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The Effect of English Language and its Culture on the Identity and Culture of Saudi EFL Learners

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Abstract:
This study aims to investigate the influence of the English language and its cultural factors on the culture and identity that predispose EFL Saudi students towards learning English in Saudi Arabia from the point of view of EFL teachers. The researcher attempted to examine these factors from EFL teachers' perspective by raising questions that examine how positive and negative these factors are and how they influence Saudi culture and identity. These cultural factors are globalization, westernization, Saudi teenagers' attitudes and beliefs towards foreign influence, motivation for learning a foreign language and culture, traveling, social media platforms, knowing the purpose of learning, and the need for communication in the English language as a requirement of a globalized world. A survey was conducted using a questionnaire as the main data-gathering tool. A total of 57 EFL teachers from Taif University, Saudi Arabia, participated in the survey. The analysis of the collected data showed the most influencing factors on the culture of Saudi Arabia upon learning English, the impact it has on the identity of Saudi youth, and the concerns of Saudi EFL teachers for preserving the identity and culture of Saudi future generations

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Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ministry of Education
Taif University

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم
جامعة الطائف

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
Degree of Master of ART
TESOL

By

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1440-2019

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أثرتعلم اللغة الانجليزية وثقافتها على هوية وثقافة الطلبه السعوديين

رسالة مقدمة لاستكمال متطلبات درجة الماجستير في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لغير الناطقين بها

للباحثة

أسماءزهير العمري

إشراف

د. منصور المالكي

1440هـ -2019م

Dedication

I dedicate this modest work

To my beloved father, who has remained the source of inspiration for me throughout my life

To my much-loved mother, who fills my life with supreme love and blessing

To my dearest husband Ahmed, who has always supported me in achieving my dreams

To my lovely kids, Naif and Aljawharah, the bliss of my life

To my ever loving sisters, Zinah, Huda, Amal, and Rugayha

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This thesis has been a labor of love and dedication for me, and it would be remiss if I don’t mention the people who helped and supported me dedicatedly through this journey.

First and foremost, all praise and gratitude be to Allah the Almighty, Who has granted me power and determination for all the achievements in my life, and peace and blessings be upon His dear Prophet Mohammad S.A.W, who is the finest source of guidance for all humanity.

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This work would have been incomplete without the presence of these precious people in my life. I am exceptionally grateful for having them as my best support system.

Abstract

This study aims at investigating the influence of English language and its cultural factors on the culture and identity which predispose EFL Saudi students towards learning English in Saudi Arabia from the point of view of EFL teachers. The researcher attempted to examine these factors from EFL teachers' perspective by raising questions that examine how positive and negative these factors are and how they influence the Saudi culture and identity. These cultural factors are: globalization, westernization, Saudi teenagers' attitudes and beliefs towards the foreign influence, motivation for learning the foreign language and culture, travelling, social media platforms, knowing the purpose of learning, and the need for communication in English language as a requirement of a globalized world. A survey was conducted using a questionnaire as the main data gathering tool. A total of 57 EFL teachers from Taif University, Saudi Arabia, participated in the survey. The analysis of the collected data showed the most influencing factors on the culture of Saudi Arabia upon learning English, the impact it has on the identity of Saudi youth, and the concerns of Saudi EFL teachers for preserving the identity and culture of Saudi future generations.

الخلاصه

هذه الرسالة تهدف إلى دراسة تأثير اللغة الانجليزية ,والعوامل الثقافية المرتبطة بها على ثقافة وهوية الطلاب السعوديين الذين يدرسون اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

قام الباحث هنا بفحص مدى إيجابية وسلبية العوامل الثقافية التي توثر على هوية, وثقافة الطلاب السعوديين من وجهة نظر معلمي اللغة الانجليزية كالعولمة، التغريب، موقف وسلوك المراهقين السعوديين تجاه اللغة الأجنبية، الحوافز تجاه تعلم اللغة الأجنبية وثقافتها، السفر، محطات التواصل الاجتماعية، معرفة أهداف تعلم اللغة الأجنبية ,وضرورة التواصل باللغة الانجليزية في عصر العولمة.

تم البحث لإكمال الدراسة عن طريق الاستبيان ,وكان عدد المشاركين في الاستبيان (٥٧) فرداً من معلمي اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة الطائف بالمملكة العربية السعودية ,نتائج الاستبيان تعكس العوامل المهمة في تأثير اللغة الأجنبية على الثقافة في السعودية ,وعلى هوية طلاب اللغة الانجليزية، وكذلك مخاوف معلمي اللغة الانجليزية تجاه حفاظ الهوية والثقافة في أجيال السعودية القادمة.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Language and Culture

Across centuries, linguists have always been substantially keen on the relationship between language, culture, and thinking. How language, culture, and identity are interconnected and what affects the other has always been a complicated question. The culture to which a person belongs or the lifestyle, habits and traditions and interaction with people shape the way one might think, and talk. This forms the creating and shaping of language in cultural boundaries. As culture creates the scenarios in which language is used, and learned, the particular use of language in turn shapes the thinking process of a person. This comprehensive and complex process joins the dots to frame the identity of a person, nation or country. Differences in cultures give birth to different patterns in languages and the changes in language affect and shape the way people look at things. Whorf (1940) asserts that speakers of different languages see differently at the world due to the differences in their languages.

The relationship of language, culture and identity has been universally admitted and it is a stated fact that culture and language are inseparable, and grow hand-in-hand with each other. Moreover, linguists highlight the significance of cultural awareness in the course of language learning and second language acquisition. According to Tucker and Lambert (1973) the ability for communicating successfully in a second or foreign language depends on the aptitude of the learner to acquire awareness of the values and traditions of the people whose language is intended to be studied. By this, the significance of cultural awareness and insight become evident for language learning.

Kachru et al. (2006) define global language as “a tongue which has moved beyond its nation, to become “international” (p. 352) and being linked to economical, technological and electronic development, the English language is entitled the position of an international language with a global impact across the world. People of different communities rely on English as a lingua franca, and it brings closer various communities

belonging to different backgrounds and ethnicities that live together. The dominance of English language in communication across major fields like economy, technology, media and education led to more attention towards learning English and seeking it in the Arab World, Gulf countries and even Saudi Arabia. In order to be competent for a compelling world of tomorrow, many people seek and stress on the acquisition of education in English-medium schools and institutions, as prominent job positions, and corporations depend mainly on proficiency in English. (Hanani, 2009)

Learning of the English language, subconsciously, opened up the Arab community to the native culture of the language, and with time, Arab communities began to feel the impact of the English culture on their identity and lifestyle. Changes in clothing, decreased use of Arabic words, food preferences, preferring English as a mother tongue for the younger generation are the subtle changes that have been observed in Arab countries and especially the Gulf region. Due to the rapid development in major Gulf countries like UAE and Saudi Arabia, new business ventures and opportunities have accelerated the need and acceptance of English language as even though Arabic is the official language of these countries, many international companies work through the medium of English language and consider it as a prerequisite to professional success.

