paragraph, it should be about 100 words. So you need as an administrator, when you write the final exam, you need to have a task which can if you want to accept guiding information for some tasks, it might be difficult to write something with guiding information, like, for example, in the ESP task last semester. I still remember when we

started thinking about the tasks for the different streams, the medical, the scientific and the admin.

INTERVIEWEE

And we started thinking about the final exam because when we were selecting the tasks, we were having the final exam in the back of our head, we need to select something where we can write the final exam about. So some of the tasks, for example, in the medical stream, was very interesting, but it was very difficult to think of how to have them in a guiding information format. So at the end we decided, no, this is not going to us. We are not going to. So I would say that these are the three reasons why one task would be useful more than the other important doable.

INTERVIEWEE

Is it doable or not applicable in the final exam?

INTERVIEWER

What's next? every answer you have is very perfect and complete.

INTERVIEWEE

Thank you so much.

INTERVIEWER

I think also because you have experience with the administration.

INTERVIEWEE

Because I was part of the story of this writing.

INTERVIEWER

How useful are the textbooks used for teaching writing?

INTERVIEWEE

I think they are very useful, actually. I love the Milestones series. When I came back from the UK in the ELC, they used to teach highway is also by Oxford, but it's more, I would

say general language. Milestone is general language, but it's more oriented into academic writing or academic language presentations, writing an email, things like that. Even the language is more academic, so I love it and especially the writing system. In each paragraph there is lesson four, which is a writing lesson, and the structure is very similar to the model answer that they told you about.

INTERVIEWEE

So they have a passage, for example, in describing a city, they had a passage about the city in Libya. And then in the second page, after they have examined the photograph very well, they looked at all the aspects. They looked at the linking words, the grammar, the mechanics and so on. And the second page, it asks them to write a paragraph about a seminar topic. So I think they are useful. Maybe they are a bit long. The example modern answers that they are giving in the book, but you can always adapt them to your needs because as I told you in the assessment of writing, because of the level of the students, we decided to start at the level of paragraph.

INTERVIEWEE

Most of the passages in the book in the writing lesson are more than one paper, but we don't do that even for the model answer. If you notice this semester, we took the task from the book, like the one above Libya. We took it from the book, but we modified it. We made it shorter and we made it into one paragraph to the length that we want. But I think it's very useful. This idea of modern paragraph, I find it very useful, especially with beginners.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, of course. It's guided writing and product approach.

INTERVIEWEE

That's true. By the way, I agree, as I said, with several teachers who said that this is not real writing. I agree.

INTERVIEWER

I heard this in my pilot study. Yeah, I had two teachers and they said it's not to be frank.

INTERVIEWEE

That's true. We had it ourselves, by the way, because in the beginning, when we started this idea of writing assessments, we had several workshops with teachers, often workshops where everybody would say their ideas, what they like and what they don't like. So further of them would say, this is writing. Do you think this rubric is working? Is that really writing in the sense of generating ideas? I would say, no, it's not. But when you know how difficult writing assessment is for the teacher, for the students and for the administration, then you appreciate each and every step, whatever steps that the administration is taking, in my opinion, are very brave.

INTERVIEWEE

It's always easy. And they have seen it a lot because they won't part of the administration. And they told you for three years and half every time I would say after Doctor Sultan, because Dr. Sultan was condemned, maybe by the end of the semester, because as they told you, it was too much and we took it very harsh. He told me it was too much, but he was still convinced that it was important. The one who came after him, actually two different managers. It was very easy for them to say we don't have time, we don't have effort, we don't have resources.

INTERVIEWEE

We don't think we can do it. It's always easy to say that. And by the way, nobody can argue with you because it is difficult, especially when you have big numbers of students. This administration with the director, she decided to take the challenge. So as I told you, I learnt to appreciate each and every step. It's not easy. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

This is the core of my study, this initiative for writing an assessment. Because when I arrived here in the UK, one of my colleagues told me that you started to have assessments and tasks. And then last semester you had the final exam. So it is a very rich topic.

INTERVIEWEE

It is a very rich topic because it is also when you think about the context here at the ELC, something new, how are teachers adapting? How is the administration working with the challenges? How are the students, even if you can do maybe some interviews with students, that would be amazing.

INTERVIEWER

That's why I'm doing complex system because I have students and I have teachers and I'm looking at the documents.

INTERVIEWEE

Because it is challenging. And I'm sure you will see that the challenges are different from different perspectives. For the teachers, it might be the teaching. I don't have time. It's too much of an effort. We have a large group of students. How can I give them the feedback and so on for the serious it will be. I don't know what writing is about. I haven't been told writing properly before. I'm too scared. I don't think I can do writing for the administration. It will be the assessment, the correction, the interater liability, the guidelines, and how details they have to be.

INTERVIEWEE

So I agree. It's a very rich topic, especially because it's a new area that everybody is exploring. Here.

INTERVIEWER

How much flexibility do you have in your teaching and assessment of writing?

INTERVIEWEE

We don't have much flexibility. No, we don't have much flexibility. As I told you, it's very guided. The model is very specific, and if you notice in the guidelines, it's mentioned clearly follow the model because the final exam is going to be based on the model. If each teacher is teaching something different, then when we come to the final exam, it would be very difficult for the students to follow the guiding information. Is it flexible? No, it's not flexible. It's very fixed. The final exam is also very Brigitte if you like.

INTERVIEWEE

It's not proper writing in the sense of creative writing. But I think that with this level of students with this context, with the fact that they haven't been taught writing before, we don't have any other options. Maybe in the future, with the feedback that the administration is getting from the teachers and from the students with more experience that the administration is getting as well in managing the writing tasks. Maybe in the future we can find more creative ways of assessment of writing. But until that happens, I think this is a huge step.

INTERVIEWEE

No, it's not the end. We know that there is a long way ahead that we need to take. But the good news is that the administration is willing to take it, of course. And this is very important because if the administration is not willing to take it, then you can do nothing.

INTERVIEWER

I want to talk about the blended context. Now, can you tell me about the challenges you face in your classes online versus in class?

INTERVIEWEE

Okay, actually, let's first agree on what you mean by blended. Do you mean by blended? Like some days online and some days on campus, or do you mean like what's happening now? Some students at home and some students in class.

INTERVIEWER

I was shocked by this idea.

INTERVIEWEE

It is shocking. I'm still shocked. Until now. Let me explain the situation here. So actually it's a mix of both what we are doing now, we have some classes fully online for the whole group, for the 33 students that I have in my class, and we have some classes that are blended in the sense of some students are in class in front of me and some students are online via Webix. Is it easy? No, it's not easy. Every class is a challenge. Believe me or not, technology is a challenge, and sometimes the projector is not working.

INTERVIEWEE

The students there are not listening. You must write something on the board, but the students who are at home are not going to be able to see what you are writing. If you want to write something, you have to write it on the computer so that both students can see it on the projector and the students at home. So for me, number one challenge is technology, for sure. And you know that sometimes technology decides to not work and at that time you can do nothing. You can just stop or maybe adapt or maybe find a way.

INTERVIEWEE

So technology is the first challenge. It's not easy at all. Number two, when you have some students in front of you and some students at home, no matter how much you try as a teacher to involve the students at home, if they are not motivated, they are not involved. When I give them a task, for example, I try my best to take one student from the class and one student from the online platform. But sometimes the students who are at home are not even with you.

INTERVIEWEE

I'm not following. So I started asking, ladys, ladys online. Are you there? Please? One of you. Then maybe after one or two minutes of nagging on the head, one of them say, yes, teacher, I can do that. It's difficult. It's not easy to keep them involved. And the other thing, by the way, is number three challenge. I would actually maybe put it as number one is the fact that this semester we don't have participation marks. Have you heard about that? No, we don't have participation. So the class work is divided between Oxford and online practice and online practice.

INTERVIEWEE

That's it. So only ten months and you are not allowed as a teacher to give them Mark for participation. And because I am open, I don't like to hide things from the students. I like them to be on the board with me from the beginning of the semester. I told them from the beginning of the semester that we don't have participation. I told them that maybe it would have been easier for me to lie and to say that, yes, we have participation to force you to participate.

INTERVIEWEE

But I don't like this idea. I told him that saying that we don't have participation. It doesn't mean that you don't need to participate. You need to participate. You need to understand you need to be involved. You will learn by participation by asking, but it's not working, especially because of this system. So if you are online at home and you know that there are no participation marks, do you think you all want to participate? No, of course not. Even if I were in their place, I wouldn't participate.

INTERVIEWEE

Maybe I'm just motivated and engaged with 16 hours a week. Maybe you'll be engaged with some Days, but not all the time. It's difficult to keep them engaged all the time. So these are the three challenges, technology participation and what else did we say? Technology participation and the blended things keeping them involved all the time.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, but how do you teach in this way? Like do you have the model for both groups?

INTERVIEWEE

Well, it depends on when the writing task is going to come. So last time I think it was in the class which was online. So I taught it online. I gave them the model. I explained the model very well. I divided them into groups and each group had to study the paragraph carefully and answer some questions, like about the answers about the sentences, how they were written, and so on. Then we came together to the main room. We looked back at the answers to the questions. I explained them on the answer again.

INTERVIEWEE

And then I gave them the guidelines. Now what helps, I think with the teaching writing in this situation is the feedback session. When I give them the writing task, I tell them that you can show me your draft during the office hours. They show me their draft and they correct the draft for them individually. One by one, we look at the mistakes. I explained the mistakes for them. I give them the chance to correct the mistakes before I

give them the answer. So I think this way is working because when the feedback is individual, you will learn otherwise.

INTERVIEWEE

It's very difficult in this situation.

INTERVIEWER

It's too much work. I think even for the teacher.

INTERVIEWEE

It is a lot of work you can't imagine, especially again, because in this semester we have a large number of students in each group. It's very challenging. You can't imagine how much. Sometimes the office hours are 2 hours. So when we have a writing feedback, sometimes they can be extended into 3 hours because each one of them would come to a private room. Maybe we will need at least ten minutes for each student and then you take the other student. I'm not sure if there is maybe another easier way of doing it, but for me until now, I don't feel it's working with the ELC.