As the world is rapidly shifting towards globalization, Arab nationals, and especially Saudis got an increased exposure to the Western countries and culture in pursuit of better educational opportunities and lifestyle shift. According to a study, Saudi Arabia has more students studying abroad compared to a global average. A total of 5.5% students travel to foreign countries for their bachelors and masters compared to a global average of 0.6% in 2013 (Arab News, 2018). With that, the social media and broadcast media allowed the foreign culture have a smooth access to the Arab individuals and influence them with the spark and glitter of the life in West. In the present time, Saudi students love to dress like Western celebrities, listen to music by foreign artists over Arab artists, and surprisingly find themselves aloof from their own Arab culture while more attached and connected with that of the West. Today, it’s a commonplace assertion made by many Arabs that the Arabic identity and culture are drastically influenced by the Western culture which threatens the Arab identity and language.

The emergence of English language as the need of international market across the globe has called for the acquisition and learning of this language on a global scale. In order to stay up-to-date with the international market demands, it has become an important medium of instruction and communication in Arab countries which includes Saudi Arabia as well, it is important to have a thorough look at how the shift in language is affecting the people who are learning it, and what effects does this shift have on their language and culture.

This focus of this research is to study the cultural components that are influenced by learning the English language among Saudi EFL students. The research attempts to examine all the factors like globalization, social media, and westernization, that lead to strengthening the foreign culture from the perspectives of Saudi EFL teachers. It also attempts to explore the concerns and worries of EFL teachers and parents related to the impact of foreign culture on the identity of Saudi young learners. Saudi EFL learners are developing an increased interest in learning English language which is creating a shift in the identity and culture of the younger generation in Saudi Arabia.

1.2 Significance of Research

Owing to the tremendous development in economic and technological domains across the world, the spread and need of English language has allowed foreign culture to gain formidable influence on Arab culture, especially the younger generation and youth. The importance of this research is to investigate university level EFL students about the impact of foreign culture on their identity, their lifestyle and culture and whether they see it beneficial or harmful. Besides, this research also aims at exploring the impact of the foreign culture from the EFL teachers' point of view, and how would they see the future of the Saudi culture under the huge impact of Western culture on the identity, language and thinking of our Saudi youth.

The exploratory nature of this research lays the basis of a framework for future studies to be conducted in this field. As the issue of foreign influence on Saudi EFL learners does not have much research work done on it, this study lays the basis of initial work on which more conclusive and comprehensive work can be formed by future researchers to tackle

the issue closely and examine it widely. According to Brown (2006) exploratory studies tackle new problems on which little or no previous studies have been done. The study explores a range of possible factors for the foreign influence on the identity of EFL learners in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 2

Literature Reviews

2.1 Review of the Previous Studies

It is of vital significance to comprehend what literature review or past studies think about socio-cultural impacts of the English language and its culture as a learning medium on the identity of the students who receive it. Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, (1978) concentrated on how the conditions and surroundings of an individual influence his learning practices. As per him, individuals' practices, mental and profound advancement, enthusiastic and physiological creatures are altogether impacted by a deep rooted convention and socio cultural condition. It tends to be reasoned that Saudi young students connect with their antecedents and assimilate the learning inclination and learning esteems.

Language researchers have always taken a keen interest in studying relationship between acquisition of a second language and the social change that accompanies it. As this study primarily focuses on the impact of foreign culture on the identity of Saudi EFL students, I first find it critical to review the interrelation between language and identity, and what impacts language may have on identity. Language is fundamental to the expression of cultural identity. According to Norton (1997), language is not simply a means of communication or expressing one’s self, it is a practice of constructing understanding of self, of social surroundings, of histories and futures. Norton believes that the learning of language engages the identities of language learners in diverse and complex ways. Norton further quotes various other authors like Leung, Harris and Rampton who point out that identity is constructed through language. Most of the authors argue that language is inseparable from identity, and language itself is an "act of identity". The author has demonstrated the existence of closely related links between language and social processes, power and identity.

It is through language that we express our cultural identity, our inner self, and our values from one generation to the next. Language is the preserver of identity, and it possesses the power to shape and define the human experience. Benjamin Baez (2002) strongly argues that losing one's language means losing the connection with one's originality and roots, "the intimacy associated with Spanish and the closeness to my family and past it allowed. I lost, essentially, all the 'sights and sounds' associated with my native language." According to Baez, language 'shapes' and 'gives meaning' to identity, more than even culture can. Norton (2002) also confirms that learners use language to 'shape' conversations, but occurring at the same time is their negotiation of who they are, and what is their relationship with the world, which in other words their identity. Norton (2000) has also conducted a case study to emphasize the impact of learning ESL on the identity of five women who were learning English in native language contexts. This disposes directly that when students learn English, their own sense of identity, and how they see themselves in relation to the world continuously is negotiated and by learning English, their identity is being influenced and reshaped.

Mekheimer (2011, p.46) conducted a research on the profile of college students level of study in English at Saudi Arabia. Using subjective information accumulation techniques, the reactions and academic history of the understudy give bits of knowledge into his own characteristics and aptitudes as a local like speaker of English as demonstrated by CEPA scores and direct correspondence with the case in English. The account of the understudy demonstrates a solid impact of the second language culture on the learning of this language. The case has been examined and exhibited against a rich research and writing setting that investigated culture and language ideas and their interrelatedness from alternate points of view, accentuating the centrality of cultural assimilation as a major aspect of second or foreign language securing/learning. The paper finishes on notes and suggestions for instructional methods and further research in culture also, language in EFL learning settings.

Alshahrani (2017) conducted a research on EFL students. The discoveries of this examination underscore the dormant utilization of the Twitter microblogging stage in

EFL classes, just as uncovering the positive effect upon Saudi EFL understudies' social connection (commitment), excitement and enthusiasm for getting familiar with culture in English language classes.

Elyas.T. & Nouraldeen (2014) find the investigation of the gathered information which demonstrate that the most affecting variables after learning English in Saudi Arabia are heading out abroad to learn English, knowing the motivation behind learning English and Saudi youngsters' convictions and frames of mind .The least impacting elements after learning English in Saudi Arabia are Islam and westernization. Another factor they present, that encourages the spread of the foreign culture among Saudi students is watching English movies. Students tend to watch movies to reinforce their vocabulary, which in turn exposes them to the English culture. The researchers found out that students encourage the idea of exposure to movies as more words are acquired when they are presented visually in the movies in the form of subtitles.

Alsamani (2014) Conducted a research on topic of Foreign Culture Awareness Needs of Saudi English Language Majors at Buraydah Community College. The finding of the study is students of Saudi need to learn English to find out about various parts of their culture and build up their way of life mindfulness what's more, that they depend generally on sound/visual media to find out about the objective culture. The discoveries likewise appeared that understudies have uplifting dispositions toward the objective culture and its kin. Presenting valid materials for example, DVDs, video tapes, papers in the unknown dialect classroom was profoundly suggested for upgrading society mindfulness and improving language capability. Along these lines, the momentum examine recommended changing the whole EFL instruction projects to present culture in the unknown dialect classroom.

Teaching English language to children Saudi Arabia, as a Muslim country is matter of debate in current time. A group of educators think that it is not suggested to learn English at childhood because it may have a bad effect on Saudi Arabia and Islamic identity, This

may in turn result in dangerous social effects and norms in future. However, the objective of this study lies in its being opposite such deeply rooted beliefs, which created our orientations towards English as a foreign language. This study aims that at ending the debate related to teaching English language for children. This can hopefully be carried out throughout this study by submitting psychological, social and linguistic solutions which will be employed as a scientific and logical analyzation for the origin of such ancient beliefs/ideas and a way to modify them (Beheri, 2014).

Alhawsawi (2015) presents different studies in the area of English language learning to indicate the impact of identities in learning English as Foreign Language. The study presented discoveries structure an English as Unknown dialect (EFL) program in a Saudi Medical University that outline the impact of various characters on understudies learning background in. It features how personalities related with understudies' financial back ground just as controls of study impact understudies' learning knowledge.

From the review of literature, we can conclude that in language and culture has an intricate connection and interdependence for the process of language learning. It has become evident that language learners develop cultural awareness as they acquire a language, and also that cultural awareness cannot be ignored while acquiring a second language. Keeping the discussion in mind, we will analyze the influence of foreign on EFL learners in Saudi Arabia, and how impactful foreign language had been on the culture, beliefs and attitudes of Saudi youth.

2.2 Research Questions

The research, which overviews the impact of the Western culture on the identity of Saudi EFL learners, seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the effects of a foreign culture on the identity of Saudi EFL learners?
2. What are the major factors that contribute to the foreign influence?
3. How is the foreign influence a threat to the identity of Saudi teenagers?
4. What are the concerns of Saudi teachers related to the identity of the future Saudi generation?

The participants in this research are 57 EFL teachers of Taif University, Saudi Arabia. The research project involves the collection of data through a questionnaire, which the participants had to fill out of their free will and choice.

2.3 Hypothesis

1. It is more likely that the foreign culture is affecting the behavior and beliefs of Saudi EFL learners.
2. The major factors that possibly contribute to the foreign influence are giving high importance to mastering English language, social media, and globalization.
3. The foreign influence is most likely forming a threat by affecting the identity, behavior, beliefs and culture of Saudi youth.
4. Saudi teachers are most probably afraid that future generations will lose their Saudi identity under the influence of foreign culture.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Methodology

Research methodology determines the process by which the research is carried out and proceeded. It constitutes the components of the research, the problem discussed, the tools and approaches taken to investigate, procedures designed, and the process of data collection and analysis. According to Schwardt (2007) research methodology is a theory that defines how an inquiry should proceed; it also involves analysis of the assumptions, principles and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry (p.195). This chapter analyzes the method and procedure of the study consisting of research design, research tools, materials, and procedures.

3.2 The Study Design

According to the research conducted by Rakgatlha (p. 42, 2013) research design is a plan for selecting subjects, research sites, and data collection procedures to answer the research questions. A sound research design aims at providing results that are judged to be credible.

This research follows a descriptive quantitative method by utilizing a questionnaire to investigate the effects of foreign language on the identity of Saudi EFL learners and the factors behind them. The researcher aims to identify and examine these factors from EFL teachers' perspectives by raising questions that examine how positive and negative these factors are and how they influence the Saudi culture and identity. Quantitative research uses methods from the natural sciences that are designed to ensure objectivity, generalizability and reliability. In quantitative research, the participants are selected in an unbiased manner, and the researcher plays an external role in conducting the research contrary to qualitative method where the researcher is a main research instrument. (Weinreich, 2009).

3.3 Research Procedures

For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire was devised as a main data gathering tool. Due to time constraints, I was not able to conduct any pilot study prior to sending the questionnaire to the participants. The eligible research population for this study comprised all the EFL instructors of Taif Univeristy, Saudi Arabia. Eligibility criteria specify the characteristics that people in the population must possess in order to be included in the study (Polit & Hungler 1999, as cited in Gisbey, 2015). In this study, the participants had to be EFL instructors in any Saudi University or high school setting, and had to have a background knowledge of Saudi identity and culture as well as experience of teaching Saudi EFL learners. Hence, the participants of the survey were selected, and it was not an open survey. The questionnaire was sent through an email to all the EFL teachers (over a 100) in Taif University by my instructor Dr. Mansour Almalki. Out of the total number of EFL teachers to whom the survey was sent, 57 of them responded to questionnaire. This concludes that the researcher used non-probability or convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is the rational choice in cases where it is impossible to identify all the members of a population (Mbambo, p.25, 2006)

3.4 Participants

According to the demographic data collected, 57 EFL teachers participated in the survey of which 44 were female instructors and 14 were male varying in age factors, qualifications and teaching experience. More than one third (20) of the participants belonged to the age group of between 30-35. One participant only was above 50 years of age, while another 3 belonged to the youngest category i.e. 20-25 years. The participants in the age group of 25-30 were 8, while the remaining (25) fell in the age groups of 35 – 40 and above equally.

In terms of qualification, there were 6 Ph.D professors who took part in this survey, 22 participants with Masters degree, and another 19 holding Masters degree along with professional credential (Celta/Delta/TtT). The remaining 10 participants were Bachelors degree holders with 4 among them having professional credential like Celta/Delta and TtT.

Mentioning the experience of EFL teachers who took the survey, 25 of the participants had 10 or more years in teaching English language. 14 participants had been in this field for 5-10 years, and another 15 who were between 2-5 years. Only 2 participants mentioned there teaching experience to be less than 2. The greatest experience holder was only 1 participant who had more than 20 years of experience in teaching English language.

3.5 Data Collection

According to Polit and Hungler (1999, p. 267, as cited in Gisbey, 2015) data is "the information obtained during the course of an investigation or study". In this study, the questionnaire was used to collect data relevant to the study's objectives and research questions. The questionnaire was kept open for responses for a period of 5 days after sending it to the target group. After 5 days, the data was collected from Google Forms. As the questionnaire was made through using Google Forms, the data collected on Google Forms was available in the form of graphs, giving a clear sketch of the responses collected for each graph. The responses summarized in graphs are explained in detail in the Data analysis section of this study.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, the questionnaire was analyzed and examined for being the main data gathering tool. The questionnaire was subjected to 57 EFL instructors, and their responses reflected the perspective of teachers on the impact of foreign language on the identify and culture of Saudi EFL learners. The responses in the questionnaire were carefully examined as each one of them was related to the main research questions. 15 Likert statements were placed in the questionnaire, and the respondents responded with "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to each statement. The overall analysis of the questionnaire responses helped in gathering data to answer the main research questions.

4.1 English is becoming an important language in Saudi Arabia

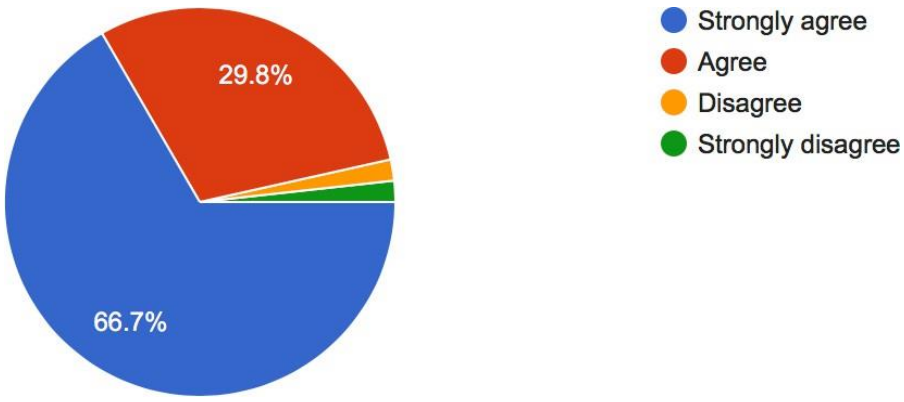


Figure 1: 'Responses to English becoming an important language in Saudi Arabia'

Results of survey statement 1 reveals (as shown in Figure 1) that 38 (66.7%) out of 57 strongly agreed that English has started to emerge as an important language in Saudi Arabia while another 17 (29.8%) agree to the same. 1 of the 2 teachers from a total of 57

disagreed while another strongly disagreed to the statement. The results show that 95% of the EFL teachers agree that English has become an important language in Saudi Arabia.