INTERVIEWEE

I think the students at this level, they need this one to one feedback.

INTERVIEWER

I think we talked about this, but maybe you can reflect on it. What can you say about the student impact on your practice levels of proficiency, motivation, attitude and apprehension? You mentioned a couple of times.

INTERVIEWEE

Yeah, actually, as I told you, one of the things that have changed me throughout. This is the feedback that I'm getting from the students. As I told you when I started teaching after I finished my administration job, I started giving students feedback at the end of the semester, so usually good on all the aspects except one that was always low, which is a variety of teaching strategies because I'm traditional. So from that time on, I decided that I should change my teaching style. I should include some flexibility.

INTERVIEWEE

I should adapt or adopt the role of a facilities. So the feedback that I got from them is very important. The level of proficiency is for sure important. When you are teaching students who are at high level, you can maybe skip some of the preparation tasks, like when you are teaching beginners and you are giving them a listening task. You need to prepare them for the listening task you need to teach. Maybe the vocabulary items you need to give them a little bit of a general idea what this listening is about before you start listening.

INTERVIEWEE

But when you teach advanced students like I remember one semester I teach students who are advanced. When we had this placement test, you don't need this preparation. They aren't ready. When you tell them to read the questions, you are going to listen and then you answer the questions, they will do it like that. So the number of the students makes a big difference, for sure. Motivation? Yes, it makes a big difference. As I told you when I saw in the beginning of the semester from their faces that they are not motivated, that they are good, they are not following it's too much for them. So I decided to include more activities, more games and so on. So for me, at least it makes a big difference.

INTERVIEWER

Last question, what is your goal of teaching writing to PY student or what do you aim your student to learn from you?

INTERVIEWEE

Actually, I don't expect them by the end of this year to be able to write an essay. I don't expect them to write from scratch. Like give them a topic like the tofu or the Ice topic and then they write about it. No, this is not my aim as a teacher. My aim as a teacher is for them to learn the basics of writing, how to write a good sentence in English. As I told you, each sentence should have a verb. This is a rule that they need to learn and they learn by practice mechanics.

INTERVIEWEE

When you use a comma. When you use the full stop when you use a capital letter, when you use a small letter and so on. Very important vocabulary. I like very much to teach them how to use the dictionary and then writing, especially collocations. How do you use the dictionary to find the right collocation when you are thinking about the next word in writing. So gathering is important as well at the level of a paragraph. Not more than that. So I would say basic writing, the basic skills of writing. Not more than that. No.

INTERVIEWER

I think if you just change their mindset about writing, that's enough.

INTERVIEWEE

That's enough for me. Because if you can't do it in one year, it means you are amazing all the misconceptions that have developed for ten years. Maybe you'll be successful with some of them, and maybe you will not be successful with some of them. But at least you are making a difference. You are trying. At least.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have anything else to add?

INTERVIEWEE

No. I think that's it. Thank you very much for the interview. I learned a lot from answering your questions and good luck with your PhD as well. I'm sure you will do a great job.

INTERVIEWEE

In general. Do you like to write in English?

INTERVIEWER

Yes, I do. I do like writing in English. And Besides the fact that it's an essential part of my studying career, it is also important for me personally because I have some non-Arab friends. So I mostly use it to communicate with them over texting in social media.

INTERVIEWEE

That's so nice. How about writing assignments in university?

INTERVIEWER

Yes, I write assignments, but I mostly use writing in English informally, social media.

INTERVIEWEE

How did you improve your English?

INTERVIEWER

It's all self-taught. To be honest, I didn't take any courses or anything, just movies, shows, YouTube videos.

INTERVIEWEE

Very nice. How did you feel about your writing level when you started University studies?

INTERVIEWER

I think it was pretty good. To be honest, I can give the credit to my high school English teacher because she was really good and she was also strict about the writing tasks that she gave us. So I think that kind of prepared me to the academic writing.

INTERVIEWEE

That's so nice. It's usually the opposite experience with high school. It's always negative and imitation. It's not good. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

I'm so grateful for my high school. It was really good. It was amazing.

INTERVIEWEE

Okay. Do you think learning to write is important for your study?

INTERVIEWER

Yes. As I said earlier, I think it's an important part in my studies.

INTERVIEWEE

You are a medical student, right?

INTERVIEWER

Yes.

INTERVIEWEE

It's very important.

INTERVIEWER

First year?

INTERVIEWEE

Yeah. What do you find most difficult when you write in English?

INTERVIEWER

I think maybe finding the right vocabulary as a beginner in the writing field. Finding the right word to use in a sentence has always been really difficult for me, and it's something that I've been trying to work on for as long as I can remember, and I'm hoping to eventually get better at it.

INTERVIEWEE

very nice. How about the grammar and punctuations?

INTERVIEWER

No, I don't find any problems with all of these. I think it's just the vocabulary.

INTERVIEWEE

What do you find easier to do when you write?

INTERVIEWER

Definitely writing simple sentences because I approximately practice the language on a daily basis, so I think that helped me get better at writing simple sentences. Yes.

INTERVIEWEE

It's very important to start with the simple sentences and do the complex compound and et cetera.

INTERVIEWER

Yes.

INTERVIEWEE

What do you feel about writing in English at the University?

INTERVIEWER

I think I prefer to do tasks at home because I think it gives me much more space and time to write and use as much resources as I can, and it's more comfortable at home. So I don't like writing in University.

INTERVIEWEE

I had the same exact answer from one of the students. She said they are at home because I have time. I can check whenever I want. What do you feel about in class?

INTERVIEWER

I don't know. I don't like being restricted to a certain time, a certain topic, so I think I like it better at home.

INTERVIEWEE

Do you feel anxious about receiving feedback from your teacher?

INTERVIEWER

No, I don't think I feel anxious. It doesn't worry me that much. No.

INTERVIEWEE

Do you discuss your feedback with your teacher?

INTERVIEWER

I think it depends on the feedback that I've received. But in general, yes, I think I would discuss the feedback with the teacher.

INTERVIEWEE

How do you feel about sharing your writing with your classmates?

INTERVIEWER

I don't have a problem with it. No, it's okay. Sharing with the class? Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE

Do you let someone help you with your writing?

INTERVIEWER

No, I don't let anyone help me. I think accepting help is really good, but it's a skill I need to work on because I don't like letting someone help me or especially edit my work.

INTERVIEWEE

Very good. I want to ask about the instruction because I know that you have used model. When you write, for example, you have an email that you have to imitate and connect the sentences together. So what do you feel about that?

INTERVIEWER

I don't mind them really. I mean, they can be helpful sometimes, but they also can be complicated and too specific sometimes, which I don't like.

INTERVIEWEE

To be honest, I feel it's a bit restricted, like you have to follow.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, it can be too specific.

INTERVIEWEE

Yeah. Do you like to choose your own topic if you have the opportunity?

INTERVIEWER

Yes, I would prefer it.

INTERVIEWEE

Do you like activities like brainstorming, discussing with the future before start writing? Doing outline these things?

INTERVIEWER

Yes, I think it's fine.

INTERVIEWEE

How do you like to be taught writing?

INTERVIEWER

I think a lot of practice comes with a lot of benefits too. So I think writing assignments every once in a while could be really helpful.

INTERVIEWEE

Do you feel that the two tasks are enough? Because I know that in one semester you have to write two. Only.

INTERVIEWER

If we're talking about the grade. I think it's but if you want to practice, I think teachers should give us some practice with no grades. I think that would be really good because I think grades stress some students. Yes.

INTERVIEWEE

Everyone says the same. Like it's all about grades and marks and the GPA and your major.

INTERVIEWER

Yes. It's really stressful when you're talking about the grades.

INTERVIEWEE

Personally, I don't think that writing should be assessed in that way. Like to count the mistake because the teacher has to count. If you have three, you have full Mark. If you have four mistakes, it doesn't feel good.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, exactly.

INTERVIEWEE

So when I talk about factors that affected your writing experience at the University. So what do you think about your level of English? Was it helping? Was it hindering your experience?

INTERVIEWER

I think what was really difficult for me, the other subjects the other subjects were closed, of course, because as students we would be focusing on other subjects and other assignments so we wouldn't give that much attention to the writing tasks or writing skills as much as we focus on getting the full Mark. So I think the other subject workload is really affecting.

INTERVIEWEE

Yeah. I think your prior learning experience is positive. Your level is positive attitude. I feel like you like to write teachers instruction, like the models are helping in some way. Yeah. What do you think about the online and in class this way? Like blended learning.

INTERVIEWER

How do you get confusing? I really don't like it, to be honest. And I think it's really difficult on the teachers themselves.

INTERVIEWEE

Yeah, true. They talked about that because they have to control, like 30 students . Some of them are not there when they are online. Do you feel like it affected your participation?

INTERVIEWER

No, I don't think so. I don't mind participating on online classes.

INTERVIEWEE

That's good. What do you think of the textbooks that you have?

INTERVIEWER

I think they're pretty good. What I like about them is that they are similar to what we used to have in high school, so that kind of made attending University English classes less intimidating and more relatable.

INTERVIEWEE

Okay. I have the same answer from two students. It's very similar to the high school. What do you think of the task? Because I know that you wrote email and then describe a city.

INTERVIEWER

They were pretty good. They were not hard and they helped me out. They helped me improve futures to have actually really helped me improve my academic writing because I don't write academically all the time, so I think it really helps me.

INTERVIEWEE

Yes. She's interested in writing and academic writing and assessment. She's very good at that.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, she's really good.

INTERVIEWEE

How do you feel about the assessment used for the writing task? Because you have rubrics.

INTERVIEWER

As I said earlier, they can be too specific and confusing, but I don't mind.

INTERVIEWEE

So you had the final exam? I don't know, maybe a week ago. What do you think of the writing tasks that you have? How do you feel about that?