4.2 : English is influencing the culture of Saudi Arabia

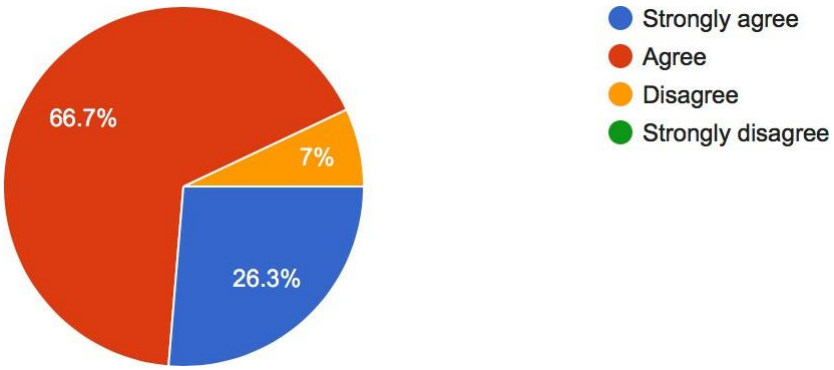


Figure 2: Responses to 'English language influencing the culture of Saudi Arabia'

Figure 2 shows the results of responses to statement 2 which suggests that learning English language is influencing the culture of Saudi Arabia. A total of 38 respondents (66.7%) agree that it indeed is influencing the culture of the learners. Apart from the 38 that agree to the statement, a total of 15 respondents (26.3%) responded with a strong agreement with the statement. Only 4 disagreed to the influence of the language on the culture of the learners which makes 7% of the total respondents.

4.3 : The attitude of Saudi youngsters is changing towards English language

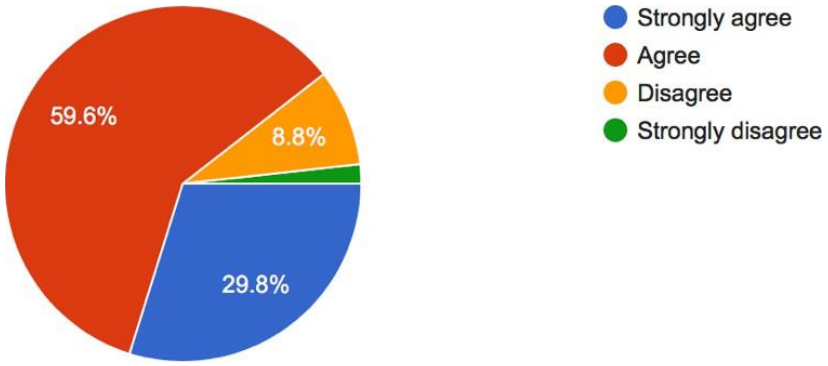


Figure 3: Responses to 'the attitude of Saudi youth is changing towards English'

Results of survey questionnaire statement 'The attitude of Saudi youngsters is changing towards the acquisition of English show that 51 (89.4 %) of 57 EFL teachers responded positively out of which 18 respondents strongly agreed with the statement. The remaining 10% disagree that the attitude of Saudi youth is not changing towards the acquisition of the language.

4.4 Learning English is promoting the foreign culture among Saudi EFL students

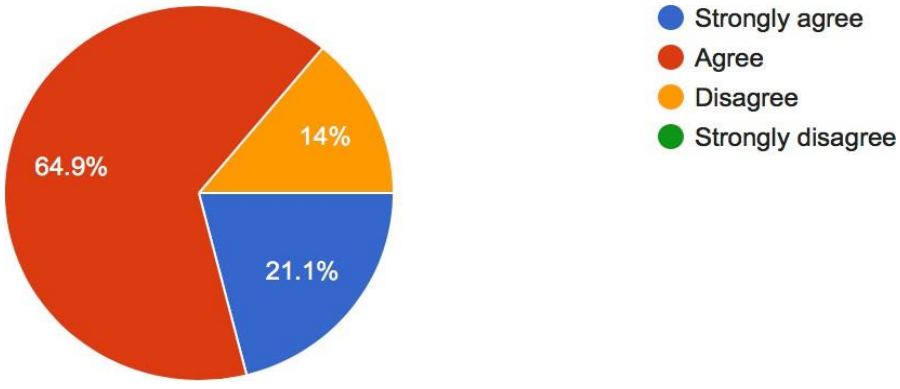


Figure 4: Responses to 'English promoting foreign culture among Saudi students'

Findings of the survey indicate that majority of EFL teachers agree that learning English is a reason for the promotion of the foreign culture among EFL students. According to Figure 4, 49 (86%) of the respondents confirmed that English is a reason for the promotion of foreign culture, among which 12 (21%) strongly agreed with the statement. Only 8 respondents said that they don't agree with the statement, whilst none of the respondents strongly disagreed with it.

4.5 English is changing the behavior and beliefs of Saudi EFL learners

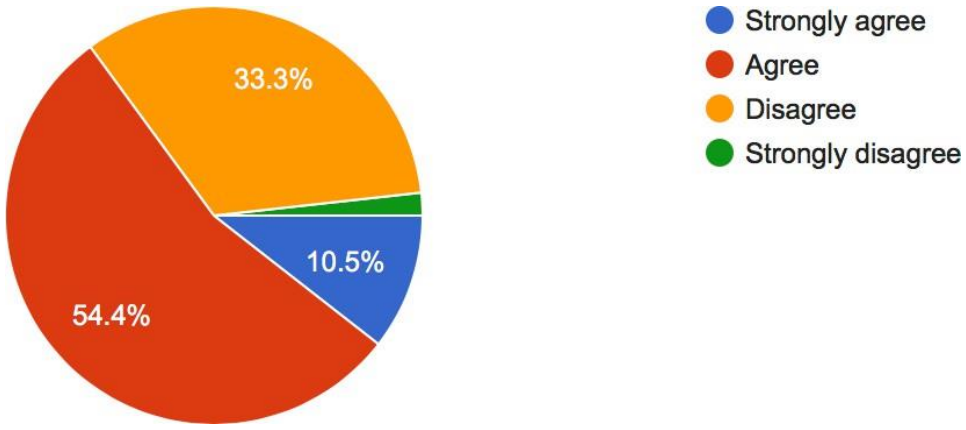


Figure 5: Responses to 'English is changing the behavior and beliefs of Saudi EFL learners'

In response to the questionnaire statement 5 that stated 'Learning English is changing the behavior and beliefs of Saudi EFL students, a total of 30 respondents (54.4%) agree that English language is having an impact on the behavior and beliefs of Saudi EFL students, while 5 (10.5%) EFL teachers strongly agree that the beliefs and behaviors of EFL students are indeed changed with the impact of English language. 19 (35%) respondents disagree with the statement with one respondent strongly disagreeing with it.