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, it was really easy. For the sake of my grades, I don't prefer to have a writing task on the final exam, but I think in general, having a writing task at the final exam can motivate students to work on their writing skills, Which I think is really important and good for them.

INTERVIEWEE

Yeah. It's a new thing that we didn't have final exam before. I think they added that maybe a year ago. So they are doing these things, these new things with writing and

speaking at the University. Anything else to add? Do you have anything about writing about task, feedback, teacher, the University, anything?

INTERVIEWER

No, I don't think so. I don't think I have anything else to add. Yeah.

INTERVIEWEE

Let me just look at the I'm looking at the Arabic version Because I want to see if the other students have something that I want to make sure that we talked about.

INTERVIEWER

I read every one too. It's kind of similar.

INTERVIEWEE

The same. Yeah.

Appendix K: Teacher Code List

- Easy tasks
- Elicitation techniques
- Engaging students with feedback process
- English level of students
- Errors found in students' writing
- Essay writing practice
- Facilitator
- Fairness of using rubric
- Feedback and students' feelings
- Feel challenged
- Focus on teaching writing
- Focusing on skills
- Following the policy
- I consider myself a teacher
- I didn't believe in exams
- I don't teach writing
- I follow the models because of the final test
- I teach them how to follow the guidelines
- Indirect feedback
- Integrated system is not working for us
- Interactive learning
- Judging the students harshly
- Lack of clarity for the teachers
- Lack of enjoyment in using the rubric
- Lack of enjoyment with online classes

- Lack of flexibility
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of peer feedback due to settings
- Lack of skills lead to model paragraph
- Learning and reflecting on teachers' own experience in learning
- Less flexibility for teachers now
- Level of proficiency of the students
- Limitations in using external resources
- Limitations of word count of the tasks
- Limitations to teachers' agency and freedom in class
- Limiting their creativity
- Longer tasks to practice writing
- Loss of control for teachers
- Model is not appropriate at all
- Modelling of teachers
- Models are helpful for beginner level students
- More tasks for practice
- Need to take a teacher's role
- Negative attitude toward online teaching
- Negative perceptions of the textbooks
- No participations marks
- No time and the number of students
- Not creative, narrative, descriptive, or comparative writing
- Not enough practice for students
- Not fair to use external resources
- Not focusing on one style of writing
- Not realistic
- One textbook is enough
- Online classes are harder for language learning
- Only resources for the teachers
- Organized system
- Outcomes of actual classes are better

- Perceptions of the changes
- Portfolio for writing practice
- Preparing them for the final exam only
- Pressure to finish the textbooks
- Prior learning and teaching experience
- Prior learning of students
- Producing something similar to the model
- Product approach
- PY system impact on teachers
- Reflections of students' improvement
- Replicating writing tasks result in issues
- Rubric is good for the task
- Rubric is not effective
- Rubrics are fair to use
- Rubrics are reasonable for the student level
- Rubrics useful yet not a reflection of the task
- Rushing
- Scared to make changes
- Sense of achievement
- Separate skill
- Showing errors in writing
- Simple, clear, creative
- Stressful environment
- Students are fine to share their texts
- Adopting assessment rubric from another institution
- Anticipation of students' dropping out
- Anxiety to get one to one feedback
- Appreciation of the current changes at the elc
- Basic writing skills teaching led to the current rubric
- Being lost without a model paragraph
- Challenges the administration face.
- Challenges with new changes in the settings

- Aiming for more teacher's agency in the future
- Change is not easy in a complex system
- Changes in the future to adapt to the he level
- Changes start at the classroom level in a complex system
- Changing of class setting affected students' attention span
- Feelings toward how writing is taught
- Finding balance when giving students feedback
- Focus on the basic
- Plans for make further changes to the assessment of writing
- Giving students freedom and flexibility in their writing tasks
- Global pandemic impact on the institutions and the classes
- Gradual changes
- Group or whole class feedback
- Students are interested when the topics are relevant to them
- Students are not apprehensive
- Students' engagement in writing in class
- Students' levels in not reflective in their writing
- Targeting students' issues
- Tasks are not helpful
- Teacher striving for improvement
- Teacher who loves the challenge
- Teacher's compassion toward students
- Teacher's effort in implementing her philosophy
- Teacher's flexibility with her students
- Teacher's focus on research skills
- Teacher's own approach in teaching writing
- Teacher's perceptions of her practice
- Teacher's perceptions of the followed approach
- Humility to be a better teacher
- Impact of teachers' dialogues on teachers' beliefs and practices.
- Impact of teachers' personality on her students
- Improvement of overall students' level might lead to different practices