4.6 Saudi EFL learners feel positive about the cultural changes happening in their behavior and beliefs while learning English.

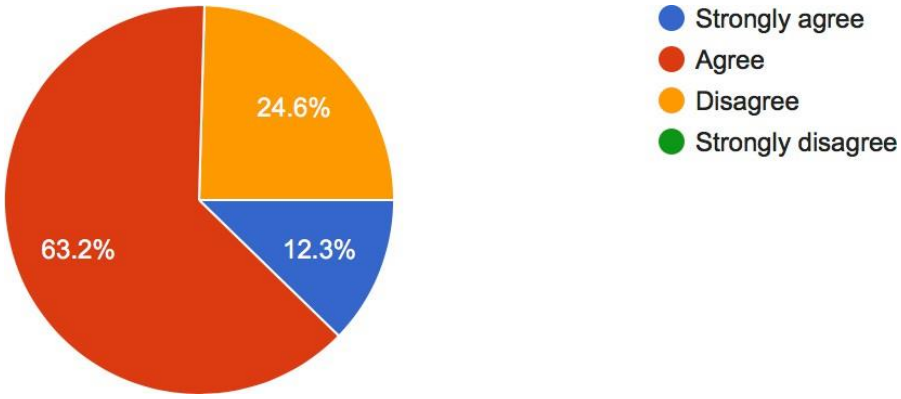


Figure 6: Responses to 'Saudi EFL learners feel positive about the changes in their behaviors and beliefs.

The statement whether Saudi EFL students are considering the change in their behavior and belief as a positive one is supported by 43 respondents out of which 6 (12.3%) strongly agree to it. The remaining 14 (24.6%) respondents believe that Saudi students do not consider the changes in their behavior and beliefs as positive.

4.7 Teachers should be careful while adopting features of a foreign culture as it is negatively affecting the culture and identity of Saudi youth

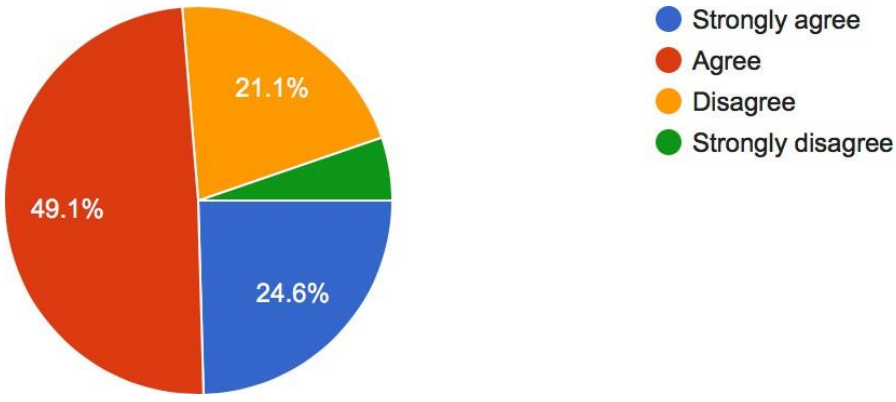


Figure 7: Responses to 'Teachers should be careful of the negative effects of foreign language'

The results of survey statement 7 “Adopting features of a foreign culture is something we have to carefully look at as it is negatively affecting the culture and identity of Saudi youth” show that 42 (74%) of EFL teachers agree with the statement that teacher should be careful while adopting features of a foreign language as it may have negative influence on Saudi youth. 14 (24.6%) of the respondents who responded affirmatively strongly agree with the statement. Of the respondents who disagree, 12 (21%) out of 57 do not agree, and 3(5%) of them showed a strong disagreement this statement of the questionnaire.

4.8 Globalization plays an important role in promoting foreign culture

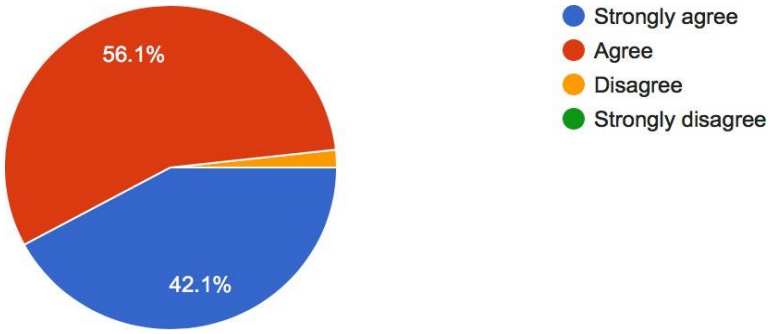


Figure 8: Responses for globalization playing an important role in promoting foreign culture

In response to the survey statement that if globalization is contributing in promoting foreign culture, almost all the respondents (98%) had a positive response with a total of 32 agreeing and the other 24 respondents showing a strong agreement to the statement. Only one respondent disagreed with the role of globalization in the spread of foreign culture.

4.9 Twitter and Facebook help in promoting the foreign culture

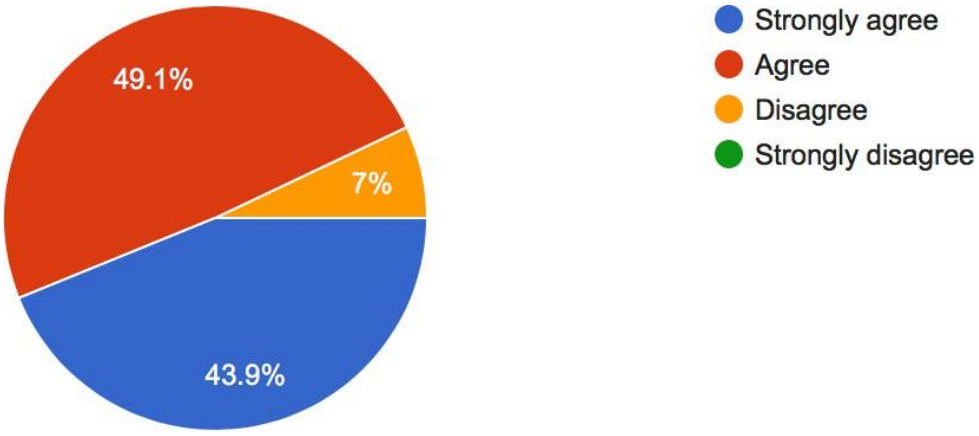


Figure 9: Responses for 'Twitter and Facebook plays an important role in promoting foreign culture'

Do social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook play a role in promoting foreign culture among Saudi youth? According to Thorne (2010) Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and LinkedIn, allow users to connect, share and interact with each other, maintaining online relationships and leading to community building (pp. 139-164). The above graph (Figure 9) shows if EFL teachers believe in the role of social media in promoting foreign culture. Half of the survey participants (28) agree that Facebook and Twitter do contribute in promoting foreign culture, while almost an equal number of participants (25) strongly agree to the statement. A small proportion, comprising of 4 participants disagreed that Twitter and Facebook do not play a major role in helping to promote the foreign culture.