- Including teachers' voices in the new ongoing changes
- Integrating teaching grammar with writing practice
- Interference of Arabic language when writing in English
- Issues persist while depending on models
- It's called paragraph writing at the PY
- Keeping in mind teachers and students when forming new changes
- Lack of objectives for the English courses
- Lack of objectives leads to below level teaching practices
- Lack of seriousness from students
- Lack of teaching writing training for teachers
- Limitations of grammar rules input based on the tasks
- Limited practice due to change in marks division policy
- Making changes to pre-existing rubric
- Mismatch between the textbooks and students' level
- Mismatch between the objectives of written task exam and the method of teaching writing
- Model paragraphs to avoid surprises for the students
- Modifications of textbooks tasks to suit the students' levels and needs
- More students, less time and workload
- More writing tasks to improve students' writing skills
- Motivation and participation marks
- Negative attitude to memorization and copying
- Negative attitude to being assessed
- Negative attitude toward the used textbooks
- Openness in approaching feedback
- Perceptions of the textbooks
- Positive attitude toward current changes
- Practicality of the writing task in the final exam
- Preferences to teach in accordance with the policy
- Prioritizing practicality in the new changes
- Purpose of final exam written task
- Purpose of the rubric from an assessor's perspective

- Quality versus quantity
- Realization of teachers' views about current practices.
- Recognizing differences in generations
- Reflections about writing outcomes from the past
- Reflecting on the students' positions in the system
- Reinforce live writing practice despite the settings
- Resistance to models
- Seeking to be a role model
- Selecting of the two writing tasks
- Sense of responsibility toward the students
- Spoon-feeding in the HE
- Stepping up or giving up on teaching writing
- Strong feelings about the current writing practices
- Students' impact on teachers' beliefs
- Students' lack of knowledge about writing
- Teacher's adapting to students' needs
- Teacher's own purpose of her teaching practice
- Teacher's positioning herself in the system
- Teacher's preferences in teaching
- Teacher's proactivity to improve classroom engagement
- Teacher's reflection on assessment
- Teacher's resistance to play different roles in class
- Teacher's role
- Teacher's unique practice in class.
- Teacher's unique practice in giving feedback
- Teachers' acknowledgement of inadequate writing practice in schools
- Teachers' adapting to change yet holding into old practices
- Teachers' anxiety about final exam
- Teachers' attitude toward writing practices in the past
- Teachers' attitudes as strict yet compassionate
- Teachers' beliefs about teaching writing
- Teachers' beliefs about teaching

- Workload of teaching writing
- Writing essay is a must
- Writing is fair, useful and suitable
- Writing is guided, mistakes are made
- Writing is important
- Visions for assessment procedures
- Washback effects of the model method
- Witnessing improvement without using models
- Workload as a limitation of teaching writing
- Purpose of writing
- Teaching writing to perform a final writing task

Appendix L: Student Code List

- Attitude toward teacher feedback
- Being independent in their learning
- Autonomy
- Impact of prior learning
- Confusing online learning
- Factors influencing learning
- Familiarity with final exam
- Importance of grades
- Feelings toward writing in class
- Preferences in choosing the writing topic
- In class participation
- Online participation
- Issues in writing
- Lack of confidence
- Time constraint
- workload
- Positive attitude toward models
- Negative Attitude models
- Perceptions of own writing skills
- Perceptions of the final exam approach
- Perceptions of the writing tasks
- Preference to write at home
- Preferences to write in English
- Negative views of rubric assessment
- Positive views of assessment
- Student own philosophy in learning of writing
- Taking notes skills
- Views of textbooks
- Familiarity of textbooks

**Appendix M: Rubric for the Assessment of Students' Writing at the ELC -
Rubric for the Assessment of Students' Writing**

Paragraph					
	Content	Grammar/ vocabulary	Mechanics	Coherence	Development*
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shows very good knowledge of the assigned topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very few syntax or tense errors. ▪ Accurate use of appropriate vocabulary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very few errors in spelling, punctuation, or capitalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective use of linking words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective topic sentence. ▪ Relevant supporting sentences. ▪ Effective conclusion.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shows some knowledge of the assigned topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some syntax or tense errors. ▪ Occasionally inaccurate use of relevant vocabulary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some major errors in spelling, punctuation, or capitalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inconsistent use of linking words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear topic sentence. ▪ Mostly relevant supporting sentences. ▪ Adequate conclusion.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shows limited knowledge of the assigned topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequent syntax or tense errors. ▪ Mostly inaccurate use of relevant vocabulary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, or capitalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only few linking words used correctly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unclear topic sentence. ▪ Inadequate supporting sentences. ▪ Inadequate conclusion.
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completely unrelated to the assigned topic. ▪ No answer at all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Numerous syntax or tense errors. ▪ Inaccurate use of relevant vocabulary affecting meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Numerous spelling, punctuation, or capitalization errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No linking words used correctly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No topic sentence. ▪ Minimal support. ▪ No conclusion.

*** Please note that development in ESP writing relates to the order of steps when**

writing a report Notes:

1. The expected length of submission is 100 words (a short paragraph). **The length of the paragraph is given only as a general guidance. It can range between 70 and 120 words.**
2. If the content is totally unrelated, or the writing is absolutely illegible, or no answer at all, a score of zero should be given regardless of the other aspects.
3. No half scores should be given. If the writing doesn't show all aspects of a descriptor, then the score below it should be given.
4. Under *Grammar/Vocabulary* and *Mechanics*, 'very few' = 1-3 errors; 'some'/'occasionally' = 4-6 errors;

'frequent/mostly' = 7-10 errors; 'numerous' = more than 10 errors.
5. The total score will be out of 15 (maximum 3 for each aspect of writing).