4.10 Parents are concerned about the impact of foreign culture on Saudi youth

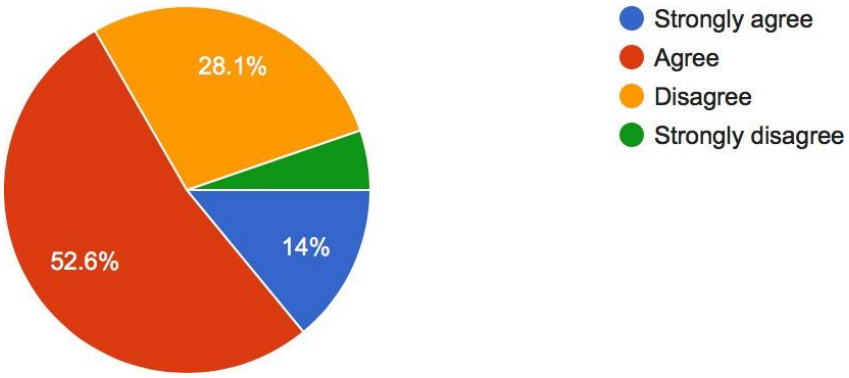


Figure 10: Responses to 'Parents are concerned about the impact of foreign culture'

Are parents concerned about teenagers being influenced by foreign culture? According to the data of the survey statement 10, 30 respondents out of 57 agree that parents are concerned about the identity of Saudi students being influenced. Adding to that, another 8 EFL teachers strongly agree with the statement. On the other side, 19 participants disagree with the statement, out of which 3 participants expressed a strong disagreement with it, and negated if parents were concerned about the impact of foreign culture on Saudi youth.

4.11 Parents should protect the identity of Saudi culture from foreign influence

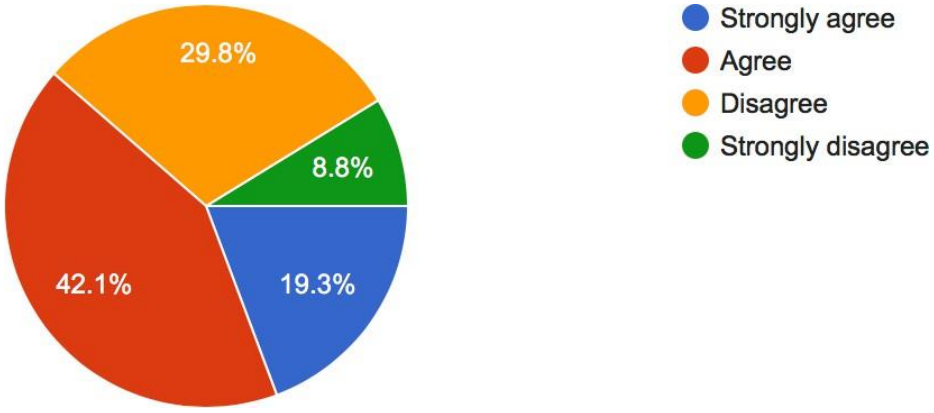


Figure 11: Responses to 'Parents should protect the identity of Saudi youth'

Figure 11 shows the data that reveals if parents should protect the identity of Saudi youth from the influence of foreign culture. 38 of our total participants agree having 8 among them who strongly agree that parents should take steps to protect the identity of Saudi youth. A significant one third (22) participants disagree with the statement, out of which 5 strongly disagree with it, which makes 8% of the total population.

4.12 Teachers are aware of the impact of foreign culture on Saudi EFL learners

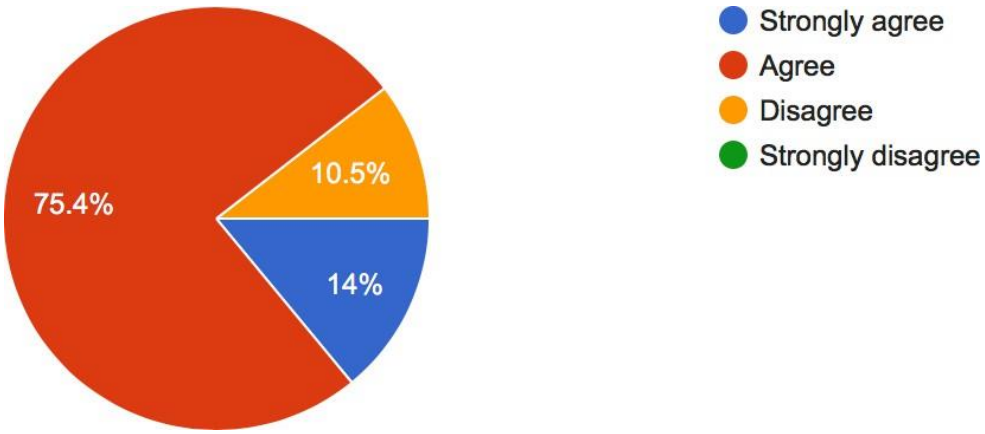
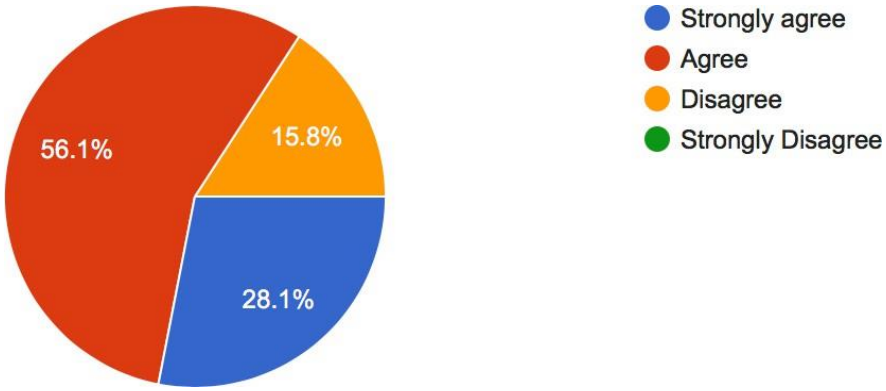


Figure 12: Response to 'Teachers being aware of the impact of foreign culture on Saudi EFL learners'

In response to survey statement 12 in the research questionnaire, EFL teachers were asked if they think teachers are aware of the impact of foreign culture on the identity of Saudi youth. 43 EFL teachers agree that teachers are well aware of the impact of foreign culture on the identity of EFL learners. Another 8 teachers expressed their strong agreement with the statements which makes up the total participants who agree with the statement to be 51 (89%). The remaining 10% expressed their disagreement with the statement implying that EFL teachers aren't really aware of the impact of foreign culture on the identity of Saudi EFL learners.

4.13 Teachers perceive the impact of foreign culture as a positive change Figure 13:



Responses to 'Teachers think the foreign impact is a positive change on EFL learners

In response to survey statement 13 which indicated if teachers perceive the impact of foreign culture as a positive change on Saudi EFL learners, more than half of the survey respondents (32) answered positively to the statement, whilst a quarter of the participants (16) expressed a strong agreement that teachers perceive the foreign impact as a positive change for Saudi EFL learners. Only 9 respondents expressed their disagreement with the statement.

4.14 Teacher are worried about the foreign influence

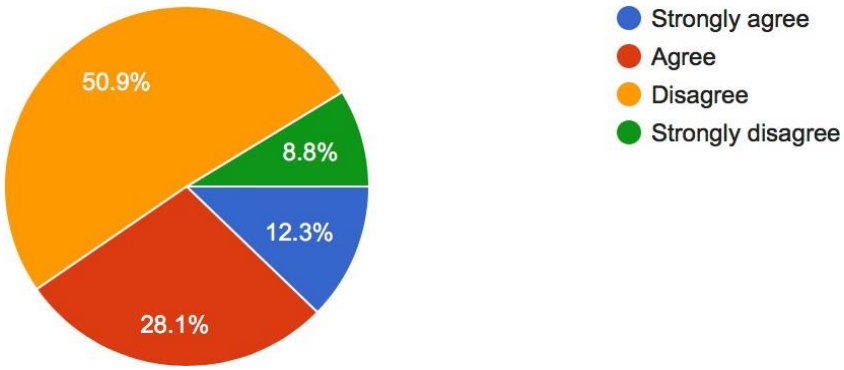


Figure 14: Responses to 'Teachers are worried about the influence of foreign culture on Saudi youth'

Figure 14 displays the data related to questionnaire item 14 which proposed that teachers are worried about the foreign influence on Saudi youth. 59% (34) of the total population expressed that they don't think as teachers they have any worry regarding the foreign influence on Saudi youth. 5 of the 34 expressed a strong disagreement with the statement. The remaining 40% indicated that they have worries regarding the identity of Saudi EFL learners. Among them, 7 participants expressed a strong agreement.

4.15 Teachers should take measures to protect the identity of Saudi learners

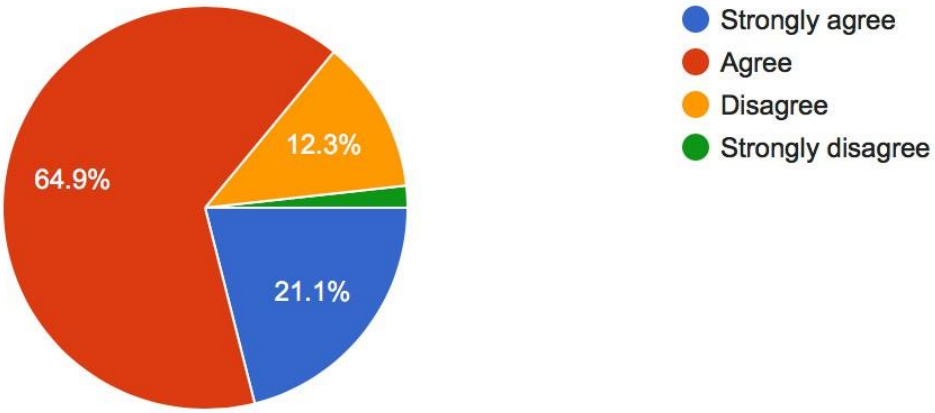


Figure 15: Responses to 'Teachers should be aware of the factors to protect the identity of Saudi learners'

The last item in the questionnaire proposed that teachers should take measures to protect the identity of Saudi learners. Majority of the EFL instructors (49 out of 57) agreed that teachers should take steps to preserve the identity of the native culture in Saudi youth. 37 (65%) of the total number of participants agree while 12 teachers indicated that they strongly agree about the role of teachers in the preservation of Saudi culture. Only 8 participants indicated their disagreement which only 1 participant who strongly disagreed if teachers should take these measures.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Suggestions for future research

5.1 Discussion

The findings of this research study indicate that English language has emerged as an important medium of education in Saudi Arabia, and learning of the language is widely promoting its culture. The findings of this study support the first hypothesis that "the foreign culture is affecting the behavior and beliefs of Saudi youth." Language learning and culture learning are inseparable. Fitria (2014) mentions that language learning and culture learning are interdependent which makes language learning culture learning and language teaching to be culture teaching (p. 2). EFL teachers are well aware of this fact that the rise of English language is widely promoting the culture of the language which naturally is an expected outcome. This goes relevant to Wang (2008, as cited in Fitria, 2014, p. 2) who claims that 'foreign language teaching is foreign culture teaching, and foreign language teachers are foreign culture teachers." This shows that as the Saudi students interest is developing in learning English as a language for educational or vocational goals, they are automatically exposed to the culture of the language as language is a carrier of culture.

Another finding of this research is that the principal reason for the endorsement of the foreign culture is globalization and social media, and this finding supports our second hypothesis which states that "the major factors that possibly contribute to the foreign influence are giving high importance to mastering English language, social media, and globalization. Globalization refers to eliminating political borders and emerging the world into a unified community relying on economic and cultural interests. Zamil (2013) mentions that globalization has its own culture, with its own tools like computers, and satellite communications (p. 19). People who are globally connected via satellite channels or through the internet on social media platforms belong to an integrated culture

regardless of regional and cultural backgrounds. As the Saudi youth gets connected to the world through the internet, they reach on a global platform beyond the culture and borders of Saudi Arabia, and readily accept the behaviors and beliefs of the global identity. Therefore, the second hypothesis for this research study proves to be true and relevant.

The data analysis reveals another important finding that Saudi youngsters are accepting this shift in their culture and behavior, and feel positive about it. The reason for this would most possibly be the confidence they feel in the ability to express on a global scale. Rahman (1996) believes that the English language is understood to be the language of power in some local cultures. Another reason could be that language is a critical tool in the shaping of identity as it is the carrier of culture, and students feel a sense of pride in their identity being constantly reshaped, with new ideas, vocabulary and cultural insight they gain through the acquisition of the foreign language. In a study conducted by Nouraldeen and Elyas (2014) one of the biggest motivation for Saudi EFL learners to learn English it to get jobs (p. 68). Apart from the students, even the teachers feel positive about the acquisition of the foreign language. This could be due to the fact that teachers want the learners to be able to be effective leaders in tomorrow’s world, and be effectively able to communicate with the world and make their contribution. It could also be due to Al-Seghayer's (2012) point that Saudis believe English is essential for the country's development and it is used in many fields in the country.

An important finding of this study is that EFL teachers undoubtedly consider the impact of foreign language on Saudi youth as a positive change, yet they are aware of the negative effects that accompany the foreign influence. The data collected also shows that parents are concerned about the impact of the foreign influence. This negative side of the foreign influence most possibly is the dominance of the foreign influence over the Saudi culture and language. English being a strong language of business and popular media has attracted the attention of the young generation, which resulted their disinterest to learn their native Arabic language and communicate in it. It is a common worry in the Arab world that with the increased interest of the younger generation in the foreign language, the identity of Arabic language and culture could be in danger in the future. Young EFL learners started to develop more interest about the foreign language and gradually lost

interest in their mother language. According to Hanani (1992) the teaching of English and Arabic are not in balance. English is endorsed at schools having more classes, while the Arabic language has fewer classes and has only been limited to homes (p.77) As a result of the continuous encouragement to learn the English language, young learners could easily lose interest in their mother tongue, and be more interested in a global code of communication, taking the pride and confidence of reaching beyond their physical and regional boundaries.

To conclude the discussion, EFL teachers believe that parents and teachers, being the integral part of language and identity development in youngsters, should take steps and measures to protect the native identity, language and culture from being dominated by the foreign influence. They believe that the foreign impact is not unwelcomed, in fact it's a welcomed change, but this change should not cost the Saudi generation to lose their own sense of individuality. Saudi learners have their own unique identity, and this has to be preserved from the foreign influence.