Appendix N: Writing Assessment Procedures (PY Streams only)

Introduction

The continuous assessment of writing has been applied for two consecutive semesters now. One challenge that was faced during the first semester of the current year in relation to the continuous assessment of writing is copying/cheating/plagiarism. Due to COVID-19, face-to-face classes have been replaced with online teaching. This mode of teaching makes it particularly challenging to assess writing tasks objectively.

Since online teaching will continue during the second semester, it is important to make sure that students get scores that they really deserve. So, the ELC Administration has decided to include a **final writing exam (out of 5 marks)** to objectively assess how much students have improved their writing ability throughout the semester. Below we include full details of how writing assessment is going to be conducted during the current semester (Second).

Writing assessment procedures

The writing skills will be assessed continuously throughout the semester (**5 marks**) followed by a final writing exam (**out of 5**). The writing exam will be administered on the same day of the final exam and will be based on one of the genres taught and assessed during the semester (**two genres** for each stream, see Table 1 below). **The teacher is kindly requested to inform his/her students about the final exam as early as possible to motivate them to work harder on their writing skill.** As the final exam is going to be unified, a model paragraph is included in **Appendix A** for each task. Kindly follow this model exactly as this is the model upon which students' writing will be assessed in the final exam.

Table 1: Target tasks for the writing assessment in the three PY streams

Stream	Task number	Book	Task title and Unit
Medical	Task One	Nursing 1	Symptom report (Unit 6) •
	Task Two	Nursing 2	A case study (Unit 11) •
Administrative	Task One	Commerce 1	Writing an email to a •

			friend (Unit 5)
	Task Two	Commerce 2	Writing a personal profile (Unit 1) •
Scientific	Task One	Technology 1	Describing a machine (Unit 10) •
	Task Two	Technology 2	Writing an email (Writing Bank) •

Upon designing and delivering the tasks, teachers are kindly requested to follow these steps:

Explain the rubric clearly to students

This step is intended to help students understand what is expected from them and how they might get or lose marks. After giving them a copy of the rubric (hard or soft), explain it clearly and give them time to ask questions.

Explain the task clearly

For the specified task in each book, kindly provide a full explanation of the task and what is required in order to complete the task successfully. This may include vocabulary choice, tense usage, use of linking words, allowed length, deadline...etc. Present the students with the model answer and show them how it was composed based on the guiding information in the book.

Initiate the writing process in class

Encourage students to use the model answer in order to compose a similar report. They can start, for example, by creating similar patient notes ('Symptom report' task, Medical Stream) or selecting another machine ('Machine description' task, Scientific Stream). Give students time to start the writing process in class, converting the information they created into a paragraph that is similar to the model answer provided. You can do this in various ways including brainstorming ideas and dividing students into pairs or groups. You can give them initial feedback in class at this pre-writing stage.

Allow them a few days to finish a first draft and give them initial feedback

Give students clear guidelines on when you would expect a first draft of the writing to be submitted. You may collect all first drafts, correct them, and give them back

to students with feedback. Or, you might want to ask them to consult with you during the office hours for feedback on initial drafts.

Set a clear deadline for the final draft submission

After you give students feedback on the first draft, allow a few more days for them to submit a final draft which will be assessed out of 5. See the table at the end of this section for specific dates.

Give student detailed feedback on the final draft

Make sure that you give students detailed feedback on their writing ability and what they need to work on (based on the rubric components). This will help them improve their writing ability before the second assignment.

Please note that this is only included for your reference. You don't have to use it with your students. What is most important is to include the grade breakdown for the students as follows:

Cont ent	Grammar/Voc abulary	Mec hanics	Co herence	Devel opment	Fina l Score
..... ... / 3	..... / 3	..... ... / 3	... ..... / 3	..... ... / 3	... ..... / 15
					... ..... / 5

Please note that based on the rubric (5 components with a maximum of 3 grades for each), each task will receive a total score of 15. You are then kindly required to divide the total by 3 to get the mark out of 5 for each task.

After assigning a grade of 5 for each task, please calculate the average (grade 1 + grade 2 divided by 2) to get the final score for the continuous writing skill assessment this semester.

Final writing exam

The final exam prompt will target **ONE** of the two genres practiced throughout the semester. it will include guiding information that students should follow in order to write a short paragraph (70-80 words). Including guiding information will make the task restricted, preventing students from coming to the exam with a ready-made model answer. They will be trained on the moves/steps of the genre and will need to show their ability

to apply that genre on the information provided. For example, students in the medical stream will be trained on writing a symptom report for a patient who suffers from a burning pain (continuous assessment) but are tested with a prompt on a patient who suffers from high blood pressure (final exam). They will have to follow the same steps (history, presenting symptoms, treatment...etc.) using the guiding information provided in the test prompt.

Appendix O: Samples of Writing Tasks in Textbooks and Model Paragraphs from ELC

LANGUAGE FOCUS
Using *and*, *but*, *so* and *or* to join clauses

To take your writing to a higher level, you need to be able to join some short clauses into longer sentences. The easiest way to do this is with *and*, *but*, *so* and *or*.

Focus on language

- Read the Language focus. Circle *and*, *but*, *so* and *or* in the sentences highlighted in the email.
- Work with a partner to answer the questions. Which circled word ... ?
 - adds information
 - says why something happens
 - gives a different idea
 - offers a different option
- Complete the email with *and*, *but*, *so* and *or*.

Write

Task: Write an email to a student who is coming to study at your college for a few months. Include *and*, *but*, *so* and *or* to join clauses.

- Work with a partner. Decide who you are writing to. Think about their age, nationality and where they are studying now.
- Choose three topics to write about in your email.
- Make a list of details for each topic. For each detail, do one of these things and include *and*, *but*, *so* and *or*.
 - add information
 - give a different idea
 - say why something happens
 - offer a different option
- Make an outline for your email by numbering these parts in the order they should be included. Then use your outline to write the email.

_____ describe your college	_____ say why you are writing
_____ say what student needs to do next	_____ describe topics you chose

Review and revise

- Read the Focus on Process Writing.
- Use the Focus on Process Writing to review part of an email below.

our house is in a quiet street, or we are having a nice room for you with your own bathroom. The university is only two kilometres away, and you can't walk there because it is too hot. I have got you a bus pass, but you can take the bus. There are some good shops near our house, so there is a bank and a nice cafe which is serving coffee and snacks all day. you can have dinner with us, so if you like you can cook your own food.
- Read your email from 7 and answer the questions. Then, underline the parts you want to revise and use (∧) to show where you can add things.
 - Is the present simple used to describe a place?
 - Are *and*, *but*, *so* and *or* used correctly to make sentences with more than one idea (using a comma before each one)?
 - Are capital letters and full stops used correctly?
- Swap emails with a partner. Use the checklist on page 205 to give feedback.
- Use the feedback to revise your email.

FOCUS ON PROCESS WRITING
Reviewing your work

Writing is more than a one-step process. Good writers plan, write and review their writing. When you finish writing, review your work and check for:

- punctuation mistakes
- spelling mistakes
- grammar mistakes
- problems with meaning

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Using *and*, *but*, *so* and *or* to join clauses

To take your writing to a higher level, you need to be able to join some short clauses into longer sentences. The easiest way to do this is with *and*, *but*, *so* and *or*.

Focus on language

- 3 Read the Language focus. Circle *and*, *but*, *so* and *or* in the sentences highlighted in the email.
- 4 Work with a partner to answer the questions. Which circled word ... ?
 - adds information
 - says why something happens
 - gives a different idea
 - offers a different option
- 5 Complete the email with *and*, *but*, *so* and *or*.

Write

Task: Write an email to a student who is coming to study at your college for a few months. Include *and*, *but*, *so* and *or* to join clauses.

- 6a Work with a partner. Decide who you are writing to. Think about their age, nationality and where they are studying now.
- 6b Choose three topics to write about in your email.
- 6c Make a list of details for each topic. For each detail, do one of these things and include *and*, *but*, *so* and *or*.
 - add information
 - give a different idea
 - say why something happens
 - offer a different option
- 7 Make an outline for your email by numbering these parts in the order they should be included. Then use your outline to write the email.
 - _____ describe your college
 - _____ say what student needs to do next
 - _____ say why you are writing
 - _____ describe topics you chose

Review and revise

- 8a Read the Focus on Process Writing.
- 8b Use the Focus on Process Writing to review part of an email below.

our house is in a quiet street, or we are having a nice room for you with your own bathroom. The university is only two kilometres away, and you can't walk there because it is too hot. I have got you a bus pass, but you can take the bus. there are some good shops near our house, so there is a bank and a nice cafe which is serving coffee and snacks all day. you can have dinner with us, so if you like you can cook your own food.

- 9 Read your email from 7 and answer the questions. Then, underline the parts you want to revise and use (∧) to show where you can add things.
 - 1 Is the present simple used to describe a place?
 - 2 Are *and*, *but*, *so* and *or* used correctly to make sentences with more than one idea (using a comma before each one)?
 - 3 Are capital letters and full stops used correctly?
- 10 Swap emails with a partner. Use the checklist on page 205 to give feedback.
- 11 Use the feedback to revise your email.

FOCUS ON PROCESS WRITING

Reviewing your work

Writing is more than a one-step process. Good writers plan, write and review their writing. When you finish writing, review your work and check for:

- punctuation mistakes
- spelling mistakes
- grammar mistakes
- problems with meaning.

Model Paragraphs

Medical Stream

Task One

Nursing 1

Symptom report

Unit 6 (Workbook: Page 37)

The patient is a 55-year-old woman. She was admitted to hospital on 13th June at 18.35 with presenting symptoms of a burning pain in her chest. She complained of nausea and said her fingers were numb. An angina attack was diagnosed. The patient rested and was given glyceryl trinitrate. At 11.00 a.m. the next day, the patient showed no symptoms. She was discharged from hospital at 14.00.