5.2 Limitations

Every research work is influenced by factors which limit its results; the major limitation for this research study is that it is an exploratory study. This suggests that the study was conducted to explore an area or an issue on which not much extensive studies exist, and it only explores the issue rather than making a statement or a conclusion.

Besides, for this research study another major limitation was time and resources. The results were dependent only upon the questionnaire, as no other data gathering tool was used due to time restrictions. The questionnaire was circulated for a limited time, and almost half of the recipients of the survey didn't respond to it due to their busy schedules and time limitations. Also, due to time restrictions, it was not possible to administer the survey in other universities apart from Taif university, making the research base on a convenience sample. Besides, just because a Likert scale questionnaire was devised, the researcher was not able to get descriptive responses to research questions three and four. Using a mixed-method approach could have added more substance to the results achieved.

Another limitation, which again arose from the time restraints, was that the data was gathered taking responses only from EFL teachers. Involving students and parents in the research survey wasn't possible and executable, that is why respondents other than EFL teachers could not have been added. Adding varied research population could have sketched a more comprehensive analysis for the study topic.

Furthermore, using a convenience sample, only the EFL teachers of Taif University were approached out of which just 57 responded. Due to limited resources, the researcher was not able to reach respondents from other universities to have more reliable data. Involving more respondents from different universities would have presented a clearer perspective of the general community about the issue.

5.3 Implications

This study calls for the need of extensive research to be done on the issue of foreign language on Saudi students and to explore the measures that need to be taken to preserve the identity of Saudi youth. Moreover, further research can deal with the impact of the changing behavior and attitude of Saudi EFL learners in the whole society. This research paves the ways for further study that needs to be done to suggest ways in which teachers are able to preserve the identity of the learners when they learn a foreign language.

According to McCarthy, Fischer & Penny, it is crucial for teachers to realize and begin to discuss the issue of "cultural identity, cultural difference, and cultural community" (McCarthy, 2003, p.445).

Analyzing the results, this research implies that parents and teacher are aware and concerned about the identity of Saudi EFL learners, as they are willingly adopting the identity of the target culture. This calls for the need to bring about some changes in education and media responsibilities to strengthen the learners' concepts of native identity and culture, and to accept the changes in the native culture and target culture. The role of teachers and parents should be emphasized to protect the identity of Saudi youngsters.

Last but not the least, studies should be done on wide scale that address how in practice the concept of native identity could be strengthened, and what would be the role of parents, teachers, and community for a better understanding of the importance of native identity in the learning of foreign language and culture.

5.4 Conclusion

It's clear from the discussion and the literature reviewed that culture and language are interdependent and deeply interconnected with each other. It would be impossible to separate them as language is part of culture, and culture depends on language for its transmission. Learning a language inevitably transfers the culture and its values to the learner. In this case, it cannot be expected of Saudi students to learn the foreign language without taking an impact of the language they are learning. To be a global citizen, it is important for Saudi students to adopt new languages, ideas and connect with the world through them as the world is getting closer and closer. The importance of English for Saudi students is reflected in using it in communication to attain jobs chances, gaining knowledge locally and internationally, understanding others' cultures, studying overseas and traveling for pleasure (Al-Seghayer (2012).

The findings of this study imply that English language is a great asset to the Saudi youth, but at the same time, their own identity, culture and language hold unparalleled value which should not be compromised. For this purpose, it is important that educational policy makers should give equal importance and attention to the Arabic language so learners are not instilled with the idea of preferring one language over the other. Teacher should teach their students to take pride in their identity, and take interest in it. Also parents should plant the love of native language in their children and encourage them to use it. English language should be taught due to its importance and global status, but at the same time, measures and policies should be taken to ensure the safety and individuality of the native identity.
Learning a new language enables the learner to have a new sense of who they are and how they see themselves in relation with the surrounding world. For this, they need to be aware of the differences that exist between their first language and the foreign language they learn. Educational centers should provide opportunities to students in which they realize, accept, and admire their cultural and linguistic background, and utilize it as a meaningful learning instrument. When teachers incorporate learner's cultural and

linguistic differences in learning, and acquiring foreign language, Saudi learners will maintain their native identity and respect the cultural differences in between while adopting the foreign language, and acquiring it.

To sum up, the researcher is confident in proving hypothesis one and two, and finds the need for future research to be done on the issue, leading up to constructive steps to be taken by policy makers, Ministry of Education, school administrators and university administrative personnel to strengthen the concepts of identity, beliefs, culture, and language in the younger Saudi generation as Muslims and Saudis. Once a strong concept in native identity is built, young Saudi learners will be able to build new languages, and reshape their identities without losing the sense of who they really are. Learning a foreign language is a need of the current age, and in order to make the Saudi youth competent with the current age, it's imperative to adopt the foreign language and be equipped with the necessities of the modern age. The concern that arouses from this study is that we want our Saudi youth to gain new languages and insight to new cultures as proud Saudi individuals who represent their culture, background, belief and language in any foreign setting.

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Appendix

Effects of Foreign Language on the Identity of Saudi EFL Students
Research Questionnaire

The Influence of English as a Foreign Culture on the Identity of Saudi EFL Learners: An Exploratory Study

The aim of this research project is to investigate the effects of English as a foreign culture on the identity of Saudi EFL students from the perspectives of language teachers. Please take in a few minutes of your precious time to fill in this questionnaire.

The study is conducted as part of the requirements of the degree of MA (TESOL) at Taif University conducted by Ms. Asma Al-Amri and supervised by Dr. Mansoor Almalki. Your participation will only be used for research purposes.

If you have any comments or suggestions, you may email the researcher at: asma_zuhair@hotmail.com or the supervisor at: msamalki@gmail.com.

Thank you!

Name (optional)

_____

Age

- 20-25
- 25-30
- 30-35
- 35-40
- Above 40

Gender

- Male
- Female

Qualification

- PhD
- MA + Professional Credential (CELTA / DELTA / TtT)
- MA
- BA + Professional Credential (CELTA / DELTA / TtT)
- BA

Teaching Experience

- 10 and more
- 5 – 10
- 2 – 5
- less than 2

Instructions: For each statement, please choose whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

1. English has started to become an important language in Saudi Arabia.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

2. Learning English is influencing the culture of Saudi Arabia.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3. The attitude of Saudi youngsters is changing towards the acquisition of English language.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

4. Learning English is promoting the foreign culture among EFL students.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

5. Learning English is changing the behavior and beliefs of the Saudi EFL learners.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6. Saudi EFL learners feel positive about the cultural changes happening in their behavior and beliefs while learning English.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7. Adopting features of a foreign culture is something we have to carefully look at as it is negatively affecting the culture and identity of Saudi youth.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8. Globalization plays an important role in promoting foreign cultures.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook help in promoting English as a foreign culture among Saudi youngsters.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. Parents are concerned and worried of the impact of English as a foreign culture on Saudi youth.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. Parents should protect the identity of Saudi culture from the influence of English as a foreign language.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. Teachers are aware of the impact of the foreign culture on Saudi EFL learners.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

13. As a teacher, I perceive the impact of English as a foreign culture on my students as a positive change.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14. As a teacher, I am worried about my EFL students' culture and identity being influenced.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15. Teachers should be more aware of the factors that may contribute in changing their students' beliefs and so should take measures to protect their students' culture and identity.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagr