# The attributes of an effective educator in cultural perspective: a case study of Saudi international students studying English for Academic Purposes in Australia

by

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## Glossary of terms

**CELTA:** Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults

**EAP:** English for Academic Purposes

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ELICOS:** English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**KASP**: King Abdullah Scholarship Programme

**L1:** First language (student's language)

**L2**: Second language

**NEST:** Native English speaker teacher

**NNEST:** Non-Native English speaker teacher

**TESOL:** Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages

**VET:** Vocational Education and Training

## Definitions of terms

**ESL students:** ESL students are those who speak English as an additional language and who are learning English in English speaking countries (Gunderson, D'Silva & Odo, 2014)

**EFL Students**: EFL students are those who are learning English in non-English-speaking countries (Camenson, 2007)

**EAL/D students**: EAL/D students are those whose first language is a language or dialect other than English. They need additional assistance in developing English language proficiency. (Hertzberg & Freeman, 2012). The term is mostly used in the Australian school context.

**EAP courses**: EAP courses focus on the academic skills that are required for studying at the university. EAP is defined as the formal academic register that all students (domestic and international) are required to use in their academic studies irrespective of their discipline (Gillett & Wray, 2006).

**Educator:** Educator is used in this thesis as an encompassing term for teachers, instructors and lecturers which are applied variously to different educational settings. However, the term effective language teacher and teacher effectiveness are specific terms used in the research literature and will be used as such throughout.

**ELICOS**: ELICOS is the common abbreviation for English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students. ELICOS is a common term used in the English language education industry in Australia (Carey & Robertson, 2015).

**Expatriate teachers:** Expatriate teachers in this thesis will be used for teachers who do not share the nationality of their students.

**Local teachers:** Local teachers in this thesis will be used for teachers who share the nationality of their students.

**TESOL CERTIFICATE IV**: Certificate IV in TESOL is an Australian qualification that prepares students to work in English as a Second Language (ESL/ELICOS) programs in Australia or overseas (TEFL). It is a pre-service certificate for people with little or no English language teaching experience (Holmesglen, 2019)

## Abstract

The concept of understanding students' perceptions of their teachers so that their learning needs can be more effectively addressed is a paramount subject in teaching (Darling-Hammond, Bransford & LePage, 2005; Raymond, 2008; Shono, 2004; Stronge, 2018; Tajeddin, & Griffiths, 2020). An inquiry into what qualities can improve the effectiveness of a teacher in an ESL setting can lead to better teaching and improved learning experiences of international students. Although a number of studies have highlighted this issue in the EFL context (Al-Khairi, 2015; Al-Yaseen, 2019; Alzubi, 2021; Javid, 2011; Raymond, 2008; Saafin, 2005; Shahmohammadi, 2015) a very limited number of studies have been conducted that have focussed on investigating teacher effectiveness in an ESL context. This study, therefore, focussed on the perceptions of Saudi students and offers insight into their perceptions of effective English language teachers in the Australian context. The principal objective of this study was to investigate who is an effective English language educator to a Saudi student. The current study used a qualitative case study design to investigate and analyse data collected through observations and interviews. A preliminary study was conducted through a questionnaire survey of a total of 48 Saudi and non-Saudi students studying in intermediate EAP programme in Australia as a method to highlight points of interest among all international students for deeper investigation through the observations and semi-structured interviews in the principal study. Results from a t-test on the questionnaire survey showed a significant difference in the scores of student perceptions of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality. No significant difference between Saudi and non-Saudi students was evidenced on the notion of teacher effectiveness in the following categories: teaching methods, communication style and cultural understanding, fairness, subject knowledge and credibility, and organization and preparation except for the personality attribute. The interviews which were the primary source of data with six Saudi students affirmed that the personality of a teacher was viewed as the most important attribute of effective EAP teachers. In addition, the findings of the study suggest that different attributes of effective teachers have a cultural dimension to them and, therefore, understanding perspectives of students in relation to their culture is a key aspect of determining teacher effectiveness in specific EAP contexts. An effective EAP teacher needs be aware of different cultural aspects of the attributes related to the notion of teacher effectiveness when demonstrating them in an EAP classroom in the Australian context.

## Declaration

This thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; and all substantive contributions by others to the work presented, including jointly authored publications, are clearly acknowledged.

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# Chapter One: Context of the study

## *1.1 Introduction*

This study aims to determine the characteristics of an effective educator from the perspective of Saudi students in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs in Australia. Teachers are viewed as one of the most important elements in determining students' learning outcomes (Stronge, Grant, & Xu, 2015). As teachers are of central importance, studying teacher effectiveness is critical in understanding a range of personal attributes, knowledge and skills that need to be demonstrated in order to address the needs of their students. However, it has always been challenging to present clear guidelines to teachers of what constitutes effective attributes as they vary from one context to another and also because they change over a period of time. In addition, further complexity is added to this issue when what is perceived as 'effective' or 'good' practice may mean something different for both teachers and students. As the demonstration of different attributes are relevant to context, the situation can be challenging for teachers when they do not share the same cultural background with their students. This is further complicated when students come from a range of different cultural and educational backgrounds that they do not share with each other. The English for academic purposes (EAP) classes provide a classic example of such situations in the English as second language (ESL) context where a diverse profile of students come to learn English for a particular purpose and time period (Martin, 2014). When there are distinctive variations between the context of students' home country and the host country, the expectations of the international students may contradict the teachers' expectations on the notion of effective teachers (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

The EAP industry is an important area of preparation for higher education in an ESL context as it provides international students with the necessary academic skills and academic language development to support success in academic programs (Martin, 2014). In a neoliberal political environment such as in Australia, it is important for higher education institutions to pedagogically address the needs of international students for economic survival in a competitive market (Olssen & Peters, 2005). As a case study of an EAP institution within the Australian context, understandings of multicultural Australian society, the role of universities in Australia, and the funding of higher education and government agenda are important for interpreting and understanding what happens in the EAP classroom. A classroom is a micro socio-cultural setting

of the broader sociocultural context of the Australian society, but EAP is focussed on international students (Martin, 2014). These international students may not engage with the Australian society and culture beyond the EAP classroom, so their needs are different because they are not going through an acculturation or socialization process. The only socialization process for them is success in higher education in Australia (Wadsworth, Hecht & Jung, 2008). Thus, the diversity of international students creates challenges for the teachers to accommodate a range of cultural expectations of classroom practice. EAP programmes themselves have a neoliberal agenda as they focus on business, and perceive students as consumers, projecting EAP as a product that can be sold and that can be marketed to the student Olssen & Peters, 2005). Therefore, demonstrating effective behaviours and practices in class, profit generation, accountability are key discourses to understand teacher effectiveness in EAP classes. EAP teachers may not necessarily be concerned about the neoliberal context as their concern has a pedagogical focus but the teachers exist within the broader neoliberal context because they are hired by the institutions who are concerned about the quality of education and reputation. Who is an effective teacher or what the qualities of effective EAP teachers are reflect how the teachers are addressing the needs of their students, which in turn impacts on the institutional reputation. Therefore, if Saudi students are coming into the classroom and their teachers are not responding to their expectations it becomes the responsibility of the institution to address the issues with their teachers.

In Australian higher education, Saudi students are an important cohort as higher education in Australia has witnessed 6200 Saudi student enrollments in 2019 making it one of the most prominent and major representative cohorts from the Middle East region (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trades, 2021). Furthermore, Australia is viewed by Saudi students as the third most preferred destination to study after USA and UK (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trades, 2021). This makes Saudi Arabia a potential market for Australian higher education that can fund their students through the King Salman scholarship to study in Australia so that in return Saudi students can contribute back to their society. Although the number is comparatively low to the international Chinese and Indian student markets in Australian higher education, if the needs of Saudi students are effectively addressed, it will attract higher numbers of Saudi students to Australia through the scholarship scheme and in the process further diversify the international perspectives of the university student population.

Being an important cohort in EAP classes in Australia, and the way these students have learned in general and English language in particular in their own country which significantly differs from how they are taught English in Australia, makes the investigation of their perceptions of an effective teacher paramount. As a result of the differences in the contexts and the neoliberal argument in Australian higher education and institutions, how much the teacher adapts to the cultural expectations of the international students including Saudi students in terms of change in classroom practices or adoption of certain practices, and how much a teacher changes their practices to reflect those of the host culture poses a further challenge to define teacher effectiveness and the role of teachers in the EAP classroom. The absence of Saudi students' voices offers an assumption that all international students are regarded as one entity and that pedagogical needs are similar; therefore, they will continue to be marginalised in the EAP industry or higher education system. Educators still have a very limited understanding of the way in which responses could complement or contradict findings of other similar ESL international students' studies conducted in Australia or elsewhere. Understanding the perceptions of Saudi students in the ESL context in Australia would, therefore, help teachers to accommodate the needs of Saudi students in a neoliberal and multicultural context. Furthermore, my experience and expertise in English language teaching in Saudi Arabia and my cultural understanding of this cohort further strengthen the selection of this particular cohort for investigation in this study.

The goal of the research is to offer insights into Saudi students' perceptions of an effective English language teacher in order to contribute to best practice of English language educators teaching Saudi students in EAP programs in Australia, as well as in other English-speaking countries and in Saudi Arabia. The voice of Saudi students will offer valuable understanding of features linked to teacher effectiveness through which their learning and achievement could be improved. Such understanding is crucial to supporting the preparation and effective transition of Saudi students, and students from similar cultural backgrounds, into higher education programs where English is used as the medium of instruction and interaction.

Teachers are a key element of the learning process and their success relates to those practices and behaviours that are helpful in achieving desired learning outcomes. Such practices and behaviours include successfully transmitting their ideas, enhancing students' learning skills, motivating them to learn and helping them achieve high grades (Al-Khairi, 2015). Amongst the various factors that

affect students' performance, teachers are crucial, since they offer the greatest opportunity to improve the overall quality of students' life (Stronge et al, 2015). Successful teaching is not a stagnant activity that can occur by simply applying certain teaching methods; it encompasses particular skills, techniques and behaviours that need to be implemented, cultivated and maintained by teachers throughout the year to improve the learning experience of the students. Elliott, Kratochwill, Cook and Travers (2000) support the idea that effective teaching requires the teacher to fully understand and have the ability to best serve the learning needs of their students by modifying their teaching styles and behaviours (DeCapua, 2018; Newton, Siregar, & Thao, 2020; Putnam, 2011; Richardson, 2012) The concept of culturally responsive teaching is important to English language teaching as students learning English in ESL contexts come from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, students who develop supportive and positive relationships with their teachers tend to achieve higher levels of achievement as compared to those who do not have such relationships (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2011). Thus, it appears that teachers who want to be effective must keep themselves abreast of students' learning needs and expectations and establish good rapport with their students.

The literature on teachers' effectiveness suggests that teachers are closely associated with the students' achievements (Stronge, 2010, 2018). In the past, a student's achievement was the only scale that was used to measure teacher effectiveness. Later, as the importance of a student-centered approach grew, researchers incorporated the voice of students in understanding teacher effectiveness, which was missing in previous literature. As the paradigm shifted from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach, students' perceptions became of central importance and it was imperative to inform educators about students' expectations so that their needs could be better addressed. However, it is critical to understand that students' voices may be very context-specific and, therefore, research is needed to understand their perceptions so that the teachers are well informed and prepared in different contexts and can approach students' learning appropriately. Kumaravadivelu (2012) emphasized that teaching is not only about teaching methods; it takes account of learners' perceptions and cultures when addressing their language learning needs. This helps in creating a classroom environment that supports effective learning.

English-speaking countries are in competition not only to attract but also to retain international students from non-English speaking countries all around the world. Given the extreme pressure on

international students, who have to learn academic English in a very limited time frame, as well as the financial investment they make, this competition highlights the importance of understanding their expectations of teachers, pedagogical procedures and the products of courses. Certain demographical variables play a significant role in impacting students' perceptions and expectations and, to foster learning, must be considered as part of understanding students' needs (Bordia, Wales, & Pittam, 2006). It is thus clear that the study of expectations would need to be context-specific, and that there is therefore a need for research in different contexts to thoroughly understand students so that educators understand the cultures of the classroom and avoid the concept of one-size-fits-all or practices that may conflict with students' cultures. The satisfaction of students regarding their teachers and learning providers, and fulfilling their needs would help to positively impact educational outcomes such as learning, motivation and behaviour.

With growing awareness of the importance of effective teaching, it is imperative to research students' expectations for effective learning in the classroom. International students studying in EAP programs in Australia come from many cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds. Most students come from China, India and the South-east Asian regions due to Australia's geographic location, among a multitude of other factors. A growing interest among Saudi students in obtaining higher education abroad has led to a rise in numbers of Saudi students in EAP classes in Australia. This is a recent trend for EAP educators who must attend to the learning needs of all students in the class, which can be diverse, in order to effectively prepare students for university studies in a range of academic disciplines. Consequently, the focus of this study is on what effectiveness means for Saudi students who are a relatively new cohort with potentially different perceptions and learning needs to the Asian majority in EAP classes.

The research questions for this study are:

**Who is an effective English language educator to a Saudi international student studying English for Academic Purposes in Australia?**

1. What are the factors that influence Saudi students' perceptions of effective language educators?

2. What are the perceived qualities of an English language educator teaching in EAP programs in Australia that contribute to Saudi students' perceived improvement of their English language proficiency?

To situate these questions, it is necessary first to look at the nature of EAP courses, both in general and in Australia, as well as the differences between ESL and EFL environments, and the role of the EAP practitioner (section 1.2). It is also necessary to consider the place of international students in Australian tertiary education, with particular reference to Saudi students as a recent cohort (section 1.3). Section 1.4 outlines the Saudi Arabian context in general, and the educational background of Saudi students to provide a frame for understanding the learners and their distinctive cultural and linguistic needs, as well as the factors that may shape their perceptions of an effective educator. Section 1.5 concerns the significance of the study, while section 1.6 outlines the organization of the thesis.

### *1.2 English for academic purposes: Courses and contexts*

English for academic purposes (EAP) is concerned with the development of English language skills for academic purposes. EAP is thus typically associated with university-level learning, and successful completion of an EAP course typically provides an entry criterion for tertiary courses, whether undergraduate or postgraduate. In most countries EAP is offered as a pathway course to pursue tertiary studies, whether in English speaking countries such as the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada and the USA (Hadley, 2014), or in other countries where English is the medium of instruction at tertiary level. For example, in Saudi Arabia many universities offer undergraduate studies through English as the medium of instruction (science and engineering), and make EAP courses mandatory for students before they start their degree program. In Australia, a variety of targeted EAP courses are available to international students who wish to prepare themselves for tertiary study in Australia (Technical and Further Education, South Australia, 2017; Wilson, 2016)

According to Gillett and Wray (2006), the aim of EAP courses is to help international students overcome linguistic and cultural difficulties that are associated with learning through the medium of English. Thus the EAP course aims to develop and enhance academic skills such as report writing, listening to lectures and taking notes, writing essays and reports, and taking part in group discussions and spoken presentations (Hewings & McCarthy, 2012). At the same time, EAP courses are expected to engage students in activities to help them gain understanding in using

English to participate in different academic contexts such as Certificate, Diploma, Undergraduate and Postgraduate programs (Wilson, 2016). EAP courses are designed for students with different language proficiencies, mainly intermediate to advanced, and most Saudi students in Australia enrol in EAP courses.

Gillett (2004) defined EAP as 'language and associated skills that students need to undertake in higher education through the medium of English' (Gillett, 2004, p. 11). These skills include the four macro skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, although Hamp-Lyons (2011) argues that speaking is generally the skill least attended to when training international EAP students. EAP also includes 'soft' skills such as critical thinking, academic referencing, and computer skills. The skills are taught using various academic tasks, content and texts, which are sometimes but not always related to students' intended area of study. Ideally, the aim of the program is not only to teach students generic academic skills but also to provide introductory knowledge to those genres that are relevant to their future disciplines (Terraschke & Wahid, 2011). As the purpose of the program is to prepare students for tertiary courses, much emphasis is laid on needs analysis when preparing EAP curriculum and setting goals in a particular context (Hadley, 2014). At the broadest level, such context relates to whether EAP is being conducted in a country where English is a foreign language or in a country where it is the official language and the language of the majority of the population.

### *1.2.1 ESL vs EFL context*

It is necessary to discuss the differences between the two contexts, ESL and EFL, given that EAP courses are offered in both ESL and EFL contexts, and given that the Saudi students coming to Australia have studied English in an EFL context (Saudi Arabia) (section 1.4.1) and are now encountering an ESL setting. The distinction in these two contexts would help to explain the students' expectations and perceptions in the ESL learning environment.

ESL students learn English language in a country where English is widely used and students have exposure to the culture of the English-speaking world and specifically the local culture. In such contexts, the notion of 'acquisition' is emphasized over 'learning' as opportunities for engaging with the language are available both inside and outside the classroom, facilitating certain language acquisition features (Van Deusen-Scholl & Hornberger, 2008). Educators in second language classes focus on students' needs and introduce a number of different learning activities to practice

the language in the classroom (Tsui, 2005). In an ESL context, students come to English with a specific aim to achieve the necessary proficiency in the language to successfully pursue their educational goals. This gives them relatively more time and focus to progress in the language. Moreover, ESL educators are encouraged to implement language pedagogies such as the communicative approach as this offers students the opportunity to interact with other students in a real communicative context. The communicative context also allows relevant phrases and words to emerge according to the situation (Toro, Camacho-Minuche, Pinza-Tapia, & Paredes, 2019). ESL classrooms typically make frequent use of the communicative approach, offering students the opportunity to develop communicative competence, both spoken and written, and use the language in authentic communicative situations (Tarnopolsky, 2017).

By contrast, an EFL context is where English is not the native language of the country (Tarnopolsky, 2017). In general, native speakers can easily define foreign language in relation to territoriality and ethno-national identity, whereas speakers of many other languages reciprocally find it challenging to define the term using similar criteria due to the unique glossography of English. The expression English as a foreign language (EFL) refers to the way in which English language is used and learned in a non-native-speaking situation. Foreign language teaching or learning suggests that L2 is not used to communicate with the community of the country where it is being learned. This suggests that EFL learners have little opportunity to informally 'acquire' English through social interaction, but are limited to formally learning English, which only takes place inside the classroom. Tarnopolsky (2017) stated 'EFL learners inevitably lack rich and varied comprehensible input in the target language, as compared to ESL learners'. Limited class hours, and lack of exposure to an authentic communicative atmosphere lowers their chances of achieving fluency in English (Tarnopolsky, 2017). The students in EFL contexts often have other subjects to study besides English language; therefore, classes are not held frequently and typically have a limited number of hours. In addition, students in EFL classes sometimes may not see significant benefits of learning a foreign language which could be one of the reasons for their low motivation (Tarnopolsky, 2017). The internet, radio and television may, however, provide further opportunities to learn and practice English beyond the classroom in such contexts.

Differences in opinion are evident in relation to the way EFL and ESL should be taught (Tarnopolsky, 2017). Some researchers such as Savignon (1990) and VanPatten (1990) considered

that there exists no distinction between the two and therefore both should be taught in the same way. The supporters of this position argue that second language acquisition data can be relevant to both EFL and ESL (Tarnopolsky, 2017). Other researchers, however, are sceptical about this view and support the idea that the process of teaching EFL and ESL is different, and that the two do not overlap (Kramsch, 1990; Tarnopolsky, 2000).

In highlighting the differences between ESL and EFL, an interesting aspect that favours ESL learners over EFL learners is the knowledge of non-verbal and lifestyle communicative behavioural patterns. Tarnopolsky (2000) states:

> It may not be a problem in ESL teaching because a student who is acquiring her or his English in an English-speaking country will grasp non-verbal and lifestyle communicative behavioural patterns very quickly just because she or he is exposed to these patterns due to immersion in an English-speaking cultural community. But an EFL learner may, and usually does, finish her or his course of English without having any idea of how different non-verbal and lifestyle communicative behavioral patterns in her or his home culture and in the English-speaking cultural communities are. As a result, however good, a command over the target language a learner acquires, it does not save her or him from problems and misunderstandings with native speakers and social institutions in the target cultural community – especially if it is vastly different in its style of daily life as compared to her or his home community. (Tarnopolsky, 2000, p. 31).

Since non-verbal and lifestyle communicative behavioural patterns are culture-bound (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012; Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018), taking the distinction between ESL and EFL into account in regard to understanding EAP teacher effectiveness is critical. Depending on the context where EAP is taught, the roles ascribed to EAP practitioners may also influence students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness in EAP programs, which will be discussed in the next section.

### *1.2.2 The role of EAP practitioners*

The role of EAP practitioners varies depending upon the position of the EAP program – whether in a university, a secondary school, or a private language school or centre (Charles & Pecorari, 2015). Also, and perhaps because EAP is taught in such different settings and in so many varied parts of the world, different terminologies have been used to describe the 'teacher', such as lecturer, educator, and practitioner. The term 'practitioner' is widely used as the role is considered

to be more than a teacher and usually involves two or all of three practices: materials development, teaching and research (Charles & Pecorari, 2015).

The role of the practitioner in mainstream pedagogy is defined by the ideologies of dominant communities and societies (Canagarajah, 1999). Therefore, in some countries, an EAP practitioner is only expected to teach language, while culture is not in the scope of their approved curriculum (Kramsch, 2013). However, the reality is that if EAP practitioners do not understand the culture of their students and do not see differences between their own culture and the cultures of students, there will be a significant mismatch in perceptions of EAP practitioners' roles and students' perceptions on the notion of teacher effectiveness. These differences in perceptions emphasise that not everyone from a different cultural background gives the same meaning to the 'role of a practitioner' due to differences in beliefs and social-cultural contexts. What role students perceive for an effective teacher may differ from the actual role an EAP practitioner has in the EAP class. Since the meaning of 'effective teacher' would be different for a teacher who is trained in the Australian context and students who are coming from non-ESL contexts, there is a likelihood of conflict between students' and teachers' perceptions of the 'role' that a practitioner should play in an EAP classroom.

The overall goals of EAP practitioners are to facilitate the acquisition of English for participation in the academic world (Liyanage & Walker, 2014), by engaging them in a variety of different tasks. Ding and Bruce (2017) identified two conceptualisations of EAP that influence the interpretation of these goals, namely EAP as a 'support service' and EAP as 'academic field'. Within any setting, the position of EAP in relation to 'support services' and 'academic field' influences the expected role of practitioners and the way it is taught around the world (Ding & Bruce, 2017). Since the 'support service' focuses on general language proficiency, EAP practitioners are responsible for developing students' linguistic knowledge and communicative skills within an academic setting. Thus, the role of the EAP practitioners in this approach is to teach the four macro skills of English (listening, speaking, reading and writing) by employing academic-focused tasks. In contrast, the goal of the 'academic field' approach is to develop students' capacity for the language that is used in their particular areas of discipline. Thus, the role of the practitioner in the 'academic field' is to focus on developing students' ability to understand and use language in different settings which can facilitate their participation in a particular

academic community in which they aim to participate. Therefore, the EAP practitioner's role and identity are not formed as a result of their personal views and self-efficacy, but rather social and political forces play a role that shapes the university and the status of EAP within that university (Ding & Bruce, 2017).

The identity of the practitioners in different settings is necessarily influenced by these two conceptualizations of EAP – 'support service' and 'academic field'. For instance, the practitioner's identity in the 'support service' approach is described as a 'technician' in which much attention is given to the competent execution of the pedagogical techniques. The 'academic field' approach, however, focuses on the concept of theory and research which is strongly linked to the practitioner's ability to undertake research that informs practice. In this case, the practitioner's identity is like a problem-solver who makes an effort to analyse and address the needs of the students through their research findings (Ding & Bruce, 2017). It is argued that EAP practitioners cannot isolate themselves from the academic and political contexts. Therefore, in order to better address the needs of students, practitioners must consider the importance of self-evaluation and self-assessment of their teaching practices (Liu, Chang, Yang, & Sun, 2011). Nevertheless, sometimes these variations in teacher's roles, depending upon the position of EAP in teaching centres, are not only unclear to teachers, but also to students (MacDonald, 2016).

Other vital factors that may influence the role of EAP practitioners in these two conceptualizations include the length of the course (time factor), types of materials used and expected outcomes in relation to skills and knowledge (Ding & Bruce, 2017). These conceptualizations are central to the understanding of teacher's effectiveness as students coming from different education backgrounds have certain beliefs and expectations of EAP courses and their perceptions are likely to be influenced if they are unaware of the overall role of the teachers teaching the EAP courses. It is therefore imperative that teachers are encouraged to negotiate students' perceptions of effective EAP teachers before the start of their EAP course. As Blaj-Ward (2014) stated: 'eliciting students' expectations, rather than starting from (potentially wrongly constructed) assumptions, is a useful step when designing and developing EAP support' (Blaj-Ward, 2014, p. 28).

### *1.3 International students in Australia*

Australian universities are high-volume providers of education to international students. In 2010-11, over half a million international students were enrolled across higher education, Vocational

Education and Training (VET) and English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) in various educational centres (Australian Education International, 2014), which made a valuable contribution of $16.3 billion to the Australian economy. Neoliberal policies that dominate the Australian higher education sector, including the preparatory EAP sector, view students as consumers and education as business (Ding & Bruce, 2017). The motives of education and neoliberalism, however, are contrary to each other (Desierto & De Maio, 2020). Where 'neoliberalism' sees attracting international students for flourishing businesses and competing for overseas students to generate revenues, the goal of 'education' is to share knowledge and support students' learning process.

Higher education in neoliberal contexts such as in Australia highly depends on attracting and retaining international students for academic and survival purposes (Ding & Bruce, 2017). The institutions, therefore, expect the EAP sector to prepare students effectively in order for students to succeed at the university (Martin, 2014). As a result, the EAP sector acts as a support that facilitates students to be prepared for success in the universities (Martin, 2014).

Saudi Arabia, which is a rich country in some ways, is a potential market and can fund their students to study in Australia so that in return Saudi students can contribute back to their society. Although the drop in number of Saudi students in EAP classes can be attributed to the limited scholarships available to Saudi students, it may well be due to the unmet students' expectations on the notion of teacher effectiveness. Meeting the Saudi students' expectations of effective teachers through the lens of Western academia would be challenging if Western academics are unaware of the Saudi students' educational and cultural background, and their perceptions on teacher effectiveness.

The teacher in the EAP classroom may not be directly aware of the neoliberal agenda and for them it is a matter of pedagogical focus because teachers are employed to teach English language skills and academic skills. However, neoliberalism can be problematic in this context because the teachers are employed by institutions that are concerned about the quality of teaching and the reputation of the institution. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the institutions to address the pedagogical issues with their teachers to effectively teach the EAP students. The notion of 'teacher effectiveness' from students' perspectives, therefore, becomes an important focus for investigation because it is a reflection of the ability of the institutions to convince students that

their teachers are teaching in a culturally responsive way. As a case study of an EAP institution within the Australian context, broader understandings of multicultural Australian society help to interpret the teaching practices of the EAP classroom; also, broader understandings of the funding of higher education help to interpret the institutional policies and practices of EAP centres.

Besides paying high tuition fees while studying in Australia, international students play a vital role in establishing international ties and learning about Australian culture (Paltridge, Mayson & Schapper, 2012). As the education sector is important to the Australian economy, it is imperative to keep international students satisfied. Therefore, in order to respond to the needs of international students, universities had asked the Australian government to increase their funding to enhance the quality of education they could provide (Orth, 2015). The focus has now shifted to standards and strong outcomes for international students (Humphreys, Haugh, Fenton-Smith, Lobo, Michael, & Walkinshaw, 2012).

There have been several changes to the educational policy by the Australian government concerning higher education that originated from the Bradley Review and the Knight Review (Orth, 2015). The Bradley review examined the access and quality of education, resulting in the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) that aims at improving the quality of Australian higher education (Orth, 2015). The Knight Review focussed on the difficulties international students face when accessing higher education in Australia (Orth, 2015). This led to some recommendations such as changes to the visa qualifying requirements for international students. In response to these reviews, Australian universities are required to improve the quality of their education system and to develop good marketing strategies that would help in attracting international students (Orth, 2015). These reviews are important to highlight as they help to explain why international students choose to study in Australia.

The major destinations for international students include the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada, France and Japan (Chazal, 2014). The interest among Asian and the Middle Eastern students creates a high demand for admission in universities in English-speaking countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011; Taylor & Albasri, 2014). Australian universities are deemed highly reputable which explains international students' desire to undertake their higher education in Australia. Midgley (2010) believes that while attaining their education,

international students socialise and build connections through engaging with the Australian community.

In Australia, international students must have credible entrance for undergraduate courses grades and English proficiency to a band of 6.0 or more in the (IELTS) English Language Testing System (McDonald, Moyle, & Temple, 2019). Those international students who are unable to achieve the desired IELTS score can register in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS). According to the Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment (DESE),

> ELICOS forms a significant part of Australia's international education sector. Students come from overseas to study the English language for a variety of reasons. Some need to improve their English for work or career purposes, some have a personal interest in becoming fluent in English, and some intend to travel. Others may want to continue their education in English, either in Australia or elsewhere, and need to develop the language skills to undertake further study. Consequently, the ELICOS Standards enhance Australia's reputation as a provider of quality education to international education markets and assist in attracting high-quality international students to Australia (DESE, 2018, n.a).

ELICOS assists international students in developing and improving their English skills before commencing their academic studies in Australia. After the completion of ELICOS at an appropriate level and fulfilling the pre-requisite of a selected course, students can enrol in their desired academic program. This means that students do not have to also fulfil the IELTS entry requirements for a university course. Most of these students are on a temporary visa and often have to meet their scholarship commitments and sometimes cannot legally work for more than 20 hours. Time then becomes a significant factor in these courses. English language skills are vital for international students in order to facilitate learning in their discipline, and for academic success (Yates & Wahid, 2013) and many international students express considerable disappointment when they fail to achieve the desired levels of proficiency.

Although studies have shown that Australia is a preferred study destination for many international students due to its reputation, students face a number of problems in relation to achieving a quality education in the higher education sector. Some universities were accused of seeing international students as 'cash cows', but the term is now rejected and used only for criticizing competitors in the market (Hadley, 2014). An intense debate emerged amongst academics and higher education

policy drivers that questioned the English language competence of international students in regard to achieving academic learning. For example, Humphreys et al. (2012) explored the English language proficiency of international students in different stages of their first semester, concluding that the proficiency of some international students regressed as they embarked on their course. Humphreys et al. (2012) were explicit in stating their findings:

> ..we have found that while some students improve their English language proficiency (as measured by IELTS) over the course of their first semester of study, others do not, and some even appear to regress. We would suggest that this variability in English language proficiency is a reality that universities must come to grips with (Humphreys et. al, 2012, p. 36).

In order to maintain its international reputation, several measures have been taken to improve the Australian education profile, which included offering scholarship programs to international students and providing access to various facilities on and off campus. Hadley (2014) highlighted that it is necessary to assess the quality of EAP courses in Australia and to provide empirical evidence to inform the allocation of funding by Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). There is a need to weigh and measure the external and internal factors to determine the quality of education plans, programs taught, and people involved (Hadley, 2014). Hadley (2014) emphasized the importance of students' satisfaction in EAP courses stating that

> Gauging student satisfaction is vital for determining if the educational services provided by the EAP unit are aiding in the recruitment and retention of international students, because as consumers in the modern knowledge economy, international students feel entitled to demand a satisfying educational experience. When expectations are unmet, they can express their displeasure by taking their business elsewhere and dissuading future students from coming to the HEI through their negative reviews (Hadley, 2014, p.101).

This suggests that it is imperative to meet the expectations of students so that benefits could be gained for the Australian economy and overseas reputation. International students not only help universities in generating revenues, but they also offer opportunities for knowledge sharing that helps in fostering intercultural learning (Dalglish & Chan, 2005; Taylor & Albasri, 2014). The current study is an attempt to improve the experience of Saudi students in EAP classrooms by highlighting their expectations of English teachers.

### *1.3.1 Why a study focusing on Saudi students?*

The total number of Saudi students studying in Australia in Higher Education, VET and ELICOS in 2018 was 2,652. In ELICOS alone, the number of Saudi students was 1,406 in 2018. However, this number is low compared to the enrolment period in 2011 when there were around 4,323 Saudi students studying in ELICOS across Australia (Orth, 2015, drawing on Australian Government 2014 data). Compared to other sectors, ELICOS has always witnessed the highest number of Saudi student enrolments. This is because English language skills are important for Saudis to achieve in higher education and ELICOS provides focused courses in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). ELICOS thus remains critical for Saudi students. However, in contrast to other international students in Australia, experience of this particular group is not widely mentioned in the literature.

Since every cohort in an ELICOS program may have different needs depending upon their experiences, education background and culture, it is important that they encounter effective teachers to ensure they achieve their educational goals while in Australia. For this reason, it is important to explore their perceptions of teacher effectiveness as this would enable Australian teachers to learn about their needs. To support the argument that every international student has different needs, Belchamber (2011) points out that all international students are different in terms of their nationality or ethnic identity. Therefore, it is important to categorise them as distinct individual 'identities' rather than one homogenous 'entity', as they have different histories, cultures, beliefs, experiences and a variety of personal motivations for becoming an international student (Koehne, 2005). However, when reviewing literature, it was noticed that most studies have in fact examined the differences between international students as an entity and as a group of individual classroom participants. For example, studies have shown that Middle Eastern and Asian international students are stereotyped as reserved and quiet (Alnawar, 2015; Tani, 2005). The concept of 'respect' was viewed differently by Saudi students and their Australian teachers suggesting differences in cultural values and ethos which may create conflict between teacher and students (Rao, 2008). Perhaps these differences between teachers and students may affect the way teacher effectiveness is perceived by Saudi students. Whether a teacher meets the criteria of effectiveness that Saudi students have in their minds is important to consider. If the teachers are aware of these perceptions, they not only can understand their students well but are in a better position to respond to their needs as compared to if they are totally unaware of students' perceptions on the notion of teacher effectiveness.

Australian teachers find it challenging to address Saudi students' needs, as Midgley (2010) highlighted:

> At the end of that first day of classes I found myself wondering how I was going to help these students to improve their English…. I had joined the teaching team midway through an intensive English course, and what some staff were calling the problem of the Saudi students had already reached crisis level. During the remainder of that course, there were several special staff meetings called to address this problem (Midgley, 2010, p. 1).

Referring to international students in Australia, Shepherd and Rane (2012) highlighted the difference between Arab students and other international students stating, 'significant differences exist between the Arab international student cohort and international students of other nationalities such as Chinese or Indian' (Shepherd & Rane, 2012, p. 2). The education system and cultural background shape the perceptions of the Saudi cohort which is important to consider as these perceptions and experiences significantly differ from other international students in Australia. Saudi students come from a classroom culture whose teaching approaches and practices are different from Western countries, including Australia. Studies have shown that Saudi students face challenges in Western countries due to different factors that relate to religious, political, social, cultural and psychological aspects. This indicates that Saudi students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness may differ due to their learning styles and experiences in their home countries which lead to academic and adjustment challenges for Saudi students in Australia (Alhazmi, 2013; Orth, 2015).

In relation to classroom experience, for most Saudi students it may be their first experience interacting with a teacher or other classmates of the opposite gender. As mentioned earlier, the Saudi educational system is gender-segregated so when Saudi students arrive in the host country, they experience difficulty in relation to communicating and interacting with the opposite sex. This has been reported by Saudi Arabian students in the United States of America (Shaw, 2010), and by AbdelRazek (2012) who identified that Saudi students' participation in American society is affected by a range of religious, political, social, cultural and psychological factors. It is also suggested that the cultural identity of Saudi students may be compromised in a mixed-gender society (Alhazmi, 2013). Supporting this argument in relation to Saudi students, Belchamber (2016) stated:

> There are male Saudi Arabian students who have never experienced a female teacher before, and Saudi Arabian females who feel inhibited by working with any of the males in the class. Although teachers are sensitive to the content of class materials, there is not the same level of censorship as in an Islamic country. Obviously, an excursion to a winery is inappropriate, but what about the sentence *You serve wine in a glass, w*hich appeared in a list of sentences to be changed into Passive Voice? (Belchamber, 2016. p. 3)

This suggests that differences related to culture and education may have an impact on learning and perceptions of students on the notion of teacher effectiveness. While Saudi students do not face the financial pressure that other international students often face during their stay in Australia, they do experience social and academic problems due to sharp contrasts in social and religious practices in Australia and their home country (Midgley, 2010; Orth, 2015). Therefore, what is clear from the researcher's reading and reflections is that Saudi students, like other international students, also struggle in the host countries and they have specific needs and perceptions which Australian teachers need to be aware of when teaching in EAP classrooms, particularly because such courses are preparatory for life and studies in the host country. Given that international students differ in their needs and problems, it is important for teachers to look at the needs of different cohorts and respond accordingly.

In order to consider the needs of Saudi Arabian students it is necessary to understand the context they come from, both from a broad national perspective and in terms of education and specifically English language learning and teaching.

### *1.4 Saudi Arabian background*

There are three distinctive features of Saudi national identity which have contributed to the need for a skilled and educated workforce: the monarchical system of government, Islam as a universal religion and the (over)-reliance on oil exports for wealth creation. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded by King Abdul Aziz AlSaud in 1932 and, according to the US budget, it is listed as one of the richest countries in the Middle East (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). King Salman became the King of Saudi Arabia in January 2015 and his son Mohammed bin Salman has been appointed as the current crown prince of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is the only Arab country where elections are not held. The official religion of Saudi Arabia is Islam and the population comprises a majority of Muslims. The country is also known as the birth place of Islam and is home to two sacred sites,

Makkah and Medina. The Islamic values are reflected in the cultural beliefs and customs of the people (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

The image of Saudi Arabia changed globally after oil was discovered in the late 1930s (Alshammari, 2017). During the 1970s, when the oil industry and prices began to rise, vast development projects in education, healthcare and infrastructure (e.g. communication, housing and transportation) changed the once underdeveloped country into a modern state (Alkharashi, 2012). The Saudi Arabian economy relies on enormous revenues generated by oil. Saudi Arabia is one of the major oil-producing countries and is also a member country of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Being the largest exporter of oil in the world, which contributes 75% to the budget's revenue, Saudi Arabia has the fastest growing economy of the past decade (Alturki, Khan, & Alsheikh, 2015). This has led to an over-reliance on the export of oil for the nation's wealth, and a disregard for the need to develop a highly skilled and educated population (Alshammari, 2017).

Prokop (2003) explained the educational situation in Saudi Arabia between 1995 and 2003 in relation to educational policies and the lack of a skilled workforce. The shortage of a Saudi skilled workforce created a gap in the market that led the government to rely on a foreign workforce. However, this also led the government to take initiatives to educate its own citizens in order to boost its economy. To understand the situation of Saudi Arabia in relation to its education system between 1995 and 1999, Prokop (2003) stated:

> Saudi Arabia's lack of skilled employees is a direct result of the country's educational and economic policy during the oil boom years. There is a huge gap between the output of the education system and the requirements of the domestic labour market. In many specialties, the number of graduates exceeds the actual requirements of the labour market in terms of occupational classification and job description. Between 1995 and 1999 only 10,000 of the total number of 120,000 students graduating from Saudi universities had a degree in technical subjects, accounting for only 2 per cent of the total number of Saudis entering the job market. If this mismatch is to be rectified, standards and enrolment ratios in general and higher education must be raised (Prokop, 2003, p. 87).

In 2016, when oil prices fell sharply, the Saudi national budget was severely impacted as its revenues were over-reliant on petroleum exports (Alshammari, 2017). In 2020, the population of Saudi Arabia is 34.81 million with fifty percent of its population below 25 years of age, and these figures are likely to increase at a rate of 2.5% in future (Global Media Insight, 2020). These factors

led the government to take initiatives such as raising non-oil revenue as an initial plan to diversify its economy and to implement the Saudization plan to create more jobs for citizens in order to reduce its reliance on the foreign skilled workforce (Alshammari, 2017). As the Saudi government recognized the gap between its education system and the availability of a skilled and educated workforce, a number of steps were taken in an effort to redress this issue.

One of the steps taken to address the gap between the education system and the availability of a skilled and educated workforce was to expand its scholarship program. Initially, Saudi students were offered a scholarship to study in a limited number of Arab Islamic countries, but after the mid-1960s students could choose to study any discipline in American or European countries (Alshammari, 2017). Since then, the situation has changed radically as a result of the expansion of the scholarship program. After 2005, Saudi students were studying abroad in 33 different countries around the world. In the 2011-2012 academic year, the USA alone received 34,139 Saudi students while the total number of Saudi undergraduate, postgraduate and research students studying in Australia in 2012 reached 5,392 (Institute of International Education, 2014). Between 2008 and 2018 the number of Saudi students studying abroad was 200,000 (Alshammari, 2017), while in 2018 alone the number of Saudi tertiary students studying internationally was 21,158 as the country aimed to equip its labour force to counter reliance on the oil industry and foreign workers (Alshammari, 2017).

An important factor that has contributed to this student growth was the availability of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Scholarship Program (KASP) which was established in 2005. Through the KASP, the Saudi government has invested a substantial amount of money to produce educated leaders in the public and private sectors. By reducing the financial burden on those who receive the scholarship to study in foreign universities, these students can focus on their education and graduate outcomes. This is in contrast to other international students who often have to pay for their own education and support their living costs by obtaining casual or part-time jobs while abroad. However, despite the financial benefits, Saudi students must contend with the cultural differences expressed through language and lifestyle in countries with different values and orientations to education.

Language carries cultural values and living in a foreign country exposes one to those different values and belief systems which may be contrary to Saudi values and beliefs. Although the

scholarship offers financial support, the cultural differences can be a barrier to effective learning and education. An effective EAP teacher would have to help Saudi students cross cultural boundaries in order to learn. This involves the development of intercultural competence which is vital for effective communication in an international setting, such as an international corporation in Saudi Arabia. One of the graduate qualities of Australian universities is to produce globally aware citizens who can cross cultural and professional boundaries or at least understand the 'other'. An EAP classroom is an ideal setting for Saudi students to learn to communicate across cultural boundaries. It does not mean that Saudi students give up their own culture, but that they come to an understanding of other cultures. This is very important in the modern world to collaborate on viable solutions to world problems.

### *1.4.1 Education and English teaching in Saudi Arabia*

The education system and the importance of the English language has changed over time to accommodate global needs and perspectives, but still retains its unique culturally informed characteristics. Prior to 1930, Saudi Arabia had no formal education system (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 2017) and education was provided through the mosques where students were taught to read and write the Arabic language (Prokop, 2003). The current education system was established by the Directorate of Education and a formal education system was introduced in 1930. The public schools were established in 1930 for boys and no schools for females were established until 1960 (Al-Zarah, 2008). However, both male and female students have equal access to education (Al-Johani, 2009), although gender segregation is an integral part of the school system. Thus, co-education does not exist in Saudi Arabia, reflecting the beliefs of Islam along with social, cultural and traditional values (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The curriculum is the same for both genders with a slight variation to meet the demands of each gender. All Saudi universities offer courses to male and female students with the exception of only two universities. King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) offers education to only male students and Princess Nora bint Abdulrahman University (PNU) offers education to only female students (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013).

The Ministry of Education is a government body authorized to design the curriculum and assessment procedures of schools in accordance with the following features characteristic of Saudi Arabia's school system (World Education News Reviews, 2020):

- education must focus on Islam and include the teaching of Islam;
- free access to education must be provided for all Saudi citizens;
- providers must adhere to a general policy of gender segregation; and
- support for education must be organised through a centralised control system.

The learning experience of students studying in government schools may be different from students studying in private schools in Saudi Arabia (Prokop, 2003). Similarly, the experience of studying in schools in Najd areas is likely to be different from studying in coastal cities of Eastern and Western Province (Prokop, 2003). However, more research is needed to support this claim and to understand the extent of difference in the learning experience of students as after 2003, Saudi Arabia has undergone tremendous change.

At present, the education system of Saudi Arabia consists of five different stages: 1) Pre-primary; 2) Primary; 3) Intermediary; 4) Secondary; 5) Tertiary (including Higher Education), (see Figure 1). Only in Kindergarten does English not have a presence. Stages where English is taught and learnt as mandatory are blocked in as panels and also shaded. The half-shaded panel indicates that some universities use English as a medium of instruction.

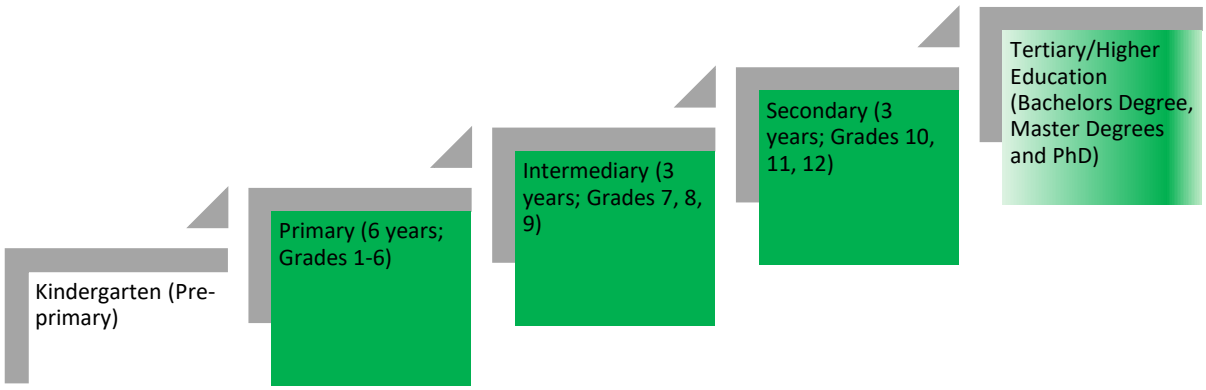



**Figure 1 Overview of stages of education with English as a compulsory subject (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2005)**

In Saudi schools, English is taught as a foreign language as it is widely used in a global context (Crystal, 2012). Initially, the government of Saudi Arabia was not in favour of introducing English language teaching at elementary schools as it was believed that acquiring a foreign language may interfere with students' learning of the Arabic language. Therefore, the English language was only taught as a compulsory subject at intermediate and secondary schools. Later it was introduced as

a compulsory subject which requires students to attend 45-minute classes twice a week in the primary stage and four lessons per week for intermediate and secondary school. Deraney (2015) concluded that the number of hours students study English varies and it depends on the type of school (private or state funded) and its philosophy of education. The English textbooks used in school are typically designed to meet the particular demands of Saudi students by presenting the material that is in accordance with national customs and cultures (Almutairi, 2008). Saudi students require an English language education that is culturally sanitized and complies with Saudi beliefs and values. It avoids crossing cultural boundaries or even awareness of cultural difference. As adults, students in EAP programs overseas have learned English from a young age in such an education system and are being confronted with differences in the teaching style of EAP programs in foreign countries. Perhaps they still seek compliance to the ways in which they were taught English in their own school system – with cultural sanitization.

In the higher education sector, most but not all universities use English language as their medium of instruction for scientific courses (engineering and medicine) while humanities subjects (education and Islamic studies) use the Arabic language as the language of instruction (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Students studying non-scientific courses need to complete one English unit which is commonly known as 'English for Academic Purposes' in order to complete their undergraduate degree (Deraney, 2015). The additional English unit aims at improving the English competency of students and equipping them with another tool for accessing knowledge in addition to Arabic. This can be viewed as designed for cultural sanitization. Scientific courses contain language that is not so rich in cultural content, but the humanities contain culturally rich content. Several universities have introduced a preparatory year program (PYP) which requires first-year students to study English for alomost 20 hours a week (Deraney, 2015; Javid, 2011). However, there are a few universities that use English as the main language of instruction for all their undergraduate, post-graduate and research degrees (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

In relation to teacher effectiveness, it is important to understand that the teacher holds a very special position in Saudi culture. Teachers are viewed as a source of knowledge; therefore, students are taught to respect them (Elyas & Picard, 2010). The concept of respecting teachers is not only central to schools, but parents also emphasise the vital role of teachers in educating society. In a classroom the role of the teacher is to deliver knowledge and the role of the student is to listen to

teachers with respect and quietness (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Student-centred pedagogy is not prevalent in classrooms as teachers and educators hold a high level of power in the Saudi education system. English teachers are not different to other teachers and are also viewed as 'preacher-like' figures. The English teachers are expected to transmit knowledge by keeping religious values in consideration in their teaching practices (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Saudi students thus have an established role as a learner in the classroom in the Saudi context and may have varying perceptions of teacher effectiveness in student-centred classrooms.

Since English language holds a special place in Saudi Arabia due to historical, economic, cultural and social factors (Moskovsky & Picard, 2018), it is the most commonly used and, in some cases, the only language that is used to communicate in social, administrative and professional sectors in Saudi Arabia. English is the lingua franca that bridges the Saudi community with a large group of foreigners working in various sectors involved in building the Saudi economy. A good command of English language has now become a necessary component of the professional and administrative sector (Moskovsky & Picard, 2018). Due to a multi-national work force in modern companies and government offices, the English language is now the standard language of business communication and therefore professionals are required to demonstrate a high level of English proficiency. In addition, a trend towards demonstrating English language proficiency, which was previously limited to private organizations, has now become important for securing government positions. Al-Nasser (2015) highlighted an important issue that despite receiving English language input for six years at school, Saudi students struggle with their communicative skills after they graduate from high school. Saudi students also struggle using English language when studying EAP abroad (Alqahtani, 2011).

A number of initiatives have been implemented by the Saudi Arabian government to enhance the English language proficiency of Saudi students. Some initiatives include modifying the curriculum, teaching methods and resources used in teaching English. However, despite a number of efforts made by the government to improve the quality of English teaching, the results are still unsatisfactory. In discussing the barriers in learning English in Saudi Arabia, Khan (2011) believed: 'Despite a sound planning, purposive curriculum, suitable textbooks, qualified teachers and effective administration, the teaching-learning process sometimes seems to be ineffective; especially the case of skill development is not found as satisfactory as it should be' (Khan, 2011,

p.1249). A number of factors hinder English language learning in Saudi Arabia, the most important of which will be discussed in the next section.

### *1.4.2 Factors affecting English learning in Saudi Arabia*

Al-Seghayer (2014) identified factors that make English language learning and teaching challenging, and divided them into four categories: psychological, technical, administrative and strategic. The psychological factor that hinders the learning of English language relates to the students' mindset of perceiving English as a non-priority subject. This is indicated by students' attitude towards learning and in their aim that focusses on gaining just the amount of knowledge to help them pass the necessary exams. For instance, rote learning is evident and students rely on memorizing without understanding and mastering the skills (Alrabai, 2018). The technical issues relate to the curriculum itself and the time constraints to deliver the curriculum, as well as a lack of resources to teach the curriculum. The administrative issues involve the inefficiency of teacher training programs to teach English. Al-Seghayer (2014) criticized the fact that in training programs teachers are taught subjects such as translation and English literature, and little emphasis is given to English teaching methods or practical classroom experience. As a result, students lack pedagogical and methodological knowledge to teach English effectively. This issue was also highlighted by Alhazmi (2003) in relation to teacher preparation programs, 'The gap between the content of teacher education programs and the needs of the classroom widens. After graduating from university, many teachers lack essential English skills, especially the ability to speak the language' (Alhazmi, 2003, p. 342). The fourth category highlighted by Al-Seghayer (2014) is strategic factors, including lack of professional development programs for teachers that could keep them updated with the latest knowledge about the English teaching industry and ways of tackling different issues faced by teachers in the classroom. Khan (2011) argued that despite addressing all concerns highlighted by Al-Seghayer (2014), teaching and learning may still be ineffective due to unsuitable approaches used for teaching English at the school level.

Typical Saudi classrooms, including English language classrooms, are teacher-oriented, with students considered to be empty vessels into which teachers pour knowledge. Learning takes place by rote memorization and students cram the lessons delivered by the teacher and sit for examinations at the end of the year. A combination of the factors discussed results in Saudi Arabian students being shaped as passive learners. Since such classroom practices are not common in the

USA, the UK and Australia, it explains why academic stress tends to be much higher for Saudi Arabian students as compared to students who have learned from student-oriented teaching methods. Although enormous efforts have been made by the government to enhance English learning and teaching, Saudi students still face a number of challenges in acquiring English language proficiency (Alhawsawi, 2014; Alrabai, 2016, 2018; Hamdan & Elandeef, 2021; Khan, 2011). This may be due to the use of the teacher-centred approach in the Saudi education system (Alkubaidi, 2014). In the Saudi education system, students often take a passive role while the teachers dominate the learning process. The students are encouraged to show high levels of respect to the teachers and much emphasis is laid on avoiding speech or behaviour that is against either educational or social norms. In the English language classroom, teachers spend much time illustrating and explaining concepts using the L1 (Al-Seghayer, 2005) and students usually take notes. According to Alrabai (2014), such a learning environment causes students to become receptors and memorizers which discourages them from engaging effectively in the learning process. In addition, lack of opportunity to practise the language inside and outside the classroom hinders their language development (Alhawsawi, 2014). This also suggests that lack of exposure to the English language atmosphere diminishes students' ability to achieve proficiency in English (Khan, 2011).

There are some other factors related to culture, community, and history that influence the learning of English in Saudi Arabia (Alrabai, 2018). Alrahaili (2014) highlights that due to the collectivist nature of the society, the most significant factor that hinders the learning of English is the community, which does not favour adopting change. Other studies have highlighted the prevalence of misconception in the society; that introducing the English language at a very young age may interfere with the ability to learn Arabic and weaken the sense of Saudi identity and culture (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). As language is integrated into the culture according to Al-Seghayer (2014), some locals show a reluctance to learn a foreign language as this could mean loss of identity, culture and customs and a spread of foreign ideologies (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Alrabai (2018) emphasised the point made by Al-Seghayer (2014) stating: 'the fear that English will impact Arabic use and may erode Arabic culture, customs, and identity demotivates some Saudi learners from attempting to learn English and in turn affects their L2 academic achievement' (Alrabai, 2018 p. 102). In addition, Alrabai (2018) acknowledged what Nouraldeen and Elyas (2014) highlighted as the reason that influenced EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia:

> … because Saudi Arabia has never been under colonial rule, Saudi culture has not been affected by European cultures. Lack of influence by foreign European cultures resulted in the Saudi community's public refusal to accept the English language when it was first introduced in the country (Alrabai, 2018, p.102 ).

Despite this fear, it is now widely accepted that studying for a university degree in an English-speaking country produces high-quality graduate outcomes that provide better opportunities for professional and technical employees in Saudi Arabia. Students must demonstrate a certain level of English language proficiency when they enter university. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of international students such as those from Saudi Arabia, English language centres associated with universities have designed programs to specifically help international students with developing their academic English language and skills to the required level (DESE, 2018).

Another important factor that impedes the process of teaching in an English language classroom relates to curriculum constraints. According to Al-Seghayer (2014), the amount of the course that needs to be covered in a specified time period may be one of the factors that may influence a teacher's performance in a classroom. In the Middle Eastern context, much of the teacher's attention is shifted to finding ways to cover the curriculum at the cost of delivering effective language instruction (Al-Seghayer, 2014). As a result, students are unable to absorb the information and often become frustrated due to insufficient input from their teachers. Similarly, factors like teachers' tight academic schedules and a lack of learning resources hinders teachers' performance in the classroom.

This study has been conducted at a time when Saudi Arabia is undergoing tremendous changes in various sectors, including education, in light of its *Vision 2030*. Since education plays a significant role in achieving *Vision 2030,* it is believed that by giving its population access to quality education, Saudi Arabia will be able to meet the demands of a growing labour market. This would result in building a civilized and responsible society. English language is one of the foreign languages taught in Saudi Arabia so far, and continuous efforts are made to improve its quality of offering. However, there are a number of challenges faced by Saudi Arabia in providing quality education and recruitment of teachers, which, unless addressed proactively, could hinder progress towards *Vision 2030*. Challenges relating to the quality of education are that the curriculum taught in school is mostly outdated and the recruitment criteria of teachers is set too low. According to a study conducted by *Strategic Gears* in 2018, teachers completed a total of 10 hours of professional

development. Due to this and other issues, the overall quality of education scored 4.3 out of 7 on the global index scale (Strategic Gears, 2018). As this study concerns student perceptions of effective teachers, it is important to mention teacher quality in Saudi Arabia, as students' past experience of education and especially English language learning may influence their perceptions of an effective English language educator in the EAP courses they attend in Australia.

### *1.5 Significance of the study*

It is important to understand how different groups of international students in a particular program and its social-cultural context characterize effective English language educators. Most of the studies conducted in the Australian context have focused on students from India and East Asia. After reviewing the literature, it has emerged that only a few studies have examined Saudi international students' experience in Australia. Little research into Saudi students' perceptions of effective teachers of English in an Australian context has been located. The present study is therefore significant in that it will identify the attributes of effective English language teachers and provide insights into Saudi students' views about effective English as a second language (ESL) classroom practices which would be specifically informative for teachers working in Australian language centres and colleges including ELICOS settings. It is anticipated that the results of this study will provide imperative information and insight into Saudi students' learning preferences for teachers, lecturers, trainers and instructors in other ESL contexts.

Saudi international students encounter an immensely different culture from their home country upon arriving in Australia. Along with the culture shock, these students are faced with language challenges as most of them only speak Arabic. The resulting language barrier results in difficulty adjusting in English language classrooms as the English language teachers are not well informed about the expectations and perceptions held by these students about an effective educator. Highlighting the difference in Australian and Saudi cultures and the struggle that Saudi students encounter, Belchamber (2016) argued:

> Being exposed to the contradictions involved in studying in Australia yet coming from a very closed and conservative society has implications for the students involved. Some might feel inhibited when surrounded by Western influences, exposed to Western teaching practices and reliant on Western teaching materials. Others could feel enabled, away from the social and cultural practices that have so far defined their lives. Or they may experience something in between (Belchamber, 2016, p. 4).

Numerous studies have been carried out in the USA and UK to identify teachers' effectiveness in higher education. However, in reviewing literature to carry out this research, it was difficult for the researcher to find literature on Saudi students in general and perceptions of Saudi students of teacher effectiveness in particular as it relates to the Australian context. Midgley (2010) has also identified this problem in their thesis of limited studies carried out on Saudi students in the Australian context. Midgley (2010) in their thesis stated:

> I was unable to locate studies published in the English language on the experiences of Saudi students in any Western country. One Saudi student, upon hearing about my interest in researching this question, told me that he had been to the university library to try to find out about the experiences of other Saudi students and was also unable to find anything (Midgley, 2010, p. 2).

In between 2010 and the time this thesis was written, only a few studies have been added in the literature focusing on Saudi students in Australia. In studying the Saudi students intercultural engagement in transition from the gender segregated environment in Saudi Arabia to a mixed gender education system in Australia, Alhazmi and Nyland (2013) directly referred to 'the paucity of literature that addresses the experience of this particular group' (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013, p. 346). The researcher was unable to locate any study that has addressed the perception of Saudi students of effective English language teachers in the Australian context. In addition, there is little literature on the effectiveness of language teachers from the perception of ESL students.

To call for more research on Arab students in Australia, Shepherd (2010) stated:

> further rigorous research examining ways to engage effectively Arabic students while maintaining Australian educational goals. Research needs to be undertaken in the fields of crosscultural communication, cultural and social capital renewal, issues of racism or alienation versus social integration, teaching and learning styles, educational culture and expectations (Shepherd, 2010, p. 6).

Previous studies carried out in the area of teacher effectiveness focusing on Saudi students' perceptions were in the EFL context. Some of these studies relied only on quantitative design (Al-Khairi, 2015; Javid, 2011). No study was located that focused on the perceptions of Saudi students of effective English teachers using qualitative analysis. This study, therefore, uses a primarily qualitative methodology to understand the perceptions of Saudi students regarding effective EAP educators in the ESL context. This qualitative approach is also informed by a small quantitative

component to identify points of interest for deeper investigation. Using a mixed methodology aims to provide a deeper insight into the perceptions of Saudi students.

In order to explore the perceptions of Saudi students studying EAP programs in Australia in relation to effective EAP educators, this study will employ an appropriate research design to answer the research questions. As there is a paucity of literature on the problem stated, this study, therefore, is an attempt to address the gap by identifying the characteristics of effective teachers from the perspective of Saudi students, specifically those studying in EAP programs in Australia. Identifying what an effective language teacher is in Australia from the perspective of Saudi students may be beneficial in incorporating an Arab perspective in the present Westernized concept of effective language teachers. It is also anticipated that the outcomes of this study will help in broadening the definition of effective language teachers from the Arab perspective. In addition, it will be particularly informative to English language teachers in the Australian context who may understand the needs of international students but not fully aware of the specific needs of these students and often struggle to find ways of contributing to the language proficiency of these students.

The present study, therefore, will identify the attributes of effective English language teachers and provide insights into Saudi students' views about effective English as a second language (ESL) classroom practices which would be specifically informative for teachers working in Australian Language centres and colleges. In contrast to other international students in Australia, experience of this particular group is not widely mentioned in the literature. Therefore, it is anticipated that the results of this study will provide imperative information and insight into Saudi students' learning preferences for educators, teachers, lecturers, trainers and instructors in other ESL contexts.

This study will help Australian educators to understand Saudi students' needs and expectations and to eliminate any misunderstandings that relate to the differences in Australian education expectations. Understanding the image of effective teachers from students' perceptions will provide understanding of behaviours and practices and professional ideas that students assign to a teacher. It would be also useful to current teachers to reflect on their existing behaviours and practices to help them decide what actions are important in different situations. This would help educators to make improvements to teacher training programs. Finally, the outcomes of the study

may also be relevant to Western foreign language teachers teaching EAP courses to Saudi students in Saudi Arabia.

### *1.6 Organisation of the thesis*

The thesis comprises seven chapters. This first chapter has set the background and context of the study, identifying the research focus on characteristics of an effective teacher in English for academic purposes (EAP) courses, specifically from the perspective of Saudi students in Australia. The chapter describes courses and contexts of English for academic purposes, the place of international students in Australia and the Saudi cohort in particular, the Saudi Arabian context experienced by Saudi students, both in general and in terms of education and the teaching of English language. It has also presented the significance of the study.

Chapter two provides a literature review on teacher effectiveness in general and teacher effectiveness in different contexts. It points out contribution and gaps in the literature to situate and frame the current study by providing arguments towards a cultural perspective on the notion of teacher effectiveness.

Chapter three presents the methods used to carry out this research by providing the rationale for the research design, participant sample, data generation procedures, and analysis of data. The chapter also presents results from preliminary study to capture a broader picture of EAP students' perceptions and to inform development of interview protocol for the principal study.

Chapters four and five addresses the overarching research question and present the findings generated through the use of interviews and classroom observation. Chapter four sets the context for considering students' perceptions of effective and ineffective teachers. Chapter five presents the participants reflections on the interview questions and their suggestions on the notion of teacher effectiveness.

Chapter six discusses the findings to answer the research questions underpinning this study. The chapter proposes a cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness to understand the attributes of effective teachers from the perspectives of Saudi students.

In chapter seven, the conclusions are presented based on the findings by providing the overview of the study, and recommendations are proposed for future research.

# **Chapter Two:** Literature review: Characteristics of effective language teachers

## *2.1 Introduction*

The aim of this chapter is to present a review of the literature on effective language teachers. It begins by introducing the notion of teacher effectiveness in general, including research findings in the literature that identify attributes of an effective teacher from a range of sources including students' perceptions. The section concludes with an outline of Barnes and Lock's (2010) model of the attributes of effective EFL teachers. Sections 2.3 to 2.7 discuss the literature on the characteristics of effective teachers identified in the Barnes and Lock's model, with particular consideration of effective language teachers over and beyond EFL teachers. The strengths and weaknesses of the Barnes and Lock's framework are discussed in section 2.8 which argues the need for a cultural perspective on teacher effectiveness in EAP contexts. This leads to a review of literature related to developing such a perspective, and a reconstruction of the Barnes and Lock's model as the basis for research design in this study.

In order to remain consistent with the terms used for different attributes in the existing literature, the present literature review will use the exact terms used by particular researchers when reporting the findings of studies carried out on effective teachers. Some references are rather dated due to a lack of recent studies available in relation to the topic of discussion.

## *2.2 The notion of effectiveness in teaching*

Since teaching is a complex and dynamic phenomenon (Prodromou, 2020), there will always be different perspectives on how its effectiveness should be conceived and measured. Stronge (2018) used the term 'elusive' to describe the concept of effectiveness, while various researchers have made use of nouns and adjectives such as ideal, competent, reflective and respected in regard to the term effective (Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001). Based on an extensive review of relevant literature, Leu (2005) concluded that it is difficult to suggest a universally accepted, valid and comprehensive definition of an ideal educator. In discussing the problems of why defining teacher quality in Australia is difficult, Byrne (2015) stated the examples of Good (2008) when determining quality teaching: '...the search for a single measure of teacher quality is rather like the search for the holy grail. Studies show that there are many teacher characteristics and qualities which, in combination, predict teaching effectiveness' (Good, 2008, p. 13, as cited in Byrne, 2015).

Similarly, Marzano (2007) argued that it is hard to suggest one form of effective teaching that may be useful to all students in all settings. Depending upon the context, there is no definite answer to whether effectiveness needs to be measured by taking into consideration teacher's credentials, their pedagogical qualities and practices (Darling-Hammond, Bransford & LePage, 2005), through students' achievements (Guskey, 2007), or a combination of all these elements.

Griffiths and Tajeddin's (2020) have presented the concept of effective teaching by taking into consideration number of characteristics. Griffiths and Tajeddin's (2020) stated:

> As we all know, teaching is a demanding profession, for which the hours spent in the classroom are only the tip of the iceberg. It requires the teacher to be autonomous, reflective, interculturally aware, knowledgeable, sensitive to individual differences, able to handle all this dynamic complexity without getting burned out, and "on board" with all the latest acronyms such as ELF (English as a lingua franca). In addition, they must be conversant with all the cutting-edge methodologies (including the latest technology), assessment theories and procedures, classroom management practices, instruction in strategies, and feedback techniques". (Griffiths & Tajeddin, 2020, p.xxv).

The above idea of effective teaching presented by Griffiths and Tajeddin's (2020) suggest that teaching is made up of several components that may be context-bound and may continue to evolve which is why it is difficult to define this construct. The situation complicates further when considering *who* is defining the term 'effectiveness' and for what purpose. Defining an effective teacher is almost impossible due to personal subjectivities. The term 'effectiveness' can also be defined differently depending on which perspective one considers; whether teachers', students' or stakeholders'. It is therefore complex to investigate the qualities of effective teachers; teachers and students give different meanings to quality teaching (Sotto, 2007). There may be matches or mismatches between perspectives of teachers and students. All this can make it very difficult to agree on one single definition of 'effectiveness'. It is also pertinent to be aware that the terms 'practitioner, teacher and lecturer' are used interchangeably to refer to EAP educators in different language centres, institutes and the university. The researcher has therefore used the term exactly as given in the literature.

### *2.2.1 Issues with classification of effective qualities*

Identifying qualities of an effective educator has been approached by researchers from numerous perspectives. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) describe effective educators as those who are capable of investigating problems, are able to think pedagogically and understand student needs by developing appropriate curriculum relevant to different groups of students. Some studies have identified qualities of an effective teacher as possessing various teaching-related skills and command of the subject area, whereas others have emphasized qualities such as personal characteristics including honesty, innovation, humour, the teacher's charisma and passion to teach (Karmani, 2010; Zhang & Watkins, 2007).

After reviewing literature on teacher effectiveness, it is noticeable that personality traits and qualities related to the ability of teachers are prominent and are viewed as essential for effective teaching. Some researchers have attempted to classify the qualities into categories such as personality traits, ability and qualities. Raymond's (2008) perspective on defining effectiveness seems relevant: that classification of qualities is challenging because human behaviour is complex, unpredictable and many qualities that may fall into the ability category can be viewed as personality traits. For instance, sense of humour can be classified as a quality related to personality traits (funny teacher by nature), but can also fall into the ability category as some teachers have to learn the ability of demonstrating humour in their lesson. Moreover Raymond (2008) argued that classification of categories on the basis of ability and personality construct is not the only way to understand teacher effectiveness and that most people would agree that the two are embedded. It is for this reason the present researcher will not use personality and ability constructs to classify the attributes.

From the discussion above, it is clear that effectiveness is an elusive concept to define because of the way it is measured, by whom it is measured and lack of agreement between researchers in measuring the concept. Many qualities of effective teachers can be expected to overlap with those of effective English teachers: 'Unsurprisingly, these characteristics (e.g., knowledge of the subject, clarity of instruction, enthusiastic behaviour, fairness) are not all that different from those that teachers of any subject should possess and exemplify' (Lee, 2010, p. 27). However, some qualities may be specific to the task, and some required qualities may relate to the context of learning. For example, EFL and ESL teachers have the same task – teaching English to students – therefore, it

will not be surprising to see many qualities of an effective EFL teacher overlapping with those of an ESL teacher, whilst there may also be some differences related to the demands of the context.

### *2.2.2 Studies related to students' perceptions about effective teachers*

The idea of studying teacher effectiveness through investigating students' perceptions is widely mentioned in the literature. For decades, researchers have offered valuable insights on students' perceptions about teacher behaviour, and teacher qualities (Greimel-Fuhrmann & Geyer, 2003; Kember & Wong, 2000). Contemporary research has also taken students' perceptions into account when exploring teacher effectiveness (Fedderson, 2003). Van Oord and Brok (2004) note that researchers have pointed out various specific behaviours linked to teacher effectiveness. Frequently mentioned behaviours include: a) providing immediate and constructive feedback, b) making sure that instruction is clear, and possessing good management skills, c) delivering content in small and structured units, and d) providing immediate and constructive feedback.

Epting, Zinn, Buskist and Buskist (2004) found that an effective educator from the perspective of university students was someone with the following qualities: a) highly accessible to students, b) offers variety in the course, and c) provides a comfortable learning atmosphere for students. The researchers observed that these behaviours were more pronounced among effective teachers and were not entirely missing in typical educators. Results of the study that Istrate and Velea (2006) carried out in the Romanian context revealed that the following qualities were associated with effective teachers from the perspective of students. Such teachers: a) are flexible, b) are open to new ideas, c) make their subject interesting through the use of projects and games related to the subject, d) are familiar with interesting and interactive pedagogical methods, e) know their students, f) inspire their students, g) have a sense of humour, h) are authoritarian when necessary, and i) are dedicated to the profession.

Koutsoulis (2003) examined high school students from 25 different schools in Cyprus on their perception of effective teachers. The survey used in Koutsoulis's study consisted of three sections related to characteristics of good teachers: the human and production characteristics, communication skills and teaching ability. The participants listed the ability of the teacher to show understanding and friendliness as amongst the most preferred human characteristics of an effective teacher. The most vital communication skill from the students' perspective was the ability of the teacher to effectively communicate with the students and to handle teacher-student relations. The

second vital characteristic in this category was classroom management. With regards to teaching ability, interesting lessons and the teacher's ability to motivate students were considered essential qualities. It was also highlighted in the study that students at different achievement levels did not respond to teacher effectiveness in a similar way. Interestingly, low achievers focused more on the human characteristics and less on communication skills, whereas high achievers preferred the teachers to be knowledgeable and clever. This raises questions about whether ability level of students may also be a factor in relation to teacher effectiveness.

Okpala and Ellis (2005) concluded in their study from the data collected from college students in the USA that teachers were perceived effective based on: a) level of caring for students, b) teaching skills, c) content knowledge, d) dedication to teaching, and e) verbal skills. Meng and Onwuegbuzie (2015) carried out a study on 430 Chinese college students' perceptions of effective teaching. The respondents highlighted a good teacher as someone who: a) is knowledgeable, b) treats all students equally, c) has a deep understanding of the subject, and d) prefers being student-centered.

In summary, from the perspective of students, the various dimensions of teacher effectiveness are knowledge, skills, classroom behaviour management and personality traits. From the students' perspective, these attributes must be actively demonstrated by an effective teacher. The studies also suggest that effective teachers share many qualities with language teachers regardless of their subject matter (Brosh, 1996), which is very relevant to the discussion in the next section.

### *2.2.3 An effective language teacher from the student perspective*

When reviewing studies on the effective language teacher, the researcher faced two challenges. One challenge was to locate recent studies in the area of English language teacher effectiveness. The area seems to have been overlooked by the researchers in the last decade, especially in the ESL context. It is for this reason that some references will appear outdated and that most references are from the perspective of students in the EFL context. Reviewing the literature from the EFL context is informative to the present study on two counts: firstly, because problems faced by EFL students revealed in these studies are often relevant across contexts; secondly, because the Saudi students in the present study have previously studied for many years as EFL learners in their home country and their perceptions may or may not have changed in the short period they have spent in the Australian context.

The second challenge relates to difficulty with organising the literature review on the basis of contexts – English language teaching in general, teaching English as a foreign language and teaching English in ESL contexts – since many qualities overlap in different contexts. In addition, as indicated above, there are limited studies carried out in the ESL context on investigating students' perceptions of English language teachers. I therefore use Barnes and Lock's (2010) framework of effective EFL teacher attributes to organise sections 2.3-2.7 of the literature review, and then review their framework at section 2.8 in terms of its relevance to the ESL context, and specifically the EAP in ESL context.

### *2.2.4 Barnes and Lock's framework of effective EFL teacher attributes*

Barnes and Lock (2010) undertook a qualitative study of the attributes of effective lecturers of English as a foreign language as perceived by students in a Korean university and based their research on a framework they derived from a review of literature. Because they found a lack of research in EFL settings, they reviewed both quantitative and qualitative studies investigating students' perceptions of effective practitioners teaching in settings outside of the English language teaching (ELT) field in various contexts. This review involved very thorough analysis and highlighted the following as important attributes: rapport, delivery, fairness, knowledge and credibility, organisation and preparation. These attributes were directly derived from the emerging themes reported by Faranda and Clarke (2004), as they were strongly evidenced in other studies reviewed by Barnes and Lock (2010). They are also the attributes used to frame the core of this chapter (sections 2.3 to 2.7).

As their initial review was of studies outside the ELT field, Barnes and Lock (2010) then reviewed studies within the ELT field that they saw as related to one or other of the attributes. For example, the 'Delivery' attributes reported in the non-ELT studies suggested that students admire educators who create a positive learning environment and care about their students, which Barnes and Lock found to be fully applicable to ELT. Also considered applicable to ELT was the importance noted by Faranda and Clarke (2004) of developing interpersonal relationships, showing positive attitudes towards their students and being available to students for consultation. However there were additional features related to 'Delivery' in ELT contexts such as focusing on mode and content of instructions (Barnes & Lock, 2010; Liu & Meng, 2009; Park & Lee, 2006), as well as emphasising error correction, providing pronunciation practice (Rammal, 2006) and designing lessons to

develop English language proficiency (Park & Lee, 2006). Barnes and Lock's (2010) review of literature on 'Fairness' suggested an educator as being fair when grading assignments and assessments and treating all students impartially in class was equally applicable to the ELT context as to other contexts. The characteristics as part of 'Knowledge and Credibility' emphasised educators being knowledge competent and expert in their subject, which in the ELT context specifically means teachers need to have 'proficient English' and 'have sound knowledge of English grammar' (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Park & Lee, 2006). Attributes related to Organization and Preparation in ELT revealed that students admired educators who were serious and dedicated (Barnes & Lock, 2010; Park & Lee, 2006). Barnes and Lock concluded that it was essential to learn students' perceptions and expectations before we could align educators and students' beliefs on teaching approaches for effective EFL learning, which led directly to their 2013 student questionnaire study. The point applies equally to learning in ESL contexts and supports the research approach taken in the present study.

In conducting the following literature review, the researcher noticed that some aspects in different attributes may overlap and could be placed in more than one category. This suggests that the placement of some aspects within the attributes could be subjective. For instance, being enthusiastic could be part of both 'Rapport' and 'Methods of teaching'. In addition, 'preparing students for exams' and 'produce examinations which closely relate to work covered in class' could both be part of 'Fairness', but the former is placed in 'Delivery'. While placing characteristics under categories need to be acknowledged as subjective, this would not affect the value of the framework if clarity is provided. Another important aspect that was highlighted by Barnes and Lock (2013) in their student study is that less emphasis on certain attributes does not necessarily indicate that these are not valued. The reason may be that such attributes appear self-evident and are taken for granted by students – 'being well prepared and organised', for example.

The decision to adopt the framework offered by Barnes and Lock (2010) to frame this literature review was made firstly because their framework was developed after reviewing studies in the ELT context as well as outside the ELT context (see appendix I). This provides verifications and endorses those categories that are relevant to the ELT setting, giving this study a framework to adapt to the ESL context. Secondly, Griffiths and Tajeddin (2020) organised their book "Lessons from Good Language Teachers" around "Macro Perspectives, Classroom Perspectives and

Instructional Perspectives" which covers the attributes that previous studies have suggested (Barnes & Lock, 2010; Liu & Meng, 2009; Park & Lee, 2006; Stronge, 2018). This provides further verification and good reasoning to use the framework for the purpose of this literature review.

The studies presented in the following sections are chosen because they specifically refer to the qualities in the Barnes and Lock (2010) framework. While the reader may notice that certain qualities within each category are elaborated more than others in the review, the reason for this is that those qualities were significantly emphasised by both Arab students (Al-Khairi, 2015; Al-Yaseen, 2019; Alzubi, 2021; Javid, 2011; Saafin, 2005) and non-Arab students (Liu & Meng, 2009; Park & Lee, 2006). Also, the less emphasised attributes had limited studies to support the findings.

The next sections (2.3 – 2.7) will look at the five attributes of effective English language teachers documented in Barnes and Lock's (2010) study: rapport, delivery, fairness, knowledge and credibility, and organisation and preparation. A review of the suitability of the framework for the purposes of this study follows at section 2.8, including discussion of the need to recognize cultural aspects that are embedded within the attributes when they are considered within an EAP context as distinct from a generalised EFL context.

## *2.3 Rapport*

Building rapport with students is viewed as important for an effective English language teacher. Rapport attributes highlighted in the literature suggest that students prefer educators who take care of their students, are patient, demonstrate humour, and are keen in developing a positive classroom atmosphere (Liu & Meng; 2009; Mercer & Gkonou, 2020; Park & Lee, 2006; Stronge, 2018). However, in the Rapport category, the most relevant attributes that were extensively reported and emphasised in the literature, keeping in consideration various contexts of Arabs and non-Arabs students, were: teacher personality, student-teacher relationship and the use of sense of humour. These qualities will, therefore, be discussed in detail.

### *2.3.1 Teacher personality*

Personality traits of teachers are deemed essential from the perspective of students and the significance of personality attributes is well documented in the literature. Jesse, Masibo and

Likoko (2013) carried out a study investigating perceptions of teachers and learners of English about an effective English language teacher in the Kenyan context. The results from this qualitative study indicated that the learners perceived a teacher's personality and pedagogical skills to be the most important characteristics of an English language teacher. However, no relationship was found between students' achievement levels and human characteristics of teachers.

In the Middle Eastern context (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman), studies have shown that students place a high value on the personality of a teacher in relation to teacher effectiveness. When comparing Turkish students with Omani students, Al-Busaidi, Aldhafri and Büyükyavuz (2016) found personality and teaching characteristics were rated highly by Omani students as compared to the Turkish students. In the Saudi context, Al-Khairi (2015) collected data from 216 Saudi male and female EFL learners and found that learners perceived the personality and professional characteristics of a teacher to be important for effective English language teaching. Javid's (2011) study also investigated the perceptions of Saudi EFL students on an effective English teacher. The sample constituted only male students and had a mixed finding in relation to attributes identified by students on the notion of an effective teacher. From the results, it was revealed that Saudi EFL learners viewed effective teachers as someone who can be a role model which can be related to personality traits of a teacher. Similarly, Alzubi (2021) investigated the perceptions of 231 Saudi male and female students in the preparatory year programme and concluded that Saudi students in the EFL context highly admired the personality attributes of effective English teachers. In addition to personality attributes, the participants of the study also highlighted that an effective teacher understands the culture of the students as well as the culture of the target language.

Malikow (2006) identified a list of personality characteristics that are most frequently cited in studies carried out on effective teachers. The list included characteristics such as 'being challenging', 'having reasonably high expectations', 'having a sense of humour', 'being enthusiastic and creative'. Similarly, when investigating the perceptions of students about effective teaching in the Turkish context, Celik, Arıkan and Caner (2013) found that 'instructor's tolerance for learner problems' (personality traits) as well as 'having command of the subject taught' were viewed as vital by language students. Similarly, Thompson (2008) identified and

highlighted that effective language teachers build rapport by caring about and respecting their students and demonstrating patience.

The personality of a teacher is particularly viewed as essential in collectivist societies such as Saudi Arabia. In collective societies the fate of an individual lies on their 'family, tribe, ethnicity, or community', unlike individualist societies where the fate of an individual rests in the hands of the individual themselves (Gilton, 2005). In one study, Hofstede (1984) presented a model that describes various dimensions of Western and Middle Eastern cultures. Hofstede (1984) suggested the preferences of groups over individuals make one culture distinct from the other (Hofstede, 1984; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012; Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). Most Arab countries, like China and much of Asia (also collectivist societies), have witnessed a growing trend of learning English (Chazal, 2014), and therefore it is not surprising to see that the personality of an English language teacher may be given so much emphasis by students (Trevino, Brown & Hartman, 2003). Teacher personality is also seen as an important aspect of teacher-student relationship, which is also viewed as an important factor when identifying effective teachers.

### *2.3.2 Student-teacher relationship*

It is emphasized that the student-teacher relationship has close connection to a teacher's personality and can directly influence students' learning and achievement (Chen & Lin, 2009). The student-teacher relationship should be such that it contributes to developing students' social and cognitive skills; however, the relationship could be affected if the teacher has insufficient knowledge of students' cognitive and social skills (Davis, 2003). The student-teacher relationship directly influences students' motivation in language classrooms (Furrer, Skinner & Pitzer, 2014; Hattie, 2012). Mercer and Gkonou (2020) report that a good relationship between teacher and student was characterised by 'respect', 'trust' and 'responsiveness' and that effective language teachers exhibit these qualities in their classroom practices and management techniques. Caring is also viewed as part of a student-teacher relationship, and particularly 'pedagogical caring' important is which means that teachers not only care about their students as people but also take care of their learning progress (Cowie, 2011, as cited in Mercer & Gkonou, 2020, p.166).

Establishing a good student-teacher relationship helps students in forming strong positive relations with their peers. It boosts students' confidence and helps facilitate their academic growth and foster a safer environment for learning (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). On the other hand, students experiencing

negative relationships with their teachers are disengaged and unable to benefit from the social and academic resources offered to them in class. This indicates that learning does not take place in the absence of positive teacher-student relationships. If the language educators and learners' connections are classified as demotivated, the learners are likely to show rejection for learning. Goh and Fraser (2000) highlighted that there is a strong connection between interpersonal behaviour (being friendly, tolerant and supportive) and students' learning outcomes. Sowden (2007) believed that effective teaching depends on the student-teacher relationship. No matter how powerful the approach that teachers use in teaching English language, if there is no connection between student and teacher, not much learning will occur (Sowden, 2007).

Thus, the nature of the student-teacher relationship guides whether or not learning takes place in class. It is noticed that the student-teacher relationship also helps in predicting a student's motivation (Misbah, Gulikers, Maulana, & Mulder, 2015). English language teachers' and students' relationship is classified as demotivated if there is a poor connection between them which, in turn, has a negative influence on students' learning. Student learning tends to be positively correlated to teachers' interpersonal behavior. Interpersonal attributes such as 'being friendly', 'tolerant' and 'supportive' have found to be closely associated to students' successful learning outcomes (Goh & Fraser, 2000). Supporting this idea, Wei, Brok, and Zhou (2009) found in their study that a teacher's behaviour (cooperation with students) was a significant predictor of students' achievement and that the effect disappeared when other variables related to students' background were taken into consideration.

It is noted that the interpersonal or relational skills of teachers, which are key to establishing student-teacher relationships, are given more importance by Arab students as compared to the nature of instruction, highlighting the importance of such personality traits. Saafin (2005) observed that students from the Gulf region deemed the relational qualities related to personality as important to effective language teaching. When discussing the importance and justification of why a teacher's personality was viewed as important from the perspective of students from the Gulf, Saafin (2005) stated:

> The participants highly appreciated teachers who were friendly with them inside and outside the classroom and indicated that this helped them in learning and improving their English. If teachers are friendly, this will help the students to learn things from them, whereas if the teachers are not friendly or are tough with students, they may not

> be able to gain, benefit or understand what their teachers teach, no matter how effective these teachers are. One of the reasons could be because the language has a social aspect. It is the tool of communication between the teachers and students. To have a social context without friendliness is something not expected or desirable. (Saafin, 2005, p.193)

Misbah, Gulikers, Maulana, and Mulder (2015) indicated that as part of the strategy to build a good rapport, some teachers prefer to be friendly with their students while others choose to keep a distance.

DeCapua (2018) highlighted that there are certain cultural concepts that are believed to be universal, but the way they are interpreted in different cultures varies significantly. DeCapua (2018) gives an example of the concept of 'friendship' that may be considered universal across cultures. However, what it means in relation to 'who', 'when' and 'with what responsibilities and rights' may differ across cultures. Taking this concept into consideration and applying it to the notion of a teacher being 'friendly', an ESL/EFL student and teacher may associate different meanings to this concept. In addition, certain words may reflect cultural norms in relation to the concept of 'respect'. For instance, in some languages there are distinctions between a formal 'you' and an informal 'you'. English language does not have such distinctions; however, respect may be communicated by sentence structure and word choices. Such differences across languages may challenge the development of positive teacher-student relationships.

English language classes are teacher-centred in the many Arab countries where giving respect to the teacher is viewed as important (Saafin, 2005). The notion of respect could take different forms such as by not asking questions of the teacher and by showing obedience. These values are deeply rooted in the society, yet studies suggest that Saudi students appreciate the friendly nature of a teacher (Alamri, 2016). This is interesting because students showing respect to teachers and the teacher's nature of being friendly may not sit comfortably together in theory, but in practice appears to work well. A teacher being friendly in the classroom is a small power distance value pattern and showing obedience and respect is a large power distance value pattern (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012; Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). For instance, Saudi students show respect to their teachers by showing obedience to the authority figure (teacher) yet respect and admire teachers who are friendly to them. Perhaps one explanation for this could be that the teachers may not view friendliness as an important quality and expect students to be respectful**.** In explaining this

behaviour, Saafin (2005) believed that it is the culture of Arab students that helps to explain *why* they prefer teachers who have a friendly nature.

> Another thing could be cultural influence that made students emphasize teachers' friendliness and expecting a lot from teachers in this particular issue. The Arab culture values friendliness and considers it as one of the important characteristics of a good person (Saafin, 2005, p. 193).

The above discussion indicates that culture plays a role in shaping students' perceptions of effective English language teachers regarding personality qualities associated with the teacher-student relation. While societal norms guide teachers on how to interact with students, students' expectations or perceptions of certain qualities may differ on the notion of teacher effectiveness. This is particularly relevant in regard to sense of humour which is the focus of the next section, and is well documented in the literature associated with qualities of effective English language teachers.

### *2.3.3 Sense of humour*

In regard to building a good relationship with students, a teacher's attitude towards using humour in the classroom has been widely documented in the literature (Jiang, Li & Hou, 2019; Mercer & Gkonou, 2020; Ziyaeemehr, Kumar & Abdullah, 2011). Nesi (2012) suggested that incorporating a sense of humour in teaching contributes to the development of a good rapport between the student and the teacher. Teachers using the strategy of being friendly usually demonstrate sense of humour to keep the classroom environment pleasant and friendly (Mercer & Gkonou, 2020).

Researchers focusing on the use of sense of humour in the classroom generally believe that it is an effective teaching tool. There are various reasons presented in the literature as to why sense of humour should be embedded in lessons. The most common explanation provided is that, when integrated in lessons, sense of humour helps to keep a good atmosphere and to motivate in the class (Wagner & Urios-Aparisi, 2011). As learning a language requires understanding and producing humour, humour is also part of the content of language learning (Vandergriff, 2016). Taking the psychological perspective into consideration, studies have shown that when sense of humour is demonstrated by a teacher in the classroom, it helps in creating a positive atmosphere by lessening the language anxiety faced by language learners **(**Petraki & Nguyen, 2016; Wagner & Urios-Aparisi, 2011). There is evidence from Bell's (2009) study that sense of humour in class not only helps in sociolinguistic development but also in linguistic development. The evidence

was collected through various data sources that included observations, interviews and analyses of humorous materials used in the classroom.

Similarly, in an EFL context, it was suggested that sense of humour plays a role in the development of sociocultural and linguistic aspects of post-beginner language students in addition to keeping students engaged and creating a warm atmosphere (Forman, 2011). Blyth and Ohyama (2011) concluded in their study that humour helps in improving and enhancing vocabulary knowledge in addition to students' appreciation towards it. Petraki and Nguyen (2016) were interested in investigating the perceptions of students about sense of humour and the frequency of its use in English programs. The results from their study conducted in the Vietnamese context suggested that teachers used different ways of expressing humour, for instance in the form of stories, jokes, comments, and examples. Humour was demonstrated at least seven times in an average 90-minutes long lesson, and it was mainly used to create a pleasant atmosphere and to draw students' attention. The instances when the humour was most frequently used were mainly at the start and at the end of the lesson. The use of a sense of humour at the beginning and at the end of the lesson acted respectively as an icebreaker and as a way of rejuvenating after a long lesson (Petraki & Nguyen, 2016).

Clearly, there are certain issues that need to be addressed when a teacher uses humour in the classroom. The first issue relates to the language proficiency of the learners. Humour requires a high level of language proficiency for learners to understand, appreciate and attain the intended benefits of its use (Gönülal, 2018). In language learning for instance, there are instances where humour may be seen to induce laughter for native speakers but not for the language learners. Therefore, it is critical that students have the cultural and linguistic resources to follow humour (Bell, 2009). However, it is argued that depending upon the category of jokes, humour could be used in language classrooms of any language proficiency level (Schmitz, 2002). It was suggested that jokes comprising universal elements could be used for beginners. The second category consisted of jokes that include cultural elements and require a high language proficiency to understand and would be suitable for intermediate learners. The advanced students may have the knowledge to understand the two categories and may also appreciate linguistic humour (Schmitz, 2002). In Bell's (2005) study, a correlation was found between the language proficiency level of learners and the comprehension of humour, indicating that learners are in a better position to

understand and produce humour as their language develops. As mentioned, the use of sense of humour also has a cultural dimension to it. Since this study focusses on Saudi students in Australia, it is important to understand that certain kinds of humour that are perceived as acceptable in one culture may be seen as offensive in another, depending on the societal perspective. Jiang, Li and Hou (2019) stated that:

> Westerners' and Easterners' views toward humour fundamentally differ from each other. Westerners regard humour as a desirable trait of an ideal self, associate humour with positivity, and stress the importance of humour in their daily life. On the contrary, Easterners' attitudes toward humour are not that positive (Jiang, Li & Hou, 2019, p. 2).

As Asian and Middle Eastern students come from collectivist societies (Hofstede, 1984), they may negatively perceive the use of sense of humour in the classroom compared to students from Western individualist societies (Yue, Jiang, Lu & Hiranandani, 2016). Gönülal (2018) investigated the attitude of Turkish, Asian and European language learners towards the use of sense of humour. The study revealed that Asian students have slightly positive attitudes towards humour, whereas Turkish students welcomed the use of humour and associated its benefits with helping students engage and build a good teacher-student relationship. In addition, the learners in Gönülal's (2018) study generally perceived universal jokes to be more positive than culturally-informed jokes.

Nevertheless, there are strong reasons given by students as to why their teachers prefer to keep students at a distance by not using humour in their lessons. Ziyaeemehr et al. (2011) were interested in understanding students' estimation of teachers' reasoning for not incorporating humour in class. Ziyaeemehr et al. (2011) investigated 195 undergraduate and postgraduate students from Asian and Arab backgrounds. Participants were asked to give their views on the benefits of using humour by the lecturers and why some lecturers avoided using humour in class. The results revealed that teachers avoid using a sense of humour in class due to lack of competence as they are not trained to use humour in teaching. Furthermore, the results suggested that teaching and learning was viewed as a serious activity by the instructors and that it needs to be carried out in a serious manner suggesting no place for humour.

Another way of understanding humour is by looking at the types that students deem appropriate and inappropriate. Wanzer, Mellisa, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk and Smith (2006) classified appropriate

humour into categories such as humour that was relevant to and not directly relevant to lecture content, and unplanned humour where the teacher may not intend to be funny, but students find a teacher's certain behaviour to be funny. Inappropriate humour was classified into offensive humour and disparaging humour targeted at students. It was highlighted that other-disparaging humour through which teachers target students individually or as a group based on their religion, gender, appearance and intelligence was perceived negatively by the students (Wanzer et al., 2006). Since learners generally hold positive opinions about themselves and their respective groups including political and religious affiliation, disposition theory helps in predicting why students perceive disparaging humour that is targeted at students to be inappropriate in classroom settings (Zillmann & Cantor, 1996).

The above discussion on sense of humour suggests that a teacher's attitude towards integrating humour in class is an important feature that may influence students' perceptions of effective teachers. The studies referred to provide insights into the use of humour in language learning and suggest that the effective English teacher must be thoughtful in planning humour in their lessons. Factors such as the timing, relevance, context, culture, forms of jokes, are all critical in making decisions about whether humour should be incorporated or not as inconsistencies in perceptions may occur due to students' own perceptions of appropriateness and appropriateness of humour.

#### *2.3.4 Section summary*

This section has provided important qualities that are viewed by students for an effective English language teacher. Whilst Barnes and Lock (2010, 2013) refer to this attribute as rapport, much of the literature has emphasised personality as the overarching concept, and rapport as a component within that. In other words, the personality of the teacher has various embedded characteristics that relate to effective teaching, and rapport is one such characteristic. This is the view adopted in the present thesis.

Characteristics such as building rapport with students requires the friendly nature of a teacher to make the classroom environment safe and positive for students, particularly in the high-risk environment of language learning. The use of sense of humour which has a cultural aspect may be regarded as threatening to students from collective societies and therefore, must be used with caution in order to provide a good learning environment for students. These aforementioned qualities depend on teacher's personality and how it is presented to students to address their needs

in English language classrooms and in order for learners to learn effectively. If the personality of the teacher is viewed by students as lacking friendliness, and they do not sense a positive student-teacher relationship, it may have a negative impact on students' learning (Sparks, 2019).

The next section will look at attributes related to the 'Methods of delivery' of an effective language teacher. The aspects that were widely documented in the literature in relation to the delivery of effective language teaching include the use of group work and the use of technology by the teachers.

### *2.4 Delivery*

There are certain practices used by teachers in ESL classes that may not necessarily align with ESL students' previous learning background. Therefore, ESL students may have different perceptions regarding a teacher's classroom practices. In the ESL classroom, where there is a diverse population of international students, language educators often take for granted that learners thoroughly understand their instructions. For instance, they often invite learners to ask questions yet fail to understand the cultural issues associated with asking questions. Many international students particularly from the Arab and Asian backgrounds are discouraged from asking questions of teachers as in their culture this suggests teachers' inability to properly express themselves. In a study of international students in Australian universities, Volet and Ang (2012) found that students perceive it disrespectful to ask questions from their teachers in the presence of their classmates. Similarly, Asian international students view their domestic peers to be impolite when they question their teachers (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). Another difference in perception concerns error correction. In the ESL classroom, teachers may correct a student's errors in front of the whole class and view this as part of the learning process for everyone. But this could be viewed as loss of face for the individual if there is a weak student-teacher relationship.

One study showed that Saudi students seek help from their friends rather than going to a teacher for help simply because students want to save face or because there is fear of bothering their teachers (Alamri, 2016). If a teacher is not aware of these perceptions of students, such practices may discourage student engagement. Therefore, in order to promote maximum engagement, it is important for a teacher to be aware of the possible effects of certain practices and activities that are used in ESL classrooms. This includes the use of group work activities (2.4.1), which are well

documented in studies focused on Saudi students' English language learning experiences in the ESL classroom, and also the use of technology (2.4.2).

### *2.4.1 Groupwork activities*

There are certain classroom activities that necessitate students to either work in pairs or sometimes in groups and for some students it is an effective method of learning. Group work is often used as an interchangeable term for collaborative learning, and it is a common practice used in ESL countries (Goodsell, Maher, Tinto, MacGregor, & Smith, 1992). In collaborative learning, the idea is to divide the class into small groups and assign them different types of tasks ranging from discussion on a range of topics, completing projects, and engaging in exchange of ideas (Barkley, Cross & Major, 2014). Most teachers use group and pair work to facilitate communicative skills and promote communication and multicultural skills amongst students. The theory underpinning group work is to promote students' talking time and minimize teachers' talking time (Harmer, 2015). Similarly, pair work helps students to spend maximum time speaking the target language. It is believed that cooperative learning offers a comfortable environment for students to engage with each other and foster their ability of critical thinking (Barkleyet al., 2014).

Teachers have their own perspectives on grouping students. Some teachers prefer grouping students according to their abilities (streaming), others prefer to group a broad ability range. These preferences can have significant influence on the dynamic of teaching and learning (Quigley, 2014). Assigning students to groups may be contextually and culturally based depending on the students' learning styles, education and cultural background. A study conducted by Gomleksiz (2007) investigated the effects of group work and attitudes towards learning English in an EFL context. The results of the study revealed that group work had a positive effect on students' attitude towards cooperative learning and learning English. Li and Campbell (2008) reported that Asian students positively perceived group work that requires interaction to discuss topics and that fosters their communication skills. Chinese students have also shown the ability to quickly adapt to the change and understand the culture of Western classrooms (Wong, 2004), perhaps indicating that they see the teacher as having cultural authority in the classroom to impose practices and views that are informed by mainstream Australian culture. This fits in well with Nordby's (2008) argument regarding the power that groups hold to justify a 'rationale' for convincing a minority to

reorganise factual beliefs and to fit in with the classroom norms (see section 2.9.2: Culture in language and communication).

From the perspective of motivational theories, students feel motivated working in groups if the group members cooperate with each other (Pan & Wu, 2013). However, students perceive group work negatively if it requires completing assignments with shared marks. Moore and Hampton (2015) highlighted that it is not easy to immediately achieve beneficial outcomes when students are assigned to groups. Different variables play important roles in the success of a group, for instance, size, composition, type of work assigned, and time allocated to work (Harmer, 2015), while in the English language classroom, many frustrations are the result of discrepancies across cultures (Richardson, 2012). For example, Altamimi (2014) and Bousquet (2012) reported that Arab Americans including Saudi students were not used to the idea of group work in the learning process as the notion of freedom was not what participants were familiar with.

If a teacher fails to understand the student's culture and educational philosophy, it becomes difficult for teachers to impose practices such as group work that work well in Western culture. Cultural variations in gender relations illustrate this point clearly. For example, Alhazmi's (2013) study suggested that Saudi participants in the Australian context faced difficulty in mixed gender environments. Groves (2015) investigated Saudi female students' preferences towards learning English and found that female participants felt comfortable interacting with females, while Saba (2014) found that Saudi female students felt uncomfortable working with male students in learning academic writing in an ESL context. AlMorshedi (2011) highlighted Saudi females' reluctance towards collaborative learning and their avoidance of interaction with males in the classroom, with the teacher and particularly with male students. Forced mixed gender grouping in the EAP classroom could set Saudi students up for social exclusion. This in turn raises concerns for teachers in EAP classrooms who may perceive it as an obstacle for effective learning. As discussed in the introduction chapter of this thesis, it may be the first time for some Saudi students to interact with the opposite sex during group work; therefore, their perceptions towards this teaching method may differ in an Australian EAP classroom.

### *2.4.2 The use of technology*

There are four different ways in which technology has been used in education (Shah, 2013). First, it is integrated in the curriculum. Second, it is used to deliver teaching content. Third, it helps in

giving instructions. Fourth, it acts as a tool to enrich students' learning experience. The use of technologies is more pronounced in student-centred classrooms where the focus of learning is more centralised. Thus there are numerous ways a teacher can make use of technology in class. If it is used effectively, it can significantly change the pedagogical practices in student-centred as well as teacher-centred classrooms. However, most studies are conducted in schools across different levels (Shah, 2013); therefore, it is hard to suggest what works better in what settings. Evanouski (2009) highlighted some positive outcomes of using technologies. For example, technology makes it easier for students to access information. It helps in developing greater interest in learning. Moreover, it increases retention rates and makes teaching more interactive.

Harmer (2015) explains that Marc Prensky introduced the term 'digital natives' to describe those who grew up using digital devices and 'digital immigrant' to describe those who were already alive when the digital evolution took place and had to learn about technology and ways of using it. Educators who were digital immigrants had to face a number of challenges to move with the flow of new demands. This term was later criticized as all teachers including senior teachers learned to use technology and felt comfortable using it. The new term for digital immigrants has become 'paid-up citizens' as teachers now know what young students know about technology (Harmer, 2015). This suggests that age was an important factor of this division made by Prensky. However, Harmer (2015) suggests that there are people who access technology from time to time (digital visitors) and others who are frequent users of it (digital residents). These distinctions are important because depending on the age, some teachers could be digital visitors and others could be digital residents. The amount of time and the use of digital technology by the teacher may influence students' learning and their perceptions towards the notion of an effective English teacher. Depending upon their learning styles, some students may not feel comfortable with the use of technology in the class while for others, it is a motivating tool.

Liton (2015) investigated the perceptions of EFL students and found that students held positive views about adoption of technology in class, and considered that integration of technology in lessons helped them learn better as compared to the traditional pedagogy used by their teachers. Students perceived the use of technology ineffective when they were not familiar with the use of technology and how it could be used effectively to learn language (Liton, 2015; Shadiev & Yang, 2020). Therefore, Tütüniş (2020) concluded that for an English language teacher it is vital to

possess not only pedagogical and content knowledge but also the technological knowledge to successfully deliver the lesson. In addition to this, students also need to be made familiar with technology by teachers to support their learning (Liton, 2015; Shadiev & Yang, 2020).

There is a growing body of literature on how to teach using technology, and benefits of using technology in English language classrooms (Hockly, 2011, 2017), suggesting that the use of technology has vitally contributed to creating a modern classroom environment both in developing and developed countries (Al-Showaye, 2002). Therefore, with the growing trend of the use of technology pedagogically, integrating technology in English language classes in relation to teacher delivery method requires attention (Tütüniş, 2020). The use of technology is now viewed as an essential competency skill for an effective English language teacher as part of the methodological practices used to promote learning in the twenty-first century classroom (Tütüniş, 2020). It is reported that although there is a bulk of literature focussed on how technology helps in learning writing, speaking, and vocabulary (Shadiev & Yang, 2020), how the teacher is viewed by students in relation to the use of technology is not clear.

The way technology is integrated in the lesson makes a major difference in learning perceptions of students in relation to teacher effectiveness (Tütüniş, 2020). For instance, Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi and Al-Maamari (2015) conducted a study in the Omani context to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of effective EFL teachers. In their study, a 68-item questionnaire with a 4-point Likert-type scale was distributed to 171 Omani students and 233 English teachers and the results from this large quantitative study revealed that the participating Arab Omani students did not perceive the use of technology to be associated with effective teaching. The use of technology in an Australian classroom may influence students' perceptions of effective English teachers when students come from EFL backgrounds and student-centred classrooms where technology was not frequently used by their teachers (Alahmari, 2013). This matter is important to this study as Saudi students studying EAP in Australia are used to studying in classes where teachers did not make use of technology in classrooms. While Aleissa's (2017) study revealed that Saudi female students were aware of the benefits of technology and how it could be integrated to enhance their learning skills and motivate students in EFL contexts offering support to the use of technology in the classroom, it is not clear whether the teachers were

making use of technology in the classroom and if students actually experienced a teacher who used technology in the classroom.

In learning about the perceptions of students on the notion of effective teachers, it is important to understand how effective teachers use technology in their classrooms. Harmer (2015) highlights that there are different types of resources available in classes. While some classes are equipped with data projectors and whiteboards along with built-in-speakers to deliver audio content, other classes may have a whiteboard with a CD player/tape recorder or simply just a whiteboard. In some classes, students are allowed to work on their mobile devices and the results could be displayed on the interactive whiteboard. There are even situations when there is no blackboard or whiteboard in a class. In all these different situations, an effective teacher can still be successful despite being deprived of extremely expensive and valuable resources (Hadfield & Hadfield, 2003).

### *2.5 Fairness*

Stronge (2018) suggests that it is deemed important for an effective teacher to demonstrate respect and equality, relating the concept of teacher effectiveness with fairness and with respect. Fairness is viewed as an important characteristic of an effective teacher by students in school and higher education (Delaney, Johnson , Johnson & Treslan, 2010; Stronge, 2010, 2018). Students expect their teachers to treat them fairly and equitably, which also means the teacher needs to avoid favouring some students over others (Stronge, 2018), providing equal opportunity in the classroom. In other words, participation is a key aspect of an ethical classroom (Lichty & Palamaro-Munsell, 2017). Differences in treatment may cultivate different interaction patterns, such as leading certain students to dominate classroom discussions. An effective teacher respects the classroom diversity, whether related to gender, cultural background or race (Harmer, 2015).

A study investigating students' perceptions of effective teachers in a high school setting, by Schulte, Slate and Onwuegbuzie (2008), found that students viewed fairness in such terms as: 'reasonable', 'impartial', 'non-judgmental', 'treats students equally', 'not partial, objective', and 'not prejudicial'. Alqahtani, Kanasa, Garrick and Grootenboer (2016) found that Saudi teachers ranked fairness as the second most important attribute of effective teachers in English language teaching. The study, however, did not use students as samples to suggest whether students' perceptions were aligned with teachers. In investigating characteristics of an effective English

teacher in the Korean context, Park and Lee's (2006) study found that students and teachers both perceived 'fairness' as an important characteristic of an effective teacher. Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2015) found that EFL teachers and students both agreed that proficiency in English language and treating students fairly were the most essential characteristics.

A key aspect of student-teacher relationship is based on trust (Delaney et. al., 2010). For example, establishing classroom rules and implementing them builds trust between students and teachers. If teachers do not consistently demonstrate trust and fairness in application of rules set for class, behaviour issues creep in and rules become ineffective, leaving a negative environment (Harmer, 2015). An effective teacher ensures that the set classroom rules are respected by students and teachers for an effective learning environment. It is also important for teachers to show equity when addressing students' needs. Teachers who are excessively helping one student to address their needs and giving little time to others may have their fairness questioned.

DeCapua (2018) believes that members of different cultures perceive being 'fair' differently and draws an interesting connection with 'time perception', which may also influence students' perceptions of an effective teacher. The notion of time perception is important in educational settings and specifically in the EAP classroom. However, the perceptions of international students may not align with those of a Western teacher. 'For many students' entry to U.S. universities, time management can be an issue when they come from cultures with more flexible attitudes towards time' (DeCapua, 2018, p. 21). Similarly, in educational settings and EAP classes in Australia, there are explicit rules about coming to class on time, whereas in polychronic cultures, relationships are given more importance than time schedules. Individuals from cultures that prioritise relationships over time may find a Western teacher who plans timed meetings and follows a strict agenda disinterested and lacking a caring trait (DeCapua, 2018).

### *2.5.1 Fairness in assessment*

The link between 'fairness' and 'time perception' (DeCapua, 2018) is also relevant in regard to assessment, which Axelrod (2008) identifies as closely connected to 'fairness' as an aspect of teacher effectiveness. This is important in an EAP context, because assessments are an integral part of the course, with a variety of forms of assessment used to determine students' English proficiency level (Axelrod, 2008; Charles & Pecorari, 2015) in preparation for university entrance. In the case of EAP students, meeting a deadline to submit an assignment or responding to feedback

on an assignment or a test may be challenging, at least initially. Students may perceive that an effective teacher shows leniency with meeting the deadline for submitting an assignment or in marking the assessments; however, from a Westerner's perspective this may be viewed as being 'unfair'. Thus, what fairness means to an individual from a collectivist society and an individualistic society may be very different due to underlying beliefs and values. It is important to understand that such conceptualizations have different meaning across cultures, with the result that understanding different attributes of effective teachers is not clear cut.

There are some aspects of assessment that are viewed as paramount to the notion of teacher effectiveness, one of which has been identified by Charles and Pecorari (2015) as 'predictability'. Predictability in assessment helps students to understand the type of assessment they will be subjected to. Students who are aware of assessment criteria are focussed and engaged in learning, whereas the feeling of insecurity and anxiety develops if students are not familiar with assessment criteria (Charles & Pecorari, 2015). Students need to be given clarity about the procedure and criteria of assessment from the beginning of the course. In addition, it is important for a teacher to show and articulate how assessments align with the course objectives (Charles & Pecorari, 2015). This would help students to view assessment as a part of the learning process rather than an obstacle. Another aspect of assessment that may be indirectly linked to teacher effectiveness is 'reliability'. EAP classes are sometimes taught by different teachers at the same time. If this occurs, there needs to be good communication between teachers on agreed set standards that students are clearly informed about. Failure to do this may threaten reliability which can make teachers ineffective (Charles & Pecorari, 2015). Yet another aspect of fair assessment in regard to teacher effectiveness is the notion of 'transparency'. Communication is important with regard to expectations as students need to be made aware of what they have achieved and how they could improve (Churchill, Ferguson, Godinho, Johnson, Keddie, Letts, Lowe, Mackay, Mcgill, Moss, Nagel, & Shaw, 2018). Clarity in expectations also support perceptions of teachers' knowledge and credibility.

### *2.6 Knowledge and credibility*

Knowledge and credibility in relation to effective teachers mostly relates to the teacher's qualifications and knowledge of the subject area that they teach – 'being knowledgeable'. Studies have consistently identified content knowledge of the teacher as a vital element of effective

teachers. Teachers who have strong subject knowledge have the ability to go beyond the book. They can also effectively engage students in activities and are able to provide interesting activities to students (Stronge, 2018). However, stressing the importance of teacher training, Stronge (2018) indicated that those programs that train teachers to acquire pedagogical knowledge as well as subject knowledge are more effective than those programs that focus only on content-knowledge acquisition. Harmer (2015) believes: 'It is clear, then, that good teachers are knowledgeable about their subject (in this case the English language) and about the craft of teaching' (Harmer, 2015, p. 114). Thus it the combination of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge that makes for effective teachers. In relation to demographic variables, Koutsoulis (2003) found that high achieving students emphasised the importance of human characteristics and teaching skills in addition to their teachers being knowledgeable and clever, indicating that different ability students perceive effective teachers differently.

In the area of English language teaching, knowledge and credibility is viewed by students as the extent to which English language teachers are proficient in English language (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Park & Lee, 2006; Rammal, 2006) and the extent and soundness of the knowledge of grammar they have (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Park & Lee, 2006). Other researchers referred to knowledge and credibility in relation to good knowledge of vocabulary (Barnes & Lock, 2013). Yazdanpanah (2015) explored ESL teacher knowledge in Australian adult education and included teaching of pronunciation in their study as well.

Through extensive examination of the literature, the researcher deems that two particular aspects of teacher knowledge and credibility – 'proficient in English' and 'sound knowledge of grammar' – have some relationship with the notion of Native English teachers and non-Native English teachers. This which will be discussed in detail in the next section.

### *2.6.1 Native vs non-native English speaker teachers*

Some controversy exists in the literature about effective English teachers in relation to native and non-native speakers. Native speakers are sometimes presumed to be able to teach English language on the basis of their sense of ownership (Phan, 2008). Kramsch (2013) also highlighted this issue, pointing out that schools prefer to hire NEST due to their 'authentic relationship' with the language. Nevertheless, in multicultural situations, as Sowden (2007) points out:

> To be effective, expatriate teachers must take account of all these cultures and how they influence the attitude and study styles of their students. Instead of trying to impose cultures of their own, they must work with the cultures that they encounter. (Sowden, 2007, p. 305).

It is imperative to understand why Native English Speaker teachers (NESTs) and non-Native English Speaker teachers (NNESTs or non-NESTs) are favoured by students in different contexts. The learners' preference for NESTs and non-NESTs has been studied in a range of contexts yielding different results. For example, results from studies carried out in the USA (Mahboob, 2003) and Europe (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005) indicated that students deemed personal and pedagogical knowledge of teachers as more important than their linguistic background whether the teachers are native or non-native speakers of English. According to Braine (2010) and Kirkpatrick (2010), native English speaker teachers (NESTs) are seen as an ideal model for language production in East and Southeast Asia. Some reasons for holding positive attitudes include the correct pronunciation of linguistic features such as grammar and pronunciation (Wang, 2012). Non-NESTs are perceived to lack grammatical knowledge and pragmatic knowledge, and are viewed negatively due to their poor pronunciation of standardised forms of English in addition to lack of foreign culture knowledge (Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2004). Similarly, Benke and Medgyes (2005) investigated the perceptions of 422 students of English language in the Hungarian context. The findings from the study revealed that students favoured NESTs due to their good pronunciation that offers students a good model for imitation. However, students also pointed out that it was difficult to understand their NESTs. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) found that students considered NESTs to be effective for teaching pronunciation, listening and speaking, but not effective for teaching lexico-grammatical aspects. In addition, students perceived the NESTs to be friendly and informal in the classroom.

However, there is also evidence from the perception of Taiwanese students in Han's (2005) study suggesting that NESTs often fail to build rapport with students due to their lack of understanding of the local educational context. Another study carried out by Pacek (2005) examined the perceptions of 89 international students in a UK university and concluded that students preferred non-NESTs on aspects related to command of teaching methods, metalinguistic awareness, and interpersonal skills. One student in the study highlighted that it was not the nationality but the personality of the teacher that mattered.

Other factors that favour non-NESTs is that they represent a good example of successful second language learners (Lee, 2000) and are in a better position to understand the challenges faced by the students in learning the language (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). Cheung and Braine (2007) investigated the attitude of university students towards non-NESTs in Hong Kong and found that students perceived non-NESTs to be equally effective as NESTs. Pacek (2005) concluded:

> if a non-NEST can meet students' expectations by introducing appropriate teaching methods and by displaying personality features favoured by the learners, most of them can actually be persuaded that being taught by a non-NEST can be a rewarding and positive experience (Pacek, 2005, p. 260).

This suggests that the notion of the idealised NEST is becoming less meaningful for L2 learners in a range of language contexts (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Despite the positive perceptions of students towards non-NESTs, the preference of hiring NESTs continues to dominate English language teaching professions (Wang, 2012). Canagarajah (2005) argued that this dominance is not on the basis of linguistic and pedagogical knowledge but the economic and political factors that play various roles in favour of NESTs. Academics, educators, institutions and publishing companies belonging to countries where English is the official language are favoured as they enjoy various financial benefits (Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). Alenazi (2012), however, believed that although the studies carried out in the UK and Saudi Arabia suggest that NESTs are recruited to teach English due to the demand of international students, few studies have empirically investigated the preference of NESTs over non-NESTs.

Pacek (2005) provided a general assumption that international students disapprove of being taught by non-NEST speakers when abroad, stating, 'Generally speaking, while it seems more acceptable for students to have a non-NEST in their home country, when they go abroad, they expect to be taught by NESTs' (Pacek, 2005, p. 260). Contrary to the common belief of students' preference for NESTs, results from Walkinshaw and Duong (2012) in the Vietnamese context revealed that students perceived non-NESTs to be effective in all aspects such as qualifications, experience, cultural competency, enthusiasm, friendliness and ability to deliver interesting lessons. The only quality that students rated NESTs higher was on their advanced English competence as they perceived it to be a role model for pronunciation.

As the current study will look at the perceptions of Saudi students in the Australian context, it is important to review some particular studies that look into perceptions of Saudi students towards

NESTs and non-NESTs, whilst recognising that most studies exploring Saudi students' perceptions on the notion of NESTs and non-NESTs have been carried out in the EFL context. A study carried out by Al-Omrani (2008) on Saudi EFL and ESL students yielded important results. Al-Omrani (2008) found that beginner Saudi students prefer to be taught by a non-NEST in Saudi Arabia as the students find it easy to communicate with the teacher. The advanced Saudi learners, however, preferred to be taught by NESTs due to students' perceived expectation of better language practice opportunities. The results also suggested that for intermediate and advanced language proficiency groups, aspects such as sharing the mother tongue of students and understanding their culture facilitated language learning. Similarly, Saudi students reported preferring NESTs for teaching pronunciation, speaking and listening and preferring non-NESTs for teaching grammar and writing skills (Alseweed & Daif-Allah, 2012). A study carried out by Alghofaili and Elyas (2017) in the Saudi Arabian context reported that students perceived the personality of the teacher to be of more significance than the teacher's native speaker factor. The results of the study also indicated that the teacher's competence and expertise were deemed crucial to the notion of teacher's effectiveness regardless of their nationality. Unfortunately, even though the issue of native and non-native English language teachers is an important aspect in the Saudi Arabian context, where both groups exist in the teaching community, Javid's (2014) study on perceptions of Saudi students on the notion of effective English language teachers in the Saudi context did not include 'preference for native and non-native teacher'. Since students' perceptions are the focus of this study, it is important to address this topic.

The above discussion on native and non-Native English teachers suggests that most previous studies in EFL contexts have embedded the concept of English teacher subject knowledge and language proficiency. However, no study has directly addressed the connection between Saudi students' perception of an effective teacher in relation to native and non-native teachers in ESL contexts. It is, therefore, an important quality that needs further investigation from the perspective of Saudi students in ESL contexts.

### *2.6.2 The use of students' own language in teaching English*

The use of students' own language to teach English is another important area that has been a focus of many studies as a factor that may have positive or negative perceptions in relation to teacher effectiveness. The term 'students' own language' is used here because, as Hall and Cook (2012)

argued, the varied use of terms such as 'mother language, first language (L1) and native language' has caused considerable confusion. It is important to understand the distinction between these terms to avoid any confusion that relates to the term used in different studies. Terms such 'mother language, first language and native language' for L1 terms have been used by other researchers interchangeably to refer to the same concept and sometimes these terms are used to convey different meanings. For instance, it is not necessary that the student's mother language is really their mother's language. Similarly, students coming from Turkey and studying in a German school, may not necessarily have Turkish as their native language. There are similar issues with L2 terminology: students may be bilingual or multilingual and therefore, the use of the term L2 is vague and ambiguous and does not offer much clarity. Hence to avoid confusion, Hall and Cook (2012) referred to the student's own language as L1 and the 'new language' being learned was presented as L2.

The assumption of the use of students' own language in foreign language learning classes has been widely studied, although the language-learning literature has primarily concentrated on the use of monolingual teaching. Studies carried out in contexts where English is used as a foreign language have indicated some benefits of the use of students' L1 in classrooms. As Hall and Cook (2012) pointed out, it is imperative to understand what different functions are in play when the students' language is used in the class by the teacher. Typical functions include classroom instruction, classroom management and administration, to express empathy and harmony, to translate words for students, to facilitate the learning of unknown words, and for general communication between teacher and students (Hall & Cook, 2012). Those language classes and schools that encouraged the use of monolingual principles became models for other institutions. Hall and Cook (2012) gave the example of Berlitz International where students in the class speak different languages and the native speakers who are often hired to teach students cannot always speak the language of the students. However, some studies have shown negative outcomes in restricting the use of the students' own language. For instance, in Brooks-Lewis's (2009) study, adult learners experienced stress in monolingual classrooms. Similar results were reported by Levine (2003) suggesting the importance of using a student's own language to facilitate language learning for beginners. Tang (2002) reported that the use of L1 was beneficial in creating a positive learning environment not only for beginners but also for intermediate students. The principle of using bilingual methods in class supports the idea of reducing anxiety in the classroom by facilitating a good learning

environment. Similarly, using students' own language in the classroom helps to build the student-teacher bond and to communicate ideas of cultural stereotyping that would not be possible when using the language that students are learning (Edstrom, 2006).

A study carried out by Latsanyphone and Bouangeune (2009) in Laos investigated the use of students' language in improving English learning. The study used two groups: an experimental group and a control group. In the experimental group, students' own language was used to translate new words and vocabulary whereas no treatment was given to the control group. The results of the study suggest that the use of the learner's own language facilitated in enhancing retention of new words in context as well as in isolation. Another study carried out by Kovacic and Kirinic (2011) investigated the perceptions of teachers and students on the use of Croatian in ESP classrooms. The results of the study found that teachers and students both agreed that the use of students' language facilitated learning if the frequency of its use was kept to moderate by the teachers. In the Arab context, Bhooth, Azman and Ismail (2014) explored the use of L1 in English learning in an EFL context. The data collected from 45 Yemeni students indicated preference for the use of the Arabic language in teaching English. The results indicated that students used their own language as a scaffolding strategy to translate new words, define new concepts, to help peers or in group work. AlNofaie (2010) investigated the attitude of teachers and students towards incorporating L1 and found that students held positive attitudes towards the use of the Arabic language in the classroom. These findings that favour the use of bilingual principles are based on practical observations and not on theoretical assumptions. These findings offer insight into the use of L1 in the EFL context and are important to this study as Saudi students would have certain attitudes towards it which may influence their perceptions in the Australian context.

Balancing the use of L1 in English classrooms is critical and there are different practical ways of benefiting from using students' own language. One such example is the codeswitching phenomenon which is receiving much recent attention in the ESL context. Codeswitching offers a limited and strategic use of students' language to assist in their learning. In Deyi's (2010) study, learners were asked to find words for different terms and concepts equivalent to their L1 and found that this process helped the students in their understanding of and acquiring academic and technical terms. Therefore, the idea of using L1 to discuss different concepts prior to understanding and writing about them is encouraged in EAP classrooms (Deyi, 2010). Paxton (2009) incorporated L1

by encouraging her students to discuss ideas in their own language and provided a tutor who understood the language of students. Paxton (2009) suggested that such discussion in classrooms offered a valuable resource for the development of multilingual glossaries.

### *2.7 Organisation and preparation*

Stronge (2018) believes that since teaching is a 'complex activity' at any level, it requires the teacher to be organised. This involves planning for materials, activities and setting objectives for lessons. In addition, during the teaching process, objectives and plans need to be carefully communicated to students so that they can track their learning within the course period. From the results of a study by Delaney et al. (2010), it was revealed that students viewed an effective teacher to be organized when they are prepared for their lessons. In addition to preparedness, students perceived that organised teachers use clear visual aids, are coherent in class and/or provide notes on a web site, reviewed a test when it was handed back to students, provided a course outline, and provided feedback consistently throughout the course. Reporting the results of Arab students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness, Raymond (2008) found that 'the open-ended questions also indicate the importance of teachers being prepared to stand and deliver well-organized materials and lessons to their students' (Raymond, 2008, p. 112). Similarly, results from Al-Hinai's (2011) study showed similar perceptions of Arab students. Al-Hinai (2011) indicated: '[s]tudents seem to expect a teacher who is enthusiastic about the subject and teaching to be well prepared for their classes and to give clear explanations and well-organised lectures/tutorials' (Al-Hinai, 2011, p. 247).

Demographic variables also play a role in influencing perceptions of effective teachers. For example, the perceptions of students may differ according to their levels of achievement. In Park and Lee's (2006) study, there were significant differences found between low and high achievers. High achieving students perceived an effective teacher to be prepared for the lesson and use interesting activities. On the other hand, low achieving students perceived an organised teacher to be someone who provides interesting activities that are tailored to students' language proficiency. In relation to gender difference, Saudi female students preferred teachers to be organized and well prepared, as their third most preferred quality in Al-Khairi's (2015) study. The results of these studies indicate that students' perceptions of an effective teacher as someone who is organised and well prepared is well documented in research (Al-Khairi, 2015; Park & Lee; 2006).

As a contrast, in Saafin (2005), Arab students reported a low preference for effective teachers being prepared and organized. However, I believe that ranking certain qualities low does not mean that students do not value them, and consequently they should not be overlooked, especially given that the larger literature on effective teachers clearly indicates its importance. If qualities are ranked unusually by students, this indicates that students have different priorities. Depending on the context, on individual differences and demographic variables, students may rank effective teacher qualities differently. To clarify and justify the ranking students give to certain attributes including attributes related to effective teachers on 'preparedness and being organized', Saafin (2005) argued:

> The low frequency of this category should not mean though that students underestimate teachers' preparedness; it could mean that learners have priorities. What is important for them after all is teachers' ability to teach, help them to understand and improve in English. Being well prepared may help the teachers in increasing the effectiveness of their teaching, but it does not necessarily guarantee they will achieve this effectiveness (Saafin, 2005, p. 161).

This section completes the discussion on the characteristics of effective language teachers. It is worth noting again that most studies carried out on English language teacher effectiveness were carried out in EFL contexts (Al-Busaidi et al., 2016; Al-Khairi, 2015; Javid, 2011; Shahmohammadi, 2015). Most of the studies investigating the qualities of effective English language teachers from the lens of students lack a cross-cultural element in that no comparison group sample from an ESL context was included. This is a weakness in terms of providing input to the design of the present research study, which takes place in an ESL context, and specifically in an EAP context, as described in section 1.2. The next section will look more closely into the strengths and weaknesses of Barnes and Lock's framework in an EAP context, highlighting both the reasons for drawing on it and the need for including attention to the cultural aspects of an effective teacher's qualities.

### *2.8 Strengths and weaknesses of Barnes and Lock's framework for use in an EAP context*

There are many good reasons to use Barnes and Lock's framework to understand teacher effectiveness in EAP classrooms. Firstly, tracing back the history, EAP is considered as a branch of ELT and EFL. This is highlighted by Ding and Bruce (2017, p. 54): 'EAP has its origins in earlier approaches to teaching English as a foreign or second language'. Since Barnes and Lock's

framework is based on the emerging categories of effective teachers from ELT and EFL contexts, these categories are also relevant to the EAP context. In discussing the similarities of EAP and ELT, Chazal stated that 'as with general ELT teachers, key skills for the EAP teachers include planning and organizational skills, understanding of student behaviour, motivation and psychology; and classroom management skills' (Chazal, 2014, p. 34). This suggests that ELT and EAP teachers share many common attributes of effective teaching. While ELT and EAP teaching involve different approaches, good teaching practices, behaviours and skills should always be employed in teaching any language program, including EAP. It is noted that teachers who are in transition from ELT to EAP sometimes feel unconfident when the distinctions between ELT and EAP are overemphasized. As a result, when teaching EAP courses, teachers from ELT backgrounds avoid displaying those key practices that are important for effective teaching (Alexander, Argent, & Spencer, 2008).

A second reason supporting the use of the Barnes and Lock framework is the fact that the present study focuses on students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness and not the perceptions of teachers. Therefore, since most students who comprise the EAP classrooms in Australia are from EFL contexts who bring certain experiences and expectations of an effective English language teacher from their previous contexts, these attributes identified from the EFL literature are relevant to the current study. A third reason that was critical for this research in deciding to use Barnes and Lock's (2010, 2013) work in the current study was their close examination of an extensive range of studies, since effective teachers irrespective of subject share some similar qualities.

Lastly, despite inconsistencies in the use of terms for defining the attributes of teacher effectiveness, their meanings do overlap in various teaching contexts (Stronge, 2018) suggesting that the Barnes and Lock framework can readily be adapted to explore the perceptions of students about effective teachers in EAP contexts. Since limited studies have considered students' perceptions of effective EAP teachers in the ESL context, this review of literature has been informed by two areas: 'effective teachers in ELT and EFL context' and 'effective EAP classroom practices'. The review clearly indicates the potential of the Barnes and Lock framework as a tool that can inform both data generation and data analysis in this study.

However, it is vital to address some potential weaknesses in the framework in regard to the present purpose. One such weakness relates to the distinctions between EAP and EFL classrooms, as

explained by Gillett (2004), as there are certain unique aspects of EAP classrooms and the role of EAP practitioners. For instance, EFL classes are language-driven in nature, whereas EAP is skills-driven and students are required to show critical thinking ability and reflection. Moreover, since EAP courses follow strict course plans and are intensive in nature, there is not much opportunity for the students to participate in classroom discussion by sharing their ideas. In contrast, students have the opportunity to actively participate in EFL classrooms as they are not intensive in nature (Gillett, 2004; Lansford, 2014; Tarnopolsky, 2000). There are also distinctions between EAP and ESP classes. For example, it is argued that the role of a teacher in the EAP classroom is to enhance learners' academic language skills by drawing on content knowledge of their relative subjects instead of giving them knowledge of their relevant disciplines as in the case of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Thus, the teacher's responsibility in an EAP classroom is to ensure that the learners can effectively use the English language in their relevant disciplines (Cai, 2017). Learners' perceptions, therefore, are likely to be influenced if they are not aware of these distinctions, which may constitute a limitation in the Barnes and Lock framework.

More important, however, is the distinction between EFL and ESL contexts given that, despite the identified strengths of the Barnes and Lock framework in the EFL context, the review suggests that the model is inadequate to fully explain teacher effectiveness within a social context where there are students with different languages and cultures in the same class. This occurs in the Australian EAP context with diverse international students as well as in the mainstream school ESL situation with migrants and refugees. When addressing the needs of students from different cultures and learning styles, teachers face a number of challenges which are magnified when teachers do not share the cultural background of the students – the norm in ESL classrooms. Most EFL and ELT models of effective teachers lack sufficient recognition of the cultural aspects of teacher effectiveness because they were developed for EFL contexts, where the teacher and students often share a common cultural background (Newton, Siregar & Thao, 2020). Therefore, it is important to consider the need for a cultural perspective.

### *2.8.1 Need for a cultural perspective on teacher effectiveness in EAP contexts*

The importance of culture in effectively teaching English language in EAP contexts cannot be ignored. EAP students and educators bring different expectations and norms to the classroom due to their variety of sociocultural backgrounds and previous educational experiences (Dogancay-

Aktuna, 2005; Vo, 2012). As a result, different norms and expectations apply in relation to the roles that teachers and students play. In addition, there are norms and expectations with regards to learning-teaching practices that learners and teachers view as appropriate or effective (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005).

A review of relevant literature suggests that when dealing with students from a diverse cultural background, educators are confronted with circumstances where Western styles of teaching fall short of those from non-Western student expectations resulting in frustration for teachers who teach in Western settings (Midgley, 2010; Orth, 2015; Putnam, 2011; Richardson, 2012). Dogancay-Aktuna (2005) presented the problem reported by Hu (2002) of imported teaching methods where culture exerts a significant influence in determining teacher and student perspectives.

> Communicative language teaching (CLT) has failed to have the expected impact on ELT in China because assumptions underlying CLT conflict with the Chinese culture of learning. Hu's argument is supported by others who have shown how Chinese teachers and students view explicit grammar analysis as crucial to foreign language learning and believe that the teacher should dominate the classroom. A teacher who does not do so risks being seen as lazy or incompetent. Chinese students, on the other hand, have problems in accepting group work, debates, and other interactive activities as meaningful or relevant to their learning. Instead, they value mastery through memorization because they perceive it as knowledge that will bring them confidence and a feeling of success (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005, p. 101).

In explaining the struggle when the teacher does not have cultural knowledge about students, Richardson (2012) explained that being qualified to teach English does not necessarily guarantee that students would respond to the teaching techniques, styles and practices used in the classroom. For instance, English language educators may find students careless, disengaged, refusing to take part in group work, resistant to going beyond textbook learning, insisting on giving the correct answers, negotiating with teachers to be flexible with the grading system, and so on, which are not perceived as appropriate by a Western educator (Putnam, 2011; Richardson, 2012). Many of these frustrations may stem from the educator's or the student's lack of intercultural perspective (Putnam, 2011; Richardson, 2012).

Canagarajah (1999) argued that learning does not take place in the absence of a context, meaning it is essential for teachers to recognise and be responsive to context. He warned that it is wrong to assume that:

> ..learning is always autonomous, and never hindered or contaminated by contextual forces. Social-cultural conditions always influence our cognitive activity, mediating how we perceive and interpret world around us (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 14).

EAP students may not hold the same views on qualities or attributes of effective teachers as a Western EAP practitioner does due to contextual influences and cultural differences. EAP teachers' behaviours and teaching pedagogy may carry different meaning for EAP students as they continuously try to form connections between what happens in the classroom and what happens outside the classroom (Canagarajah, 1999; DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016).

When the teacher does not take into account the socio-cultural background of students, it can adversely affect student learning. Canagarajah (1999) believes that when teachers are teaching English language curriculum, they are also teaching a 'hidden curriculum' that consists of values and thinking which may not necessarily be aligned with students' perceptions. Thus, the Western teachers may not understand what meanings students give to different characteristics, practices and verbal and non-verbal behaviours used in English language classrooms and this is why not all activities are suitable for all learners in ESL classroom (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016). In addition, the role of a teacher contrast greatly in different cultures across education systems. While cultures with high power distance view teachers as a source of knowledge and their role is to explicitly guide students learning, Western teachers expect students to take responsibility of their own learning (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016). Therefore, a conflict may arise due to different expectations around the teacher's role and the practices they use as a result of their role. Confusions and misunderstandings, therefore, may challenge or question teacher effectiveness from students' perspectives.

From the discussion above, it is apparent that learners and teachers may have different cultural expectations and perspectives on the notion of effective teaching. Due to diversity in EAP classes in the Australian context, different cultures prevail in the classroom and therefore meanings given to particular attributes and perspectives do not necessarily align – either amongst students or between teacher and students. EAP classes in the ESL contexts are a classic example of classrooms where cultures meet. This may pose a challenge for teachers to cope with different, possibly conflicting, perspectives and cultures. Therefore it is important to further explore the notion of a cultural perspective and to better understand how it is interwoven with attributes of effective teachers in ESL or ESL EAP classes.

## *2.9 A cultural perspective on teacher effectiveness*

This section begins by considering variations in defining culture, concluding with a poststructuralist stance, presented as the researcher's preferred option. This is followed by consideration of culture in language and communication, raising the question of how to approach culture as an educator (2.9.3). The next sections address this question in more detail, presenting a framework for teaching understanding of culture, taken from the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1999) in the United States. A more specific question is then raised, namely how an EAP teacher can approach students' culture. This leads to a review of cultural aspects of effective EAP teaching (2.9.6), and a section on intercultural understanding and competence (2.9.7). An outcome of the review is a step towards a cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness that can inform the research design of the present study (2.9.8).

### *2.9.1 Defining culture*

In the past, it was easier to define different cultures as the definition was confined to social, artistic and intellectual traditions but now the term encompasses broader areas. Moran (2001) notes that culture is an important concept that is viewed from different perspectives in various academic disciplines and academic traditions. For example, Hofstede's (1984) five dimensions of culture explain behaviours of different cultural groups in work settings which could also be relevant to educational settings. Individualism/collectivism explains divisions between individualistic societies that have loose ties between their individuals such as Australia and the USA versus societies that have strong ties between their individuals such as China and Japan (DeCapua, 2018; Etri, 2012; Hofstede, 1984; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). Time orientation views the degree of emphasis given to long-short time orientation which influences educational ramifications if not aligned in educational systems in different societies. Power distance is viewed in relation to a degree of power an individual can utilize to change the idea or behaviour of other individuals in that society (DeCapua, 2018; Etri, 2012; Hofstede, 1984; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). Masculinity/femininity focuses on the roles that are perceived relevant by the members of societies on the basis of gender (DeCapua, 2018; Etri, 2012; Hofstede, 1984; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). Uncertainty avoidance deals with how members of different groups tackle uncertainty and ambiguity.

Kramsch (1993, p. 205) views culture as 'a social construct, the product of self and other perceptions'. This suggests that culture is established when people with different perceptions

interact with each other. The interaction is not just limited to the perceptions of social groups but also the perceptions of an individual. Later on, Kramsch (2013) also adopts the distinction made by Holliday (1999) between the two types of culture – the big C culture and the small c culture, as subsequently named by Lange and Paige (2003). The big C culture refers to cultural artefacts such as architecture, literature, art and music, while the small c culture involves features that are displayed by the people of a culture, including their products and practices (Bennett, 1998; Kramsch, 2012).

Moran (2001) views culture in terms of a multi-faceted phenomenon:

> A cultural phenomenon involves tangible forms or structures (products) that individual members of the culture (persons) use in various interactions (practices) in specific social circumstances and groups (communities) in ways that reflect their values, attitudes and beliefs (perspectives) (Moran, 2001, pp: 25-26).

A poststructuralist stance of this kind is useful in the present study to define culture. The supporters of poststructuralism believe that people's ideas in relation to the world and realities are highly dependent on constructed discourse (Peters & Burbules, 2004). The poststructuralists do not believe in the existence of one concrete reality (Peters & Burbules, 2004), but rather in the existence of multiple realities raising ambiguity and tensions in communication (Barker, 2008). For poststructuralists, meanings differ from one person to another; in other words, meanings are not static (Morgan, 2007; Peters & Burbules, 2004). Poststructuralists focus on exploring the notion of multiple identities, perspectives, values and practices of groups as well as individuals, by taking into account the sociohistorical factors (Barker, 2008). This position applies well to the purpose of this thesis, which is to unfold perceptions of participating Saudi students who come from a different cultural background to that of the Australian learning environment in which they are studying. Moreover, perceptions of Saudi students on the notion of teacher effectiveness may not be aligned with Western perspectives, meaning there is no one concrete reality of the concept of effectiveness. Examining the perceptions of Saudi students on the notion of effective teachers through the lens of poststructuralism will provide in-depth understanding. When a teacher communicates with a student, the message carries multiple meanings depending on the intent of the communicator (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). As a result, the student does not necessarily receive the same meaning as the teacher intended to convey due to differences in their beliefs and the social-cultural contexts they come from.

### *2.9.2 Culture in language and communication*

Culture is an important aspect by which we view the world. Received information passes through cognitive and affective filters before we make sense of behaviours we encounter. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) called these filters 'eyeglasses' that help us to understand and interpret the world around us, and specify three steps involved in perceptions: selection process, organization and interpretation. In the selection process, 'we pick out cues from our cultural landscapes' (p. 230) and we then learn to pay attention to the cues that are valued in our culture. One characteristic is paying close attention to something that stands out – Toomey gives an example of a teacher with a heavy accent. Students are likely to pay more attention to the teacher's accent (voice, pitch and tone) and less attention to the content of the lecturer. Therefore, culture plays an important role in what we select to pay attention to. The second step, organization of perception, relates to the organization of cues, which involves grouping objects and things that are similar. The organization of cues is guided by culture and language. The last step, 'interpretation', is important as it involves meanings attached to expectations. Expectations are critical as they help us in predicting how people will behave in response to certain situations.

> Our expectations influence the way we perceive and interpret cultural strangers' behaviours, and likewise their reactions to us are based on their expectations and preconceptions. Expectations are the filters of our perceptions of others. We have an image of how we expect people to act in a given situation (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005, p. 231).

It is culture that offers a set of interpretations that a receiver uses as a filter to understand the message (Lustig & Koester, 2010). Therefore, culture is the basis of communication (Lustig & Koester, 2010). Culture helps to guide what is an appropriate way to talk and to whom (Jackson, 2014). Schulz (2007) stated:

> Cultural knowledge and culture appropriate communication skills play an important role in all three modes of communication: interpersonal (implying, of course, culturally appropriate interaction); interpretive (implying sufficient knowledge of the target culture to understand culture-specific meanings); and presentational (implying selection of culture-appropriate contents and use of style and register, (i.e. the conscious or subconscious understanding of what can be said to whom, how and in what circumstances) (Schulz, 2007, p. 10).

Cultural awareness guides how a message is encoded and what meaning it carries depending upon the perspectives of the receiver (Nordby, 2008). A message delivered from a communicator may

carry different meanings depending upon the perspectives underlying the culture of a receiver. For example, in foreign language classes, a message communicated by an English language teacher may carry different meanings for students due to differences in cultural background. In the language classroom, a variety of types of communication take place between teacher and students, so it is important for the educator to know what message is being communicated to students and how it will be received in terms of the cultural interpretation of students. A better understanding of culture will allow a teacher to have better communication with their students and prevent misunderstandings that trigger from underlying cultural differences.

In relation to classroom pedagogy and classroom practices in learner-centred classrooms in Australia, based on the professional experiences of the researcher teaching in both Saudi Arabia and Australia, the practices that Western EAP teachers use are different from those used in teacher-directed classrooms in Saudi Arabia. This also means that the qualities or characteristics that Saudi students perceive to be effective may be different from a teacher from Western culture. For example, the notion of friendliness is culturally informed. What one culture views as friendly, another may not (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

In cases where teacher and students have cultural disagreement in relation to communication, practices, behaviour, perspectives on the notion of effectiveness, Nordby (2008) highlights the issue of power that particularly originates from the concept of values and beliefs. The term power distance refers to the degree which the group with less power accepts the unequal distribution of power from the powerful group or members. This could be applicable to school, families and communities (Hofstede, 1984). Nordby (2008) believes that groups that have power would justify themselves or convince the less powerful group by bringing explanations to address the problem or providing what they perceive is 'rational' to reorganise factual beliefs to fit their norms of living. This could occur in EAP classrooms when the teacher may try to impose on the class a cultural stance – which could be Australian culture, organisational culture, teaching pedagogical culture – by ignoring the values and beliefs of students. In trying to resolve a conflict, an EAP teacher may be able to provide information to students and to reorganise students' beliefs due to the power they have or that the institution has, but will miss the mark from students' points of view on the notion of teacher effectiveness.

What is important to understand is that the context plays an important role in deciding which group holds the power and what culture will be imposed. The choice does not necessarily lie with teachers. For example, in an EFL context, the situation may be different from an ESL context. In a context where a Western teacher is teaching an EAP course to Saudi students in Saudi Arabia, one may assume that power lies with a teacher in the Saudi context due to the teacher-centred classroom, but that may not be the case. The additional information, explanations, reorganising of factual beliefs to fit the norms around the cultural disagreements in this situation could come from the power held by the institution or the students or both. This suggests that the issue of 'majority' and 'minority' is important in cultural disagreement in relation to communication that could affect the meaning attached to values in different contexts and under different circumstances (Nordby, 2008). Canagarajah (1999) also raised this issue:

> In the same way it is not surprising that key aspects of education such as curriculum pedagogy and instructional policy are defined by the groups and institutions that control society. Learning, therefore, is a highly contested conflict-ridden enterprise where the competing knowledge, values and practices of diverse communities struggle for dominance (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 16).

In an ESL context, international students may be considered as a minority, and therefore Western perspectives around the notion of teacher effectiveness could be viewed as appropriate by the dominant bodies (teachers, institution) involved in that context. Therefore, it is important to understand that on the basis of 'majority' and 'minority', the meaning attached to the values could be affected without acknowledging the underlying thoughts and beliefs particular to the social and cultural context (Nordby, 2008).

#### *2.9.3 How to approach culture as an educator?*

Since culture is a broad topic, for an English language educator, it is useful to approach culture from the symbol of an iceberg (see Figure 2.1) (DeCapua, 2018). DeCapua (2018) explains the tip of the iceberg as a small piece seen above the surface that represents the observable features of culture; these are the behaviours and symbols which people display and produce such as eating and food, dressing and clothes, learning and assessments. These behaviours and symbols are what can be seen and heard and relate to the small c culture (Bennett, 1998; DeCapua, 2018). The perceptions that are formed in relation to these symbols and behaviours are under the surface and are not visible. We often have a superficial understanding of behaviour and symbols due to a lack

of deeper understanding of attitudes (positive or negative) that are established as a result of beliefs that are beneath the surface (Deardorff, 2013; DeCapua, 2018).

For example, a Western educator accustomed to encouraging students to think outside of the box may be viewed as using ineffective practices by a student from a different culture. This is because a learner from a non-Western culture may be accustomed to adhering strictly to the linear patterns of language modelling and practice in a textbook and may resist participation in

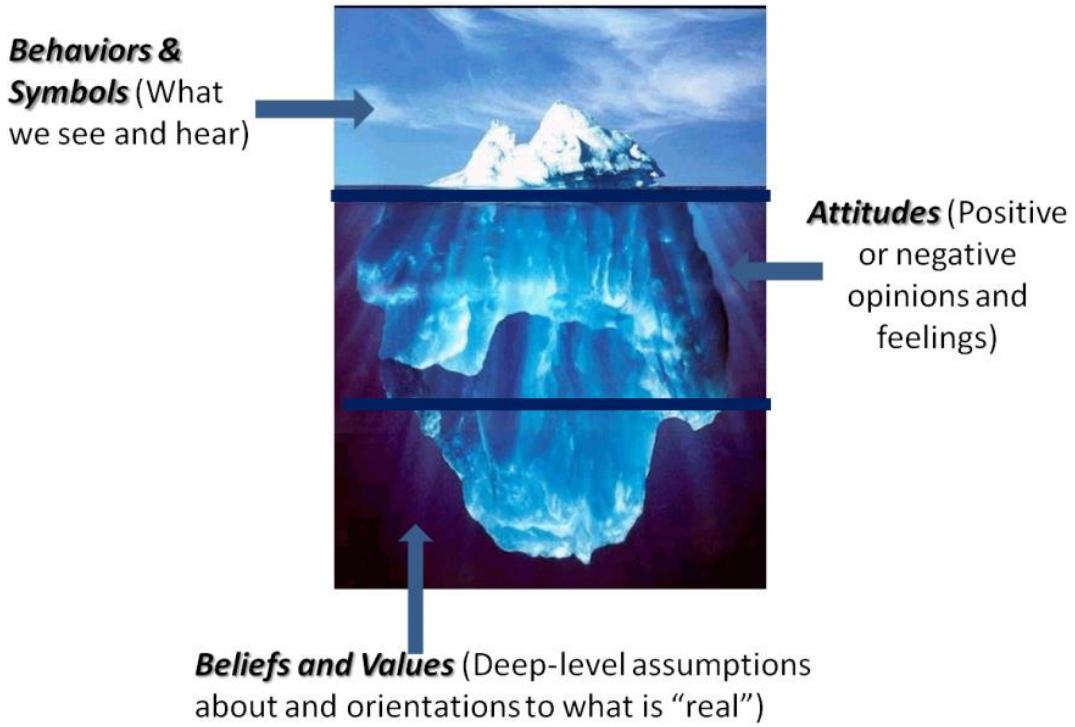



**Figure 2.1 Culture as an iceberg (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012)**

discussions that are beyond the instructional bounds of a textbook. In other words, there is a cultural element or lack of cultural understanding that is missing between a teacher and a student which leads to different expectations as a result of different perspectives that are not visible or are tacit; in other words, underlying the iceberg of culture. Therefore, educators see different emotional responses (positive/negative) to different practices that they use in class. The bottom of the iceberg consists of perspectives, including beliefs and values, which are complex to understand because they require a deeper understanding of culture (Morain, 1997; Sullivan, Schmidt-Rinehart & Morris, 2011). Attitudes are primarily formed as a result of beliefs and values that result in behaviours. According to Ting-Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) attitude has two layers in relation

to understanding culture: a cognitive layer and an affective layer. The cognitive layer is concerned with our willingness to eliminate any ethnocentric judgment by being open towards learning about the culture of others. The affective layer refers to the emotional commitment with an 'empathetic heart' to understand the culture of others (Lange & Paige, 2003; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). A flexible attitude means that we hold back our ethnocentrism and understand people's behaviour by understanding from their cultural point of view, in other words, through an ethnorelative perspective (Bennett, 1998; Lange & Paige, 2003; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

Nordby (2008) argues that many problems may occur in intercultural communication as a result of limited knowledge in relation to values and beliefs. Therefore, Nordby (2008) provides a useful distinction between 'beliefs' and 'values' and argues that these two notions have distinct meanings and if clarified and understood, it may help in eliminating problems that occur in intercultural communication. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) referred to cultural beliefs as:

> fundamental assumptions or worldviews that people hold dearly to their hearts without question. These beliefs can revolve around questions as to the origins of human beings, the concept of time, space, and reality, the existence of a supernatural being, and the meaning of life, death, and the afterlife. Proposed answers to many of these questions can be found in the major religions of the world, such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005, p. 33).

Values give us meaning of what is ethically good or bad (Nordby, 2008). Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) referred to cultural values as 'a set of priorities that guide 'good' or 'bad' behaviours, desirable and undesirable practices, and 'fair' or 'unfair' actions' (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005, p. 35). We may think of 'values' as norms and believe that they are not only the same for one group but the same for all communities and cultural groups. Nordby (2008, p. 5) gives an example of terms such as 'justice', 'fairness', 'equality', 'democracy'. If, for instance, it is believed that these terms are understood as paramount values, then it would be extremely difficult to believe that a person from another cultural and social context would consider these values as trivial. Nordby (2008) argues that these values are deemed important to one person because they are experienced by that person and have become part of their social and cultural context. Therefore, some values may be fundamental to one society but not to another. This may significantly impact on the notion of characteristics of an effective English language teacher from Saudi students' perspective.

It is extremely challenging to develop deep level assumptions of values and beliefs as they are beneath the iceberg (Deardorff, 2013) and teachers cannot approach these concepts by simple 'yes' or 'no' responses to questions or through simple explanation. There is a need for an ethnorelative mindset which according to Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) is the flexibility to understand a behaviour from the lens or perspective of another person's cultural framework rather than being enthnocentric, meaning confined to your culture and making it as a baseline to judge others.

### *2.9.4 Frameworks for teaching cultural understanding*

The Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1999) produced by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proposed a philosophical paradigm to guide educators to teach cultural understanding to students. This takes the form of a Culture Triangle (see Figure 2.2) distinguishing products, practices and perspectives in a connected relationship.

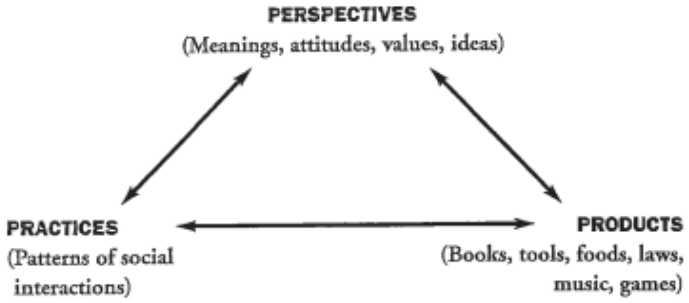



**Figure 2.2: The Culture Triangle (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 47)**

The Culture Triangle is often referred to as the 3Ps paradigm (Sullivan, Schmidt-Rinehart & Morris, 2011). Sullivan et al. (2011, p. 45) explain that products refer to tangible or non-tangible objects in a culture; practices refer to the patterns of social interactions and also guide us in what is acceptable to do, when and where; while perspectives refer to the beliefs and attitudes to represent cultural views. Schulz (2007, p. 10) defines perspectives 'as the underlying-often subconscious-beliefs, attitudes, and values that influence people's behaviour and determine what they do, how they do it, and why, with 'why' being of particular importance. Similar points are made by Nordby (2008) and Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012).

For Sullivan et al. (2011):

> [t]he Culture Triangle paradigm is an effective tool that can be used by any discipline to help understand cultures—one's own and others. Used in the classroom setting, it gives students a consistent approach for understanding and analyzing. The focus on perspective moves students beyond a superficial interpretation of the culture. Students begin to see that products and practices are not 'weird,' just different, and they can explore the 'why' of differences and similarities (Sullivan, Schmidt-Rinehart & Morris, 2011, p. 46).

Although this paradigm is used to guide teachers to teach target culture to students, it could equally be used as an effective tool for EAP teachers to understand their own culture and the culture of their students.

Building on the 3Ps paradigm and David Kolb's Experiential Learning cycle, Moran (2001) proposes five dimensions of culture and represents them in a diamond shaped model (Figure 2.3). The diamond shape illustrates the interaction of the four dimensions of culture that are visible and thus observable, with a fifth tacit and unobservable dimension underlying the four visible dimensions (Moran, 2001). The five dimensions are: products, practices, persons, communities (all observable) and perspectives (tacit) as illustrated.

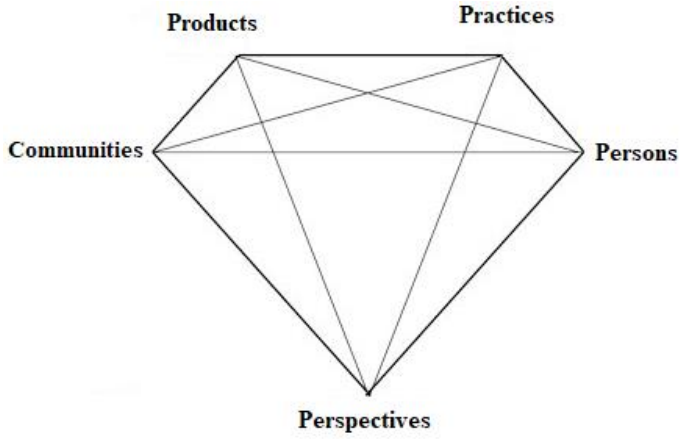



**Figure 2.3 The five dimensions of culture (Moran, 2001, p. 21)**

The two added dimensions are persons and communities. Persons refers to people who act within culture and their behaviours and thoughts are guided by the culture they are raised in. Communities refers to groups of people who share the same values and behaviours in a society (Moran, 2001). In this study the 3Ps paradigm is preferred over Moran's model because the focus is on perspectives of students, the practices used by the teachers, and the teacher as cultural product rather than individual person. Also, the study is not designed to attend to the wider communities

and people involved outside the EAP classroom; therefore, these elements can legitimately be omitted.

### *2.9.5 How can an EAP teacher approach students' culture?*

Through the lens of the Cultural Knowing Framework by Moran (2001), English language educators and English language learners can develop an understanding of their own culture and the culture of the students they interact with. This allows both students and educators to understand their own culture, identity and roles that they develop as a result of their experiences, and to compare the differences between each other's cultures. Furthermore, this gives teachers the opportunity to understand the cultural elements that are rooted in both teachers' and students' behaviours and practices and to develop a degree of intercultural competence. The Cultural Knowing framework has four interconnected elements: knowing about, knowing how, knowing why and knowing oneself. The first interaction which is called knowing about encompasses information gathering and gaining knowledge in relation to the products, practices and perspectives of a culture (Moran, 2001). The element knowing how refers to the understanding and the ability to behave in a culturally appropriate manner. Knowing why comprises the understanding of perceptions, attitudes and beliefs by constantly analysing personal cultural experience and comparing it to their own national culture (Moran, 2001). Knowing oneself refers to understanding personal culture that helps in adapting and integrating into another culture. For a language teacher cultural exploration is a life-long process that builds over time as a result of experience.

Sullivan et al. (2011) viewed integration of the culture of the target language as critical to language learning, and the Cultural Knowing framework as helpful in teaching English culture to students in the EFL context. However, it must be remembered that in relation to EAP classrooms, the students have a different linguistic goal to those students who are studying English as a foreign language. For example, the students studying English as a foreign language may never plan to travel abroad or may not have travelled abroad so they cannot make sense of some activities that Western educators try to encourage them to participate in. The main goal of EAP students, however, in both the ESL and EFL contexts, is to achieve academic skills to enable them to perform well in university courses and be able to apply the professional knowledge and skills they have acquired. Unlike migrant or refugee students studying EAP in the local context, international

students do not regard acculturation to an English speaking community as necessary or desirable. In EAP teaching, particularly in ESL countries, the responsibility lies on the shoulders of EAP educators to provide a safe environment for students to express their own cultures. This requires a framework for understanding culture and its place in language learning and teaching.

### *2.9.6 Cultural aspects of effective EAP teaching*

Sowden (2007) argues that in order to be effective, a teacher should not impose their own culture in the classroom but work on cultures they come across in different situations. It is also important for teachers to take differences into consideration and understand the impact cultures have on students' learning styles and attitudes. Teachers teaching English in Australia and around the world must engage with different types of cultures that include: culture of the nation, academic institution, discipline, international education and students themselves (Holliday, 1999). Holliday's (1999) ideas of teacher's cultural understanding should not only be limited to the expatriate situation but could also inform teachers teaching in ESL situations. The idea still stands valid in current ESL classrooms which may be taught by both local and expatriate teachers. Teachers teaching in EAP classrooms bring their own cultures into the classroom and encounter different students' cultures. Therefore, it becomes challenging for teachers to implement a prescribed curriculum and use different teaching methodologies that students may not be totally familiar with. Sowden (2007) stated:

> teachers need to be aware not only of the cultures of their students and their environment, but also of the cultures that they themselves bring to the classroom, whether they are nationals or expatriates. This is not just a question of the historical and social baggage that, for example, an American or a metropolitan from New Delhi, inevitably carries with them, but of the particular attitudes and practices that they have developed as individuals (Sowden, 2007, p. 305).

EAP teachers and students may give different meanings to an attribute that they associate with teacher effectiveness due to differences in values or beliefs. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) explained that being unaware of another culture in relation to beliefs, values and meanings people give to certain things often may cause confusion and lead to unintentional clashes.

> Overall culture is a complex frame of reference that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, meanings, and symbols that are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community. Oftentimes, our ignorance of a different culture's world views or values can produce unintentional clashes between us and people of that culture (Jackson, 2014). We may not even notice that we have violated another

> culture's norm in a particular communication scene. The result may worsen the intercultural misinterpretation process (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005, p. 37).

International students often face cultural dissonance when teachers in the host country misunderstand or miscomprehend students' learning styles, behaviour and communication that relates to their cultural patterns (Gabriel et al., 2010). Where there is an ethical diversity in the classroom, teachers may overlook a cultural problem that exists. Hence, misinterpretation or misunderstanding between teacher and student or of a situation leaves students to develop feelings of helplessness, anxiety and student disengagement (Gabriel et al., 2010). Behaviours that are viewed as appropriate among Middle Eastern or Asian international students may be viewed as a sign of passiveness or disengagement to Westerners. These problems are relevant to classes where diversity is the norm of the classroom, which is especially the case in ESL contexts. However, these differences in cultures should be viewed through the lens of assets and not shortfalls. Therefore, it becomes important for teachers to understand the culture, religious values and linguistic backgrounds of their students to meet their academic demands. In addressing the importance of a teacher's cultural awareness, Gabriel et al. (2010) stated:

> In order to avoid problems of culturally irrelevant classroom management techniques, teachers must be culturally sensitive and culturally literate. Cultural literacy may be achieved through a thorough knowledge of the history, social patterns, customs, mores, family characteristics, values and educational challenges of ethnic and racial groups. Cultural illiteracy may pose serious threats to the health and well-being of students (Gabriel, et al., 2010, p. 10).

The qualities detailed in regard to rapport (section 2.6) relate directly or indirectly to culture. Therefore, when viewing these qualities as effective for English language teachers, the cultural aspect cannot be isolated from the attributes. This section has highlighted that it is not only the culture of students but the culture of the teacher that shapes classroom practices which are introduced to class by the teacher. Since the teacher's responsibility is to create an engaging, motivating and safe environment for the students, validating the culture of the students appears to be of central importance in the learning process. It is also important to note that the qualities of teachers that may appear to be effective may be viewed differently by students. The way certain qualities are demonstrated can also pose challenges and do not necessarily bring fruitful results for a teacher in ESL classrooms. Therefore, not only sociocultural awareness and contextual interpersonal skills are fundamental for such teachers but also an ongoing commitment to

developing their intercultural competence. The next section will highlight the importance of intercultural understanding and competence in relation to the notion of teacher effectiveness.

### *2.9.7 Intercultural understanding and competence*

Intercultural understanding and competence are important aspects of education particularly in an EAP context where cultural heterogeneity is a norm (Romijn, Slot, & Leseman, 2021). Intercultural understanding involves valuing your own culture and acknowledging the differences of other cultures by connecting in a way that cultivates mutual respect. Intercultural competence goes beyond mere understanding to encompass skilled action. As Byram (1997) emphasised, knowledge is not enough for a fully effective teacher and needs to be expanded by 'first, skills of interpretation and establishing relationships between aspects of the two cultures; second, skills of discovery and interaction' (Byram, 1997, p. 33, as cited in Deardorff, 2006). More specifically, Byram (1997) defined intercultural competence as "Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviours; and relativising one's self" (Byram, 1997, p. 34, as cited in Deardorff, 2006).

As there are multiple elements of culture that are below the level of conscious awareness, DeCapua (2018) believes that when we encounter different cultures, we only focus on the differences, which often leads to cultural misunderstandings. DeCapua and Wintergerst (2016) suggest that it is critical for not only the teachers but also the students to explore what triggers the misconceptions. Ideally cultural variations provide opportunity to learn from them; however, in real settings unfortunately we often fall into a trap of judging and reacting rather than rationally interpreting them and developing an intercultural competence in response to them (Putnam, 2011; Richardson, 2012).

For example, in English language classrooms, teachers may feel uncomfortable with stretches of silence and do not give enough time to students to answer a question (Ingram & Elliott, 2014). Zarrinabadi (2014) studied the role that the teacher plays in students' willingness to communicate in English language classrooms, indicating that 'teachers' wait time', 'error correction', and 'decision on the topic' all had an impact on learners' willingness to communicate in the classroom. The study also indicated that language learners often require more time to organise their ideas and translate them in the target language than native speakers (Zarrinabadi, 2014). These findings are

important to understand as those teacher characteristics that support learner willingness to communicate may also be relevant to students' perceptions of effective English teachers.

Furthermore, in some cultures speakers use shorter pauses or no pauses at all which may generally be less acceptable in English (DeCapua, 2018). The learners often transfer this behaviour to the new language which makes it hard for an English speaker teacher to become accustomed to the learners' behaviour. Since interruptions and taking longer pauses are not perceived negatively in such a learner's culture, the speaker is unaware that for English speakers, these behaviours could cause frustrations. These variations in behaviours may be perceived differently by students, and teacher effectiveness may be construed in terms of their intercultural competence in addressing such matters.

Gender may also play a part in relation to participation in conversation. In some cultures, it is normal for men to interrupt women and to participate more actively than women (DeCapua, 2018). In an EAP classroom, a teacher may find male students from some cultures more dominating than female students of the same culture. Therefore, an effective teacher may find it useful to initiate interculturally appropriate classroom participation patterns to promote equal opportunities for all students regardless of their gender.

Bennett, Bennett, and Allen, (2003) suggested that it is vital for teachers to understand the intercultural sensitivity of learners which implies choosing the topic according to students' intercultural preconditioning. Teachers can use topics that focus on understanding differences in value system and culture shock for advanced learners. For intermediate learners, less challenging topics that focus on similarities between cultures can be chosen. These considerations are important and language teachers need to take into account those norms that are relevant to bilinguility and interculturality rather than overly focussing on the target language norm of the native speaker (Bennett, Bennett & Allen, 2003).

Intercultural competence is an essential part of teacher effectiveness in EAP courses as it helps to foster a comfortable learning environment for students where cultural variations are acknowledged. It is also important for teachers and students to be aware of areas where cultural misunderstanding can occur so that stereotyping can be avoided (Deardorff, 2013; DeCapua, 2018). Related to intercultural competence, culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is a key area that is widely highlighted in the literature. It is particularly critical to ESOL and EAP teaching as it

motivates and facilities language learning in the EAP classroom (Rhodes, 2013). Highlighting the importance of CRT, Gay (2010) states 'Culturally responsive teaching validates, facilitates, liberates, and empowers ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success' (Gay, 2010, p. 44). The views of Gay (2010) on CRT are very similar to Ferlazzo and Sypnieski (2018) who also believe that CRT validates cultural diversity that students bring to class. It is also believed that culturally responsive teaching is not a strategy used by a teacher in the classroom but it is a mindset that guides teacher classroom practices by embracing students' cultures and responding to their needs (Ferlazzo & Sypnieski, 2018). Incorporating culturally responsive teaching in the classroom requires several important aspects highlighted by Gay (2010). These include 'teacher attitudes and expectations, cultural communication in the classroom, culturally diverse context in the curriculum, and culturally congruent instructional strategies' (Gay, 2010, p. 44). CRT is crucial for effective teaching in EAP; however, practitioners sometimes do not prefer or simply are unaware of the practices and strategies that are involved in establishing and enhancing CRT in EAP classrooms (Rhodes, 2013). Thus, teachers' perceptions and knowledge of CRT have a significant impact on students' academic performance (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009).

### *2.9.8 Towards a cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness*

In order to reflect the need for a cultural perspective on EAP teacher effectiveness (identified in section 2.8.1) and thus to inform a deeper level of data analysis in this study, a tentative 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness' is proposed. This model combines the 3Ps frameworks for teaching cultural understanding (section 2.9.4) with the Barnes and Lock (2010, 2013) framework of five effective teacher attributes, to which 'intercultural competence' has been added, bringing the number of attributes to six. These six attributes are then located under one or other of perspectives, practices or products (3Ps) in the Culture Triangle, as shown in Figure 2.4 and justified in the subsequent paragraph.

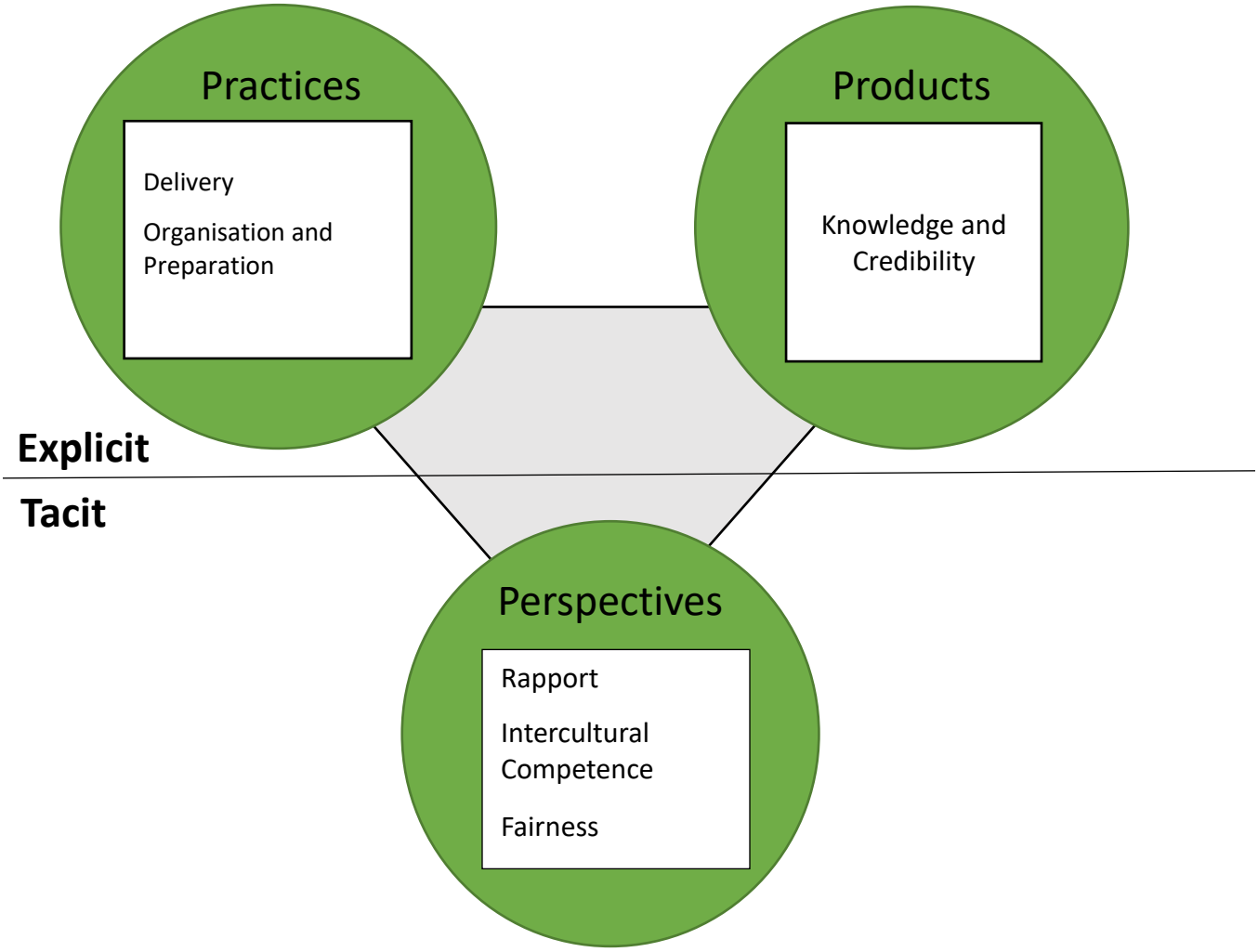



**Figure 2.4 Proposed cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness**

Given that notions of personality, intercultural competence and fairness are intangible, they are located under the concept of 'perspectives'. The teaching methods and attributes related to the teacher being organised and prepared are placed under 'practices' as they typically include observable behaviours displayed by EAP teachers. Knowledge and credibility are located under 'products' because they are a visible part of the effective teacher in action as a product of his/her environment, education and personal history. Products, according to Moran (2001) may include spoken language and education, and are presumed here to also include demonstration of the teacher's knowledge of the subject and features of native or non-native English teachers which are visible to students.

In this model, the perspectives, practices and products are placed in an inverted triangle, as in Moran's (2001) five-dimensional diamond figure (see section 2.9.4), rather than the standard triangle used in the original 3Ps format. This choice was made because the inverted triangle nicely represents the fact that products are explicit, clear, visible and generally tangible constructs, while perspectives are implicit, invisible and intangible constructs and tend to underlie the manifestation of practices and products.

The different elements of the model can be explained using an example. An EAP teacher steps into the class on the first day. Students will wonder whether the teacher is a NEST or non-NEST (products). Based on an introduction from a teacher and from certain cues, students make their judgement about the subject knowledge of the teacher. The teacher then uses various teaching methods such as use of group work, teaching through technology, and classroom discussion (practices). Students start to learn about the teacher's personality and intercultural competence (perspectives) in the process of learning through different practices. In this way, the students form perceptions of the teacher's effectiveness.

In sum, this 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness' uses the elements of the 3Ps Cultural Triangle to frame the various qualities of effective teachers identified in the Barnes and Lock (2010) framework and expanded on through the literature review, as well as the additional attribute of intercultural competence. The model will serve as a tool to inform data generation as well as initial data analysis.

### *2.10 Chapter summary*

This literature review initially focused on the notion of effectiveness in teaching in regard to issues of classification, student perceptions and perspectives. This included effective EFL teacher attributes as identified by Barnes and Lock (2010), namely rapport, delivery, fairness, knowledge and credibility, and organisation and preparation. These five attributes were then elaborated through a detailed review of related studies (sections 2.3 to 2.7). This led to a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the framework for the purposes of considering teacher effectiveness in an ESL context within an EAP course (2.8). It was concluded the framework was very relevant but that a cultural perspective was necessary due to the presence of cultural and linguistic diversity in ESL contexts such as Australia. Discussing cultural perspectives led to the argument that beliefs and values that lie beneath the iceberg require teachers to develop intercultural competence skills

to respond to students' need by making certain judgements and evaluations to promote a better learning environment for students. Teachers' attitude towards learning students' culture and openness and cultural otherness is connected to respect and better communication skills (Romijn, Slot & Leseman, 2021) that are important to the notion of teacher effectiveness. The final section of the chapter established a perspective on culture as a factor in considering the effectiveness of EAP teachers in ESL settings, concluding with the presentation of a proposed cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness. This model feeds in to the research processes discussed in the next chapter.

# Chapter Three: Research design and methods

## *3.1 Introduction*

Chapter three begins by again presenting the research questions for the study, followed by an explanation of the philosophical stance of the researcher, describing and justifying the selection of the research methodology that informs the study. This leads to an account of the choice of research design and case study methods. The next section (3.6) presents details of a preliminary survey designed to inform data collection in the case study. Details of the case study itself follow at section 3.7, including participant recruitment and selection, data generation methods, data analysis processes, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

## *3.2 Research questions*

The main goal of this study was to investigate perceptions of effective English teachers in EAP classrooms in Australia, particularly from the viewpoint of Saudi students, and to explore the views of teaching effectiveness. A review of the literature and existing research indicates that there are particular attributes that are important to teacher effectiveness, and indicates a need to further explore the nature of those attributes and possible cultural perspectives that might be associated with them. By focusing on Saudi students, this study aims to provide their particular perspective on the attributes of an effective English language educator within an EAP course. Therefore, the focus will be on the following overarching question and sub-questions:

**Who is an effective English language educator to a Saudi student?**

1. What are the factors that influence Saudi students' perceptions of effective language educators?

2. What are the perceived qualities of an English language educator in an Australian EAP course that contribute to Saudi students' perceived improvement of their English language proficiency?

## *3.3 Methodological framework*

Methodology provides a systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study by uncovering specific methods for collecting and analysing a set of data to answer research questions. The present study investigates a social problem i.e. teacher effectiveness and is

informed by the perspectives of those who are situated in the context of the problem i.e. students. The study therefore lends itself to a qualitative interpretivist paradigm where the views of multiple research participants are interpreted and understood within the social reality under investigation, which includes subjectivities that are not easily negated but can offer deep and meaningful insights when corroborated by other forms of evidence. In addition, relying on percentages and numbers would not have been sufficient to explain the phenomenon under investigation (i.e. teacher effectiveness), which requires an in-depth understanding of the problem. The primary participants whose perspectives are sought are Saudi students who co-exist in the same social realm as international students from diverse cultures with diverse views and expectations of teaching and learning. As an English language teacher of Saudi students and having been educated myself in Saudi Arabia, my own stance as a researcher is also embedded in the social reality under investigation. As a result of my background and experience of studying in Saudi Arabia, the UK and Australia, I had acquired the linguistic, educational and cultural understanding of the three systems which helped in interpreting data. I studied an advanced TESOL qualification in Australia and I have studied in higher Education in the UK which has similarities in Australian higher education. As I have taught EAP in higher education in Saudi Arabia for many years and have worked in teaching on the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and ELICOS programme in Australia. The advanced qualification in TESOL and my vast experience and expertise combined has positioned me to understand Saudi students well in the higher education sector in general and in the Australian context in particular. My interpretations of the social reality under investigation are well informed but clearly subjective. Any researcher within this context would bring their personal biases to the interpretations of collected data; therefore, as a researcher I was fully aware of the inherent bias of the subjectivities in which I interpreted the data.

The interpretive paradigm is a philosophical stance that looks at the different ways humans make sense of the world around them. The epistemological stance for interpretivism is subjectivity and the emphasis is on the social context rather than viewing the world in an objective way. Interpretivist philosophy stresses the importance of studying the situation in detail in order to understand the reality (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). From the perspective of the interpretivist, it is critical to explore the meanings that are attached to the actions of social actors so that the researcher can understand the motivation behind these actions. Constructivism or social constructivism which is usually associated with interpretivism is viewed as an approach to

qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Social constructivism views reality as being socially constructed (Saunders et al., 2012), and social constructivists believe that humans develop subjective meanings when they interact with the world around them. These meanings are subjective based on their experiences and often these meanings vary as people experience and understand the same 'objective reality' in different ways which leads the researcher to look at the complexities of views (Creswell, 2013). In terms of the choice of methods, interpretivists prefer qualitative methods which allow the researcher to closely interact with the respondents.

From the perspective of interpretivism, a researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Since there exist multiple interpretations as a result of human interactions with others and the social world, Hammersley (2013) advised that it is important that the researcher looks at the context and the culture that are involved in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Since the teacher and learner are both involved in the learning process, the reality (real-world), context and experience are important (Kolb, 2014). Tuli (2010) suggested that employing this practical approach not only helps the researcher to describe the phenomenon but also helps to understand the phenomenon in the social context.

The current study has adopted an interpretivist position and qualitative approach to explore the perceptions of Saudi students of what constitutes an effective EAP teacher. The next section will explain the research design of the study.

### *3.4 Qualitative research design*

A qualitative design was used to address the research questions established for this study. Qualitative research places emphasis on individuals and their roles in context to establish their thoughts, perspectives and behaviours in a particular setting. In qualitative research, a researcher is interested in understanding how humans interpret and give meanings to their experience. Thus a qualitative research design is appropriate for those studies where it is important to understand the experience and perceptions based on the nature of the research problem. Qualitative research is defined by Denzin & Lincoln (2005) as:

> a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world.

> This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

Qualitative methods suit research studies that require investigating complex phenomena that are difficult to measure and that require comprehensive understanding of a problem. Quantitative methods value statistical description and generalisability and aim at achieving objectivity, control and precise measurement (Patton, 2005).

In addition, qualitative research helps in answering research questions regarding experience and perceptions from the participant's point of view (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey, 2016). Data collected in qualitative research requires organizing, describing, and interpreting (Hammarberg et al., 2016). A qualitative research study has distinct characteristics at each stage according to Creswell (2015). These distinctive characteristics are (Creswell, 2015, p.16):

- exploring a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon
- having the literature review play a minor role but justify the problem
- stating the purpose and research questions in an open-ended way to capture the participants' experiences
- collecting data that is based on words (e.g., from interviews, images or photographs) from a small number of individuals so that the participants' views are obtained
- analysing the data from description and themes using text analysis and interpreting the larger meaning of the findings
- writing the report using flexible emerging structures, evaluative criteria and subjective reflexivity and bias

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) explained several reasons for when to use a qualitative design. In general, Creswell and Guetterman (2019) advised that qualitative design is a good choice for the research study if the researchers do not know the variables that are to be explored. The literature review provides general understanding of the phenomenon, with the researcher interested to explore thoughts and explanations. For instance, in the current study, qualities related to teacher effectiveness are reviewed in different contexts using different nationality samples, with the researcher interested to know how, what and why Saudi students perceive certain attributes on the notion of teacher effectiveness. The literature has not documented Saudi students' perceptions in

an ESL context; therefore, the researcher was interested to explore the perceptions in a specific context, which is EAP particularly in an ESL context.

The decision of choosing a qualitative research design was also based on the overall aim of the study and how best to address the research questions. Qualitative approaches are usually conducted in natural and real-life settings to understand how people experience the world (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Qualitative methods are characterised by the use of text (spoken and written words) to record information and to analyse the collected data (Hitleman & Simon, 2002). Lankshear and Knobel (2003) believe that to understand the world, it is important to focus on the context by paying attention to the history and language of the participants when the event is taking place. The participants' linguistic and educational backgrounds were considered as part of addressing the research questions. Moreover, the context of the study was also taken into consideration along with the timing of the study in relation to the academic calendar of EAP classes at various language centres.

In addition, this design was appropriate to understand the complex nature of students' perceptions that would not have been possible by the use of quantitative design as the results of the study were not intended to simply present the attributes but rather to explain the perceptions and behaviours. Berrios and Lucca (2006) called for using a qualitative method in a situation when 'richness of personal experience is required' (Berrios & Lucca, 2006, p. 181). In general, Trevino et al. (2003) advised that a qualitative design is a good choice for the research where generalizability is not a goal and where there is a possibility that findings will vary if carried out by researchers at different times and locations.

### *3.5 Case study method*

Case study is a frequently used method in qualitative studies (Yazan, 2015). A case study involves 'empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence' (Robson, 2002, p. 178). No simple explanation is available to describe case study research, which makes its definition challenging (Gustafsson, 2017). Yin (2009) defines case study research as an investigation into 'a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2009, p. 13). Questions consisting of 'what' and 'who' can also be answered using a survey strategy, whereas case study emphasises the presence of a specific context and has

the strength to capture the understanding of the what, why and how of the phenomenon. In its epistemological stance, a case study is a type of qualitative research as it is believed that realities are constructed by individuals through interacting with their social environment (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) suggested that in case studies:

> the researcher brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. The final product of this type of study is yet another interpretation by the researcher of others' views filtered through his or her own (Merriam, 1998, p. 22).

Case study research is mostly relevant to research that is explanatory and exploratory in nature and is used when it is challenging to find a clear-cut solution to a problem (Gustafsson, 2017). The problem under investigation in the current study is the perceptions of an effective EAP teacher amongst Saudi students. Multiple cases were used to understand the perceptions of Saudi students, taking the context into account, as suggested by Yin (2011). Each individual participant selected for interview constituted a case and all cases were within the context of the EAP classroom. Multiple case studies are used when the researcher's aim is to indicate contrasting results or when showing similarities in results (Yin, 2009) and, in doing so, help the researcher in clarifying the findings. Stating the advantage of using multiple case studies, Gustafsson (2017) highlights '… advantages with multiple case studies are that they create a more convincing theory when the suggestions are more intensely grounded in several empirical evidence,' (Gustafsson (2017, p. 2) which permits exploration of the research question in depth. The aim of recruiting multiple cases in this study was not to generalise the findings in any way but to understand and explain the phenomenon, as employing multiple cases helps in understanding the differences and similarities between the cases studied (Yin, 2009). Although multiple case studies are time consuming and expensive, it was the best choice for this study because the researcher wanted to find imperative differences and similarities between cases to understand the perceptions that Saudi students hold about an effective EAP teacher. The perceptions of what constitutes an effective English teacher may differ among the Saudi cohort on various attributes of an effective teacher due to their different past learning experiences. Consequently, the multiple cases help to capture a richer understanding and to make the findings of the topic under focus more meaningful. The selection of multiple cases helped to understand the similarities and differences in perceptions between different cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Case study research has been criticized for lacking rigorous forms of inquiry. In response to this criticism, much emphasis has been laid on collecting data not only from multiple sources but through multiple methods. Different techniques and approaches can be used in combination and it is recommended to employ multiple methods of data collection in case study research in order to validate understanding of the data (Yin, 2011). These include interviews, direct observations, documentation, and archival records, typically used in combination. Interviews and observations are used in this study because they help a researcher to gather firsthand data which provide detailed and rich description of the social phenomenon, including firsthand experience from the participants' perspectives.

### *3.5.1 Interviews*

By using interviews, the researcher has the flexibility to encourage participants to freely talk about their experience, and have the opportunity to probe the participants' feelings, thoughts and perceptions (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). An interview is the verbal conversation between two people for collecting relevant information for the purpose of qualitative research (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Interviews are among the most common technique for collecting qualitative data (Patton, 2005). The individual in-depth interview allows the researcher to explore into social and personal matters (Creswell, 2013). During an interview session, usually open-ended questions are asked in order to obtain impartial answers (Creswell, 2013). Briggs, Morrison and Coleman (2012) suggested that semi-structured interviews allow respondents considerable time to shape their responses and prevent the interviewee from giving one-word or rambling responses. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher provides some structure to the participants based on research interests (Chase, 2005). However, flexibility is offered which allows respondents space for spontaneous descriptions and narratives (Edwards & Holland 2013). The interview technique was chosen for this research to collect rich data from each student without restricting their responses (Chase, 2005). Kumar (2014) suggests that a researcher has the flexibility to select the format, wording, and sequence of questions in the interview. However, the degree of flexibility varies. It is somewhat limited in structured interviews which require predetermined sets of questions, use of same wording and sequence. For this study, the researcher also wanted the freedom to decide when to ask follow-up questions and what focus they should have, in order to generate greater detail and in-depth answers to the questions. Consequently, semi-structured interviews best fit with this study

as they give the opportunity to probe the answers when the researcher wants interviewees to explain or elaborate or build up their response (Cooper & Schindler 2008).

### *3.5.2 Observations*

Kumar (2014) defined observation as 'a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place' (Kumar, 2014, p. 134). Using observations to collect data is one of the key techniques used in case studies to make data meaningful (Morgan, Pullon, Macdonald, McKinlay & Gray, 2017). Incorporating observation techniques in a case study allows revealing insights of participants that other data collection methods cannot easily facilitate (Furlong, 2010). Musante and DeWalt (2010) believed that 'the goal for the design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method' (Musante & DeWalt, 2010, p. 110). Direct observations can therefore offer the researcher the opportunity to observe people in their natural settings and offer opportunity to understand behaviours that participants may not be aware of themselves (Morgan et al., 2017). It also assists in offering a complete explanation to a problem that is studied by adding richness to other data. Nevertheless, various factors need to be taken into consideration when determining the choice of observation as a method. Time availability is one such factor, access to institutions and classrooms is another, and a third is the importance of keeping in contact with the various centres to achieve an uninterrupted continuous flow of data collection. In this study, observations were used as one of the data sources but there were certain limitations attached to the collection of data from different sources (see section 3.5.3 and 3.7.5). First, it was first difficult to obtain access to classroom observations. In addition, the observations put teachers under pressure to perform in an effective way because they thought that the researcher was looking at different effective and ineffective behaviours and practices used by the teachers in class. Although they were informed about the researcher's agenda (see 3.7.4), they still felt uncomfortable to interact with the students when they were observed. Furthermore, the teachers may have certain beliefs for instance, that students do not have the experience and therefore, are not able to make judgements of what constitutes effective behaviours and practices. Moreover, how students come to gain these perspectives or conceptions of effectiveness and where they derive them and how those definitions apply may not be relevant in the Australian context. The teachers may have become defensive because they thought they were in the best position to make decisions and judgements about what

might be best for a particular cohort of learners and are experienced and have the training to be able to make judgments based on what constitutes effective or ineffective teacher behaviours and practices. So why they were observed by an outsider making judgments about what those classroom practices mean may be considered offensive or have caused mistrust. If the observation starts to question their abilities and methods, then the researcher may be seen as someone judging their behaviours and making conclusions based on that. Therefore, in order to protect their own professional image as well as the reputation of the centre in relation to being seen as ineffective, their behaviours or practices were influenced by the presence of the researcher in many ways. Thus, during the observations the teachers gave independent work to students in class and limited practices, behaviours and interactions were observed between the teacher and students. Consequently, limited data collected through observation cannot be treated as conclusive rather tentative and the researcher has added the points of interest captured in the observation in the data chapter to support the interviews.

### *3.5.3 Rationale for selection of methods*

In case study research design, the value of using several methods is that the strengths and weaknesses of each could be counteracted. Each of the data collection techniques requires different approaches and each technique helps in generating different types of data to understand the problem. Triangulation of data sources and methods helps in providing rigour and depth of analysis. It is a common fallacy to assume that the purpose of triangulation is to achieve uniformity between different sources or approaches employed to gather data. Rather, the inconsistency across different sources should be viewed as a strength of triangulation (Patton, 2014), enabling a broader and deeper understanding. Patton stated:

> a common misunderstanding about triangulation is that the point is to demonstrate that different data sources or inquiry approaches yield essentially the same results. But the point is really to test for such consistency. Different kinds of data may yield somewhat different results because different types of inquiry are sensitive to different real-world nuance. Thus, understanding that inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data can be illuminative. Finding such inconsistencies ought not to be viewed as weakening the credibility of results but, rather, as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between enquiry approach and the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2014, p. 318).

In the current study, a combination of two techniques was used – interviews and observations (see 3.5.1 and 3.5.2). The intent was to ensure a deep, rich and insightful understanding of the case

under investigation and avoid a simplistic or superficial understanding of the issues involved. Case study research was seen as an appropriate choice for this study since it did not aim to generalize the findings but to offer understanding in depth. Creswell (2008) believes that, in a case study, obtaining rich and sufficient data is more critical than generalising the findings. The current study used a preliminary study before conducting the main study. The intent was to capture a broader picture of EAP classrooms that constitute Saudi as well as international students from other countries. This would help the researcher to understand perspectives of not just Saudi students but also the other international students that constitute EAP classes in Australia. This was justifiable by looking at the number of international students at the time of the data collection phase. Therefore, the intent was to have a large sample size of possibly over 300 students. However, the response rate was much lower than expected (see limitations for further explanations). Nevertheless, the survey provided some foundation data that assisted in the interpretation of the case study. The next section will detail the preliminary survey which was used as part of the preliminary study and later sections will report the findings of the survey in this chapter.

### *3.6 Preliminary survey*

In order to inform the development of the interview protocol for the case study, and to capture a broader picture of EAP students' perceptions, a preliminary quantitative survey was carried out. A quantitative positivist paradigm allows objective comparison of diverse views to identify possible areas of research interest before a deeper subjective interpretive investigation is employed (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Therefore, although the study itself relies on a qualitative paradigm, a quantitative positivist paradigm did play a role in informing the interpretation of the cases in the qualitative component.

Methodologically, the quantitative approach relies on deductive designs which is why Fallon (2016) referred to it as a 'top down process'. A quantitative method is commonly used to investigate causal relationships, associations and correlation (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Quantitative methods help in understanding percentages when factual data is needed to address research questions (Hammarberg et al., 2016). The data collected in quantitative research follows a systematic process by making use of standardised measures and statistical analysis. The survey was therefore designed, piloted, administered and analysed in accordance with these principles.

### *3.6.1 Aim and survey sample*

The preliminary survey was designed to help the researcher in several ways. In the first instance, it was designed to inform the design and conduct of the semi-structured interviews planned for the qualitative study. It was intended to capture the international mix of student perceptions in an EAP classroom setting in Australia and thus to identify the points of interest to follow up in the qualitative study. A secondary aim was to identify whether Saudi students had any particular difference in perceptions of an effective teacher compared to other nationalities in the classroom or whether there was some consistency across cultural groups and various age groups. It was thought that identification of differences might be a factor in the design of the interview protocols.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling to specifically address the research questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). A purposive sampling involves selecting the sample based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. The individuals are selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell, Klassen, Clark & Smith, 2011). This type of sampling is cost-effective and time-effective (Patton, 2005). This study used criterion sampling as cases were selected using some predetermined criterion based on the research questions (Patton, 2005). Yin (2011) defines purposive sampling as 'the selection of participants or sources of data to be used in a study, based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to the study's research questions' (Yin, 2011, p.311).

To assist in obtaining such data, a preliminary study survey was conducted. To recruit participants to complete a preliminary survey and participate in principal study, the managers of adult language centres were contacted after obtaining ethics approval from the University of South Australia. The researcher requested a meeting in order to obtain consent to collect data from the sites. In the meeting, the researcher explained the main objectives and the relevance of the study. The researcher assured the anonymity of the information provided by the respondents and the centres. Due to the large number of EAP programs in Australia, even given the level of contextual description required by case study methodology, it would be challenging for an informed reader to identify a particular centre used in the study. Since more than one centre approved data collection, the anonymity of data is more securely preserved. A few managers showed their interest in the study and agreed to send out an email to the teachers to inform their students about the study. The email that was sent to the students also contained information of the researcher, main

objectives and the relevance of the study. In addition, it indicated the anonymity of the information provided by the respondents.

Access to participants was challenging, with the result that there were only 48 respondents to the questionnaire, despite best efforts, which meant that limited information was obtained. Conventionally, a sample larger than 30 and smaller than 500 ensures the researcher the benefits of central limit theorem (Stutely, 2003). A total of 11 Saudi students and 37 other international students completed the questionnaire across three language centres, i.e. 22.9% representation of Saudi students and 77.1% of other international students. As previously mentioned, EAP classes are typically comprised of a wide variety of international students, and it was considered important to find out the perceptions of a range of international students in order to obtain a broader picture of the issue investigated.

### *3.6.2 Data analysis*

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 27 was used for the analysis of the quantitative data, given that Pallant (2013) suggested that SPSS is the most reliable program for obtaining the most accurate results. The questionnaire analysis required the following steps: 1) creating a file; 2) changing the SPSS options; 3) defining the variables; 4) entering the data; 5) modifying the data file; 6) screening the data for any errors and 7) running the right statistical test (Alqahtani, 2011). Descriptive and inferential analyses were used to analyse the data. The Excel program was used for drawing figures, tables, graphs and diagrams. Internal consistency, reliability analysis, multiple linear regression analysis, and independent sample *t*-test were carried out to address the objectives of the study. The reliabilities of the different variables used in the questionnaire were tested using the internal consistency measure of Cronbach's alpha (see section 3.6.4.1 Internal Consistency Scale Reliability). Cronbach's alpha helped in determining how different variables were closely related to a set of survey items as a group or in measuring a particular variable. Linear regression was conducted to understand whether a student's nationality was significantly related to student perceptions of teacher effectiveness. Multiple linear regression was specifically conducted to determine whether differences between Saudi and non-Saudi students predicted the value of the scores of the different student perceptions of teacher effectiveness after controlling for the impact of the nine demographics of age, gender, marital status, nationality, country/countries spent most time learning English, number of years studying

English, period starting to learn English in the education system, attending any English language course before coming to Australia in home country, and length of time studying English for academic purposes in Australia. Subsequently an independent sample *t*-test was carried out to understand whether the student perceptions of importance to teacher effectiveness were significantly different between Saudi and non-Saudi students. Since the questionnaire was adopted in order to contextualize for EAP students, it was important to test the internal consistency measure of Cronbach's alpha (see section 3.6.4.1 Internal Consistency Scale Reliability).

The data collected from the questionnaire provided an initial overview of the concept of effective language teachers from the perspective of both Saudi and non-Saudi international students. It provided results that informed where cultural variations existed between the perceptions of Saudi and international students in relation to an effective English language teacher. In addition, the responses from the participants guided the interview protocols for the primary qualitative study.

### *3.6.3 Preparation, piloting and administration of the questionnaire*

A questionnaire is one of the most commonly used tools in the field of social science research for data collection (Creswell, Klassen, Clark, & Smith, 2011). To function effectively, a questionnaire requires the respondents to be able to read and understand the questions and instructions, therefore, it is important for the researcher to ensure clarity of questions (Kumar, 2014).

The composition of the questionnaire was carefully considered and passed through several stages of selection and adaptation. First, previous studies in teachers' effectiveness were reviewed to identify questions that could be adopted as a guide (Al-Husseini, 2004; Creswell, 2014). Second, some items were formulated taking into consideration the proficiency level of the respondents. Third, all questionnaire items were reviewed by three academics who had experience of teaching EAP students to check if the items would be comprehensible for intermediate EAP students. This was crucial as participants of this study were all non-native English speakers and all the questions needed to be written in a manner they understand, yet at the same time effective in addressing the research outcomes of this study. According to Sarantakos (2013), the success of a questionnaire depends on the wording used as well as the way the questionnaire is presented to the participants. As a result of the review process, a double-barrelled question and some leading questions were avoided to keep the questionnaire simple for participants for whom English is an additional language.

The questionnaire was intended to discover who is an effective teacher from the perspective of participating students and was adapted from the one used in Barnes and Lock's (2010, 2013) study, which was comprised entirely of closed-ended statements. This type of questionnaire allows respondents to reply from various options provided, to ensure that the researcher obtains the needed information. Barnes and Lock (2010, 2013) used the five categories of teacher attributes identified by Faranda and Clarke (2004): namely, Rapport, Delivery, Fairness, Knowledge and Credibility, and Organisation and Preparation. These versatile categories were initially used to frame Barnes and Lock's (2010) qualitative study on taxonomy of effective lecturer attributes. Barnes and Lock (2013) later carried out a quantitative study and constructed the questionnaire based on their results from the qualitative study so that generalizations could be made about the importance placed on the attributes of an effective foreign language teacher based on the perceptions of Korean students.

In Barnes and Lock's (2013) study, the questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part contains all the five categories of question in one section and had an ordered series of response categories:

- Rapport (Relationship with students) (Question 1-11)
- Delivery (Communication skill and teaching method) (Question 12-28)
- Fairness (Question 29-33)
- Knowledge and Credibility (Knowledge of English) (Question 34-36)
- Organisation and Preparation (37-42)

The questionnaire consisted of 42 items. In the first part, a Likert scale was used to rate the attributes of effective foreign language teachers from '1' (strongly disagree) to '7' (strongly agree). The second part of the questionnaire asked participants to rank Faranda and Clarke's (2004) five attribute categories to understand the broad view: 'Rapport', 'Delivery', 'Fairness, Knowledge and Credibility', and 'Organisation and Preparation'. The third part consisted of information about the participants.

According to Barnes and Lock (2013), the reliability of the first part of the questionnaire was measured by writing two questionnaires in the opposite order, administering them to students alternately in the piloting stage, and then comparing the mean responses to items from the two

types of questionnaire format. The reliability of each item Part 1 of the questionnaire was found to be strong after comparing the results of the two questionnaire formats using two-tailed Mann-Whitney U tests.

The questionnaire used in the present study had two sections (see appendix B), with content to a large degree paralleling the Barnes and Lock (2013) version, but with the addition of items related to communication style and cultural understanding – an area noted as lacking in the Barnes and Lock (2010, 2013) framework (see sections 2.8.1 and 2.9). Three items were also added to the first section of the questionnaire concerning the respondents' profile, namely age range, gender and marital status. This was in recognition of research identifying that perceptions can markedly vary for different age groups, gender and marital status (Alqahtani, 2011). An open-ended question was added at the end of the main body, Section 2, which offered respondents the freedom to answer without restricting their responses, especially on a complex matter. Except for the last open-ended question in Section 2, the rest of the 47 items had pre-coded responses. The participants had to choose between six alternatives: strongly agree, agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, disagree, strongly disagree.

The second section of the questionnaire had five categories (see appendix B). Questionnaire items numbered 1-9 addressed the personality attribute. Barnes and Lock (2013) used the term 'Rapport' but the literature has used the term 'personality' as an umbrella term that encompasses characteristics related to personality. Therefore, 'Rapport' is replaced with 'Personality'. In the present study, as shown in Chapter 5, participants also highlighted personality more frequently than rapport, with the latter being represented as an aspect of personality rather than the other way around. Consequently, the updated model presented here uses 'personality' as the attribute name in place of Barnes and Lock's 'rapport'. Another change is to the notion of 'delivery', Items numbered 10-21 focused on the teaching method category. Items numbered 22-34 examined communication style and cultural understanding – added to the Barnes and Lock (2013) items for the purposes of this EAP study (see sections 2.9.6 and 2.9.7). Items numbered 35-37 dealt with fairness; items numbered 38-42 addressed the subject knowledge and credibility category; items numbered 43-47 dealt with organisation and preparation. Most of the items were adapted from Barnes and Lock's (2013) study and a few items were adapted from the questionnaire used in Al-Mahrooqi et al's. (2015) study. Figure 3.1 shows the categories with item numbers. The last part

of the questionnaire used in this study contained one open-ended question asking respondents to clarify any of their responses or to make other comments; however, no participant used that section to respond.

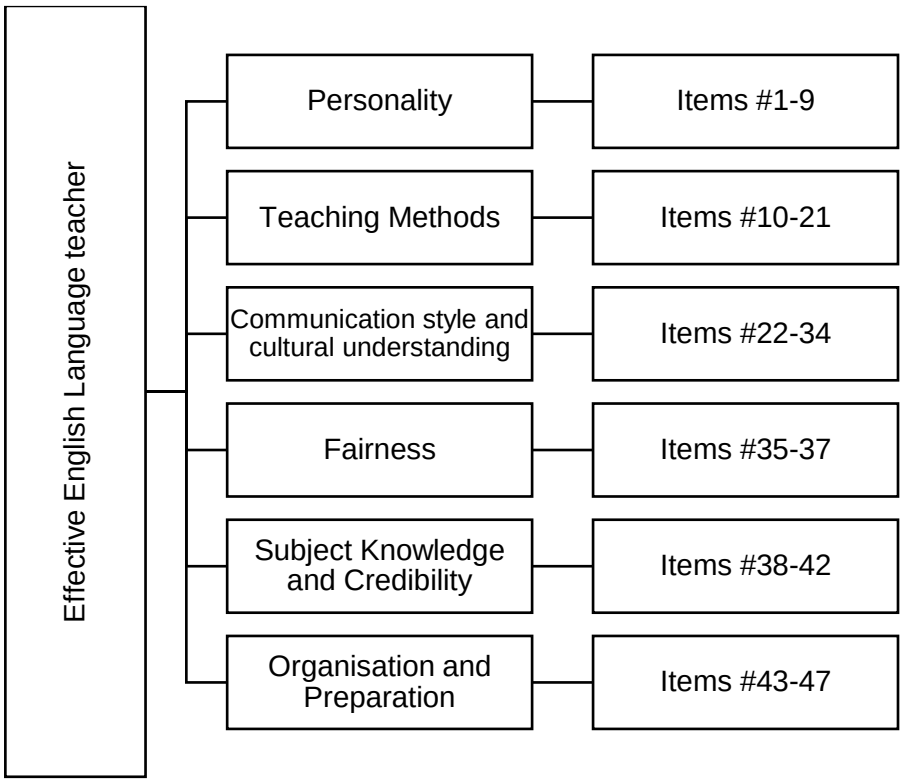



**Figure. 3.1 Categories and item numbers of the questionnaire**

The researcher decided to administer the questionnaire online as it was less time consuming and was cost-effective. Online surveys are convenient for the use of participants as most students have access to the internet. Participants could pick a moment to complete an online questionnaire which saves time. Also, the responses are received instantly after the survey is completed by the participants, unlike a paper questionnaire that requires time for return to the researcher.

The online version of the questionnaire was created using Qualtrics, carried out during a one-day workshop. The Qualtrics software was chosen because it was easy to use and offered multiple features to create graphics and complex branching. The software offers quick access to basic reports for a general overview. It also gives fast results which are easy to access at any time. The data collected could be easily transferred to SPSS and Excel for analysis. This saved a lot of time

and did not require manual data entry into SPSS and Excel. Moreover, it also reduced the chance of human error when entering details into SPSS. Another useful feature was reminding the participant to complete the questions before submitting the questionnaire to avoid partial completion.

The questionnaire was pilot tested after obtaining ethics approval. As J. Bell (2005) advised, 'however pressed for time you are, do your best to give the questionnaire a trial run, as, without a trial run, you have no way of knowing whether your questionnaire will succeed' (J. Bell, 2005, p 147). It is imperative to identify any item that does not yield useful information and to replace them with those that are important to the research investigation (Creswell, 2013). The researcher asked some international students enrolled in EAP programs in Australia and who were not going to be participants of this study to complete the survey and also to record the amount of time required to complete all the sections of the questionnaire (Creswell, 2013). On average, it took the participants 12-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Any ambiguity identified during the piloting stage was appropriately adjusted or altered afterwards (Creswell, 2013), and some questions that were regarded as confusing for the students were rephrased. The results of the piloting were excluded from the data analysis.

Once finalised, the questionnaire was administered online by sending a unique link to the participants, with the consent form appearing to the participants prior to the start of the questionnaire. The participants had to click on the option that best described their perceptions.

#### *3.6.4 Survey results*

A total of 11 Saudi students and 37 international students completed the questionnaire. The participants were from several sites and the survey consequently captured a broad range of perspectives. The largest number of respondents was from China (27%) followed by Saudi Arabia (22%) (see Figure 4.1). Of the total of 48 international students, 26 males (54%) and 22 females (45%) completed the survey. The majority of the participants fell in the age group of 18-22 (38%) followed by 22-26 (33%) indicating that these EAP classes were mostly comprised of students who had recently completed their secondary schooling.

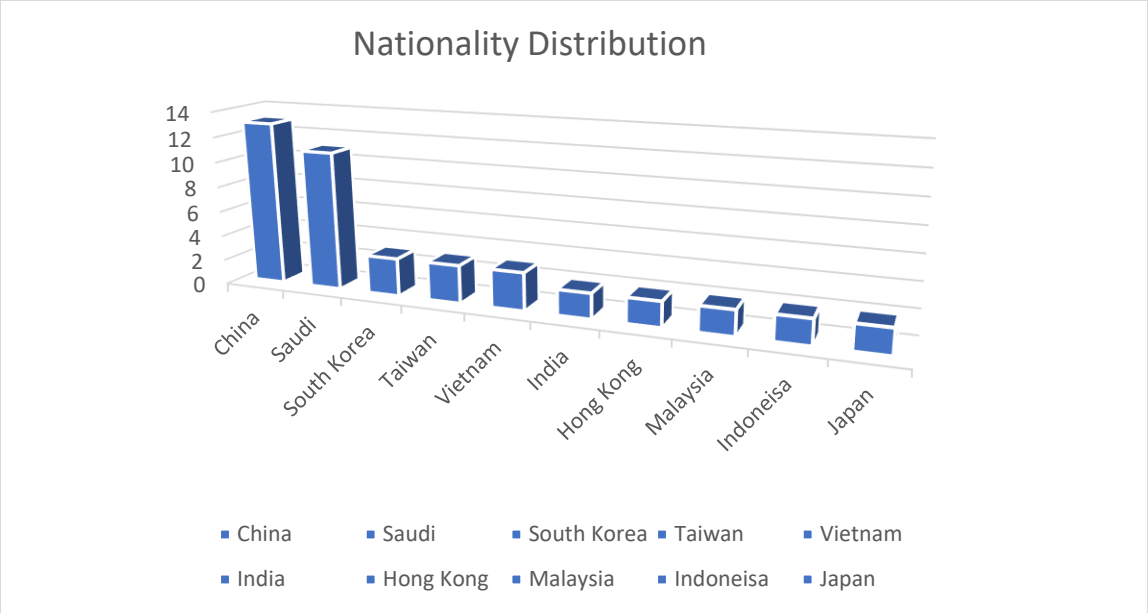



**Figure 3.2 Nationality distribution of the participants**

#### *3.6.4.1 Internal consistency scale reliability*

The reliabilities of the different study variables were tested using the internal consistency measure of Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha is a measure to determine how closely related a set of survey items are as a group or in measuring a particular variable. The study variables included six dependent variables of student perceptions of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality, teaching methods, communication style and cultural understanding, fairness, subject knowledge and credibility, and organization and preparation. Cronbach's alpha values are presented in Table 3.1.

As a general guideline, the minimum value for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70, which indicates an acceptable level of reliability. The results showed that all six dependent variables of personality (0.85), teaching methods (0.83), communication style and cultural understanding (0.89), fairness (0.83), subject knowledge and credibility (0.77), and organization and preparation (0.91) have more than acceptable reliability in terms of internal consistency since the Cronbach's alpha values were greater than the minimum acceptable value of 0.70. In fact, organization and preparation (0.91) have excellent internal consistency. To sum up, overall reliability of each variable was acceptable.

**Table 3.1: Cronbach's Alpha Measure of Scale Reliabilities**

| Study Variables | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|
| Personality (PERS) | 0.85 |
| Teaching Methods (METH) | 0.83 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding (COM) | 0.89 |
| Fairness (FAIR) | 0.83 |
| Subject Knowledge and Credibility (KNOW) | 0.77 |
| Organization and preparation (ORG) | 0.91 |

#### *3.6.4.2 Results of multiple linear regression analysis for relationship of nationality on student perceptions of teacher effectiveness*

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression or more commonly named as linear regression was conducted to determine whether student nationality is significantly related to perceptions of teacher effectiveness. Linear regression was used to predict the value of a dependent variable based on the value of an independent variable. Multiple linear regression is specifically conducted to determine whether differences in nationality predict the value of the scores of the different student perceptions of teacher effectiveness after controlling for the impact of the nine demographics of age, gender, marital status, nationality, country/countries spent most time learning English, number of years studying English, period starting to learn English in the education system, attending any English language course before coming to Australia in home country, and length of time studying English for academic purposes in Australia. The independent variable is nationality. The dependent variables are the six different student perceptions of teacher effectiveness of personality, teaching methods, communication style and cultural understanding, fairness, subject knowledge and credibility, and organization and preparation. The control variables are the nine demographics specified previously. Six different regression analyses were conducted to determine the significance of the individual influences of nationality on the six different student perceptions of teacher effectiveness after controlling for the impact of the nine demographics. A level of significance of 0.05 was used in each of the multiple linear regression analyses.

The regression results to determine the significance of relationship of student's nationality and student perceptions of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality, teaching methods, communication style and cultural understanding, fairness, subject knowledge and credibility and organization and preparation after controlling for the impact of the nine demographics are presented in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Multiple linear regression results of significance of predictive relationship of nationality and six categories**

| p Value and $R^2$ Value | Personality | Teaching methods | Communication style and cultural understanding | Fairness | Subject knowledge and credibility and organization | Organization and preparation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| p Value | 0.14 | 0.21 | 0.29 | 0.06 | 0.14 | 0.25 |
| $R^2$ Value | 0.42 | 0.28 | 0.25 | 0.35 | 0.31 | 0.26 |

Table 3.2 indicates that the regression model with students' nationality in predicting student perceptions of teacher effectiveness in terms of all the six categories: personality, teaching methods, communication style and cultural understanding, fairness, subject knowledge and credibility and organization and preparation after controlling for the impact of the nine demographics did not have an acceptable model fit. This means that the influence of nationality on student perceptions of teacher effectiveness in terms of all the six categories was insignificant.

#### *3.6.4.3 Results of independent sample t-test of differences of student perceptions of teacher effectiveness by nationality*

Results of the independent sample *t*-test are summarized in Table 3.3 and 3.4. Results showed that there was a significant difference in the scores of student perceptions of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality ($t(46) = 2.09$, $p = 0.04$) between Saudi and non-Saudi students. This was the only significant difference since the *p*-value was less than the level of significance value. Mean comparison showed that non-Saudi students ($M = 5.58$, $SD = 0.41$) have significantly higher scores of student perceptions of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality as compared to Saudi students ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 0.38$) by a mean difference of 0.29. This suggests that Saudi and non-Saudi students differed in their perceptions of an effective English teacher on the personality

attributes. These results gave an overall picture of differences between Saudi and non-Saudi students on the category basis in which only the 'personality' category indicated significant differences between the group and no significant differences were found in other categories between the two groups.

**Table 3.3: Descriptive Statistics of Composite Scores of Different Student Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness Components on Nationality**

| | Nationality | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | SE Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PERS | Saudi | 11 | 5.29 | 0.38 | 0.11 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 5.58 | 0.41 | 0.07 |
| METH | Saudi | 11 | 5.11 | 0.58 | 0.17 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 5.40 | 0.39 | 0.06 |
| COM | Saudi | 11 | 4.94 | 0.60 | 0.18 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 5.17 | 0.53 | 0.09 |
| FAIR | Saudi | 11 | 4.15 | 1.64 | 0.50 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 5.05 | 1.24 | 0.20 |
| KNOW | Saudi | 11 | 3.96 | 1.50 | 0.45 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 4.50 | 1.27 | 0.21 |
| ORG | Saudi | 11 | 4.27 | 1.37 | 0.41 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 4.16 | 1.43 | 0.23 |

**Table 3.4 Independent Sample t-test Results of Significance of Difference of Composite Scores of Student Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness Components on Nationality**

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| PERS | Equal variances assumed | 0.14 | 0.71 | 2.09 | 46.00 | 0.04* | 0.29 | 0.14 | 0.01 | 0.57 |
| METH | Equal variances not assumed | 5.43 | 0.02 | 1.56 | 12.80 | 0.14 | 0.29 | 0.19 | -0.11 | 0.69 |
| COM | Equal variances assumed | 0.07 | 0.79 | 1.14 | 15.09 | 0.27 | 0.23 | 0.20 | -0.20 | 0.65 |
| FAIR | Equal variances assumed | 1.70 | 0.20 | 1.67 | 13.59 | 0.12 | 0.89 | 0.54 | -0.26 | 2.05 |
| KNOW | Equal variances assumed | 0.37 | 0.55 | 1.07 | 14.53 | 0.30 | 0.53 | 0.50 | -0.53 | 1.60 |
| ORG | Equal variances assumed | 0.13 | 0.72 | 0.24 | 16.95 | 0.81 | -0.12 | 0.48 | -1.12 | 0.89 |

*Significant difference at level of significance of 0.05

The researcher was further interested to find out where the differences exactly existed on the 47 items of the survey so that it could be further investigated in the interview sessions with the Saudi participants. In order to measure that, an independent sample *t*-test was conducted to determine whether the dependent variables of individual response in each of the 47 survey items for the different student perceptions of teacher effectiveness were significantly different between the independent variable of nationality with the two categorical groups of Saudi and non-Saudi students. The dependent variables were the individual responses in each of the different student perceptions of teacher effectiveness of personality, teaching methods, communication style and cultural understanding, fairness, subject knowledge and credibility, and organization and preparation. It should be noted that the individual items were not continuously measured since the items can be responded to by using ordinal scales. A level of significance of 0.05 was also used in the independent sample *t*-test.

Results of the independent sample *t*-test are summarized in Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 (see appendix A for results for all items). Results showed that responses of 9 out of the 47 different survey items regarding student perceptions of teacher effectiveness between Saudi and non-Saudi students were significantly different. These include two items for personality of 'care about students' ($t(46) = 3.20$, $p < 0.001$) and 'understand the student's English education background' ($t(19.48) = 2.83$, $p = 0.01$); three items for method of teaching of 'correct writing errors' ($t(46) = 2.65$, $p = 0.01$), 'teach grammar' ($t(46) = 2.33$, $p = 0.02$), and 'adjust English language to match student's proficiency level' ($t(46) = 2.10$, $p = 0.04$); one item for communication style and cultural understanding of 'know the student's personality' ($t(46) = 2.17$, $p = 0.04$); one item for fairness of 'prepare students well for exams' ($t(46) = 3.13$, $p < 0.001$); and two items for subject knowledge and credibility of 'are native speakers of English' ($t(44.28) = 5.13$, $p < 0.001$) and 'can speak a language other than English' ($t(21.86) = 3.24$, $p = 0.01$). These items provided points of interest that the researcher could later explore in the interviews with Saudi students.

**Table 3.5: Independent Sample t-test Results of Significance of Difference of Individual Response in 47 Different Student Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness**

| Dependent Variable | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Personality - 2. care about students | Equal variances assumed | 1.48 | 0.23 | 3.20 | 46 | 0.00* | 0.59 | 0.18 | 0.22 | 0.95 |
| Personality - 6. understand the student's English education background | Equal variances not assumed | 5.90 | 0.02 | 2.83 | 19.48 | 0.01* | 0.55 | 0.20 | 0.14 | 0.96 |
| Method of teaching - 15. correct writing errors | Equal variances assumed | 3.39 | 0.07 | 2.65 | 46 | 0.01* | 0.56 | 0.21 | 0.13 | 0.98 |
| Method of teaching - 17. teach grammar | Equal variances assumed | 1.92 | 0.17 | 2.33 | 46 | 0.02* | 0.57 | 0.24 | 0.08 | 1.06 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Method of teaching - 20. adjust English language to match student's proficiency level | Equal variances assumed | 0.57 | 0.45 | 2.10 | 46 | 0.04* | 0.50 | 0.24 | 0.02 | 0.97 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 32. know the student's personality | Equal variances assumed | 1.71 | 0.20 | 2.17 | 46 | 0.04* | 0.75 | 0.35 | 0.05 | 1.45 |
| Fairness - 36. prepare students well for exams | Equal variances assumed | 0.16 | 0.69 | 3.13 | 46 | 0.00* | 1.63 | 0.52 | 0.58 | 2.67 |
| Subject Knowledge and Credibility - 41. are native speakers of English | Equal variances not assumed | 50.02 | 0.00 | 5.13 | 44.28 | 0.00* | 1.91 | 0.37 | 1.16 | 2.66 |
| Subject Knowledge and Credibility - 42. can speak a language other than English | Equal variances not assumed | 12.86 | 0.00 | 3.24 | 21.86 | 0.00* | 1.67 | 0.51 | 0.60 | 2.73 |

The last question of the questionnaire asked the participants to rank the attributes based upon their importance. An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to determine whether the student perceptions of importance of teacher effectiveness were significantly different by nationality or between Saudi and non-Saudi students. The independent-samples t-test compares the means between two unrelated groups on the same continuous, dependent variable. A level of significance of 0.05 was also used in the independent sample *t*-test.

Results of the independent sample *t*-test are summarized in Tables 3.6 and 3.7. A lower mean value indicates higher preference/importance and a higher mean value indicates lower preference/importance. Results showed only a significant difference in the scores of student perceptions of importance of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality ($t(30.66) = 4.64$, $p < 0.001$) between Saudi and non-Saudi students. In the last question where the participants had to rank the attributes based upon their importance, mean comparison showed that Saudi students ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 1.04$) have a significantly higher rating of importance of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality as compared to non-Saudi students ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.87$) by a mean difference of 2.03. These results were contrary to the independent sample *t*-test which showed that mean comparison for non-Saudi students ($M = 5.58$, $SD = 0.41$) have significantly higher scores of student perceptions of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality as compared to Saudi students ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 0.38$) by a mean difference of 0.29.

**Table 3.6: Descriptive Statistic of Scores of Importance of Different Student Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness Components on Nationality**

| | Nationality | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personality (Importance) | Saudi | 11 | 1.45 | 1.04 | 0.31 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 3.49 | 1.87 | 0.31 |
| Teaching Methods (Importance) | Saudi | 11 | 2.55 | 1.13 | 0.34 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 2.46 | 1.24 | 0.20 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding (Importance) | Saudi | 11 | 3.45 | 1.29 | 0.39 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 2.76 | 1.32 | 0.22 |
| Subject Knowledge and Credibility (Importance) | Saudi | 11 | 4.27 | 1.01 | 0.30 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 4.00 | 1.63 | 0.27 |
| Fairness (Importance) | Saudi | 11 | 4.45 | 1.51 | 0.46 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 4.19 | 1.96 | 0.32 |
| Organization and preparation (Importance) | Saudi | 11 | 4.82 | 1.66 | 0.50 |
| | Non-Saudi | 37 | 4.11 | 1.39 | 0.23 |

**Table 3.7: Independent Sample t-test Results of Significance of Difference of Scores of Importance of Different Student Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness Components on Nationality**

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Personality (Importance) | Equal variances not assumed | 12.04 | 0.00 | 4.64 | 30.66 | 0.00* | 2.03 | 0.44 | 1.14 | 2.93 |
| Teaching Methods (Importance) | Equal variances assumed | 0.52 | 0.48 | -0.21 | 46.00 | 0.84 | -0.09 | 0.42 | -0.93 | 0.75 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding (Importance) | Equal variances assumed | 0.15 | 0.70 | -1.55 | 46.00 | 0.13 | -0.70 | 0.45 | -1.61 | 0.21 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subject Knowledge and Credibility (Importance) | Equal variances assumed | 3.00 | 0.09 | -0.52 | 46.00 | 0.60 | -0.27 | 0.52 | -1.32 | 0.78 |
| Fairness (Importance) | Equal variances assumed | 2.89 | 0.10 | -0.41 | 46.00 | 0.68 | -0.27 | 0.64 | -1.56 | 1.03 |
| Organization and preparation (Importance) | Equal variances assumed | 0.78 | 0.38 | -1.42 | 46.00 | 0.16 | -0.71 | 0.50 | -1.72 | 0.30 |

*Significant difference at level of significance of 0.05

The purpose of the preliminary study was to determine the relationship between student nationalities and student perceptions of teacher effectiveness, and to locate points of interest that differentiate Saudi student responses from other cultural groups to inform through evidence the interview protocols used in collecting data in the qualitative phase. The mean comparison showed that Saudi students have a higher rating of importance of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality as compared to non-Saudi students in only the last question where the students were asked to rank the attributes of teacher. Apart from that, however, the independent sample *t*-test showed that non-Saudi students have a significantly higher rating of importance of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality as compared to Saudi students. Results of the independent sample *t*-test also showed non-Saudi students have significantly higher composite scores of student perceptions of teacher effectiveness in terms of personality as compared to Saudi students. Results of the independent sample *t*-test also showed non-Saudi students have significantly higher individual scores of student perceptions of teacher effectiveness as compared to Saudi students in terms of:

- Personality of ‘care about students’ and ‘understand the student’s English education background’;
- Method of teaching of ‘correct writing errors’, ‘teach grammar’, and ‘adjust English language to match student's proficiency level’;
- Communication style and cultural understanding of ‘know the student's personality’;
- Fairness of ‘prepare students well for exams’;
- Subject knowledge and credibility of ‘are native speakers of English’ and ‘can speak a language other than English’.

The results collected from this quantitative phase in the preliminary study suggest that international students in EAP classrooms in the Australian context with students of mainly Asian/Chinese background perceive certain attributes of teachers to be of more importance than Saudi students. This implies that most international students see the personality of the teacher to be a quality that is associated with teacher effectiveness. The results give a broader picture of students’ perceptions in EAP classrooms and suggest that there are certain attributes that are not only viewed positively by Saudi students but by other international students as well in the EAP classroom. As EAP teachers in the Australian context are not just teaching one cohort but different cohorts at a time, understanding one cohort’s perceptions alongside other cohorts’ perceptions provides teachers an in-depth understanding of differences between students from different cultural backgrounds. As the results suggested in the combined sample,

differences in students' perceptions were found in only one category (personality) and in this category, international students scored higher than Saudi students except in the section where the ranking of attributes was asked. Of particular interest, for instance, if Saudi students scored lower than international students on this particular category in the preliminary survey, does that mean they generally perceive this category to be of less importance? If so, why do they perceive certain qualities to be less important and are Saudi students' opinions mild or polarised about various attributes. Also, the contradictory results in the last question and the overall results described in section 3.6.4.3 needed a clarification which is where the case study is of critical importance.

### *3.7 The case study*

To collect data, this qualitative case study employed two methods: (a) individual interviews with six participants, and (b) classroom observations involving those same six interviewees in their various EAP classes. The overall aim of generating data from these qualitative methods was to reach a better understanding about the attributes of an effective English language teacher in Australian EAP settings.

The analysis of the qualitative data took place through coding and thematic analysis in order to produce codes and themes. Finally, the qualitative findings were explained. The survey was particularly helpful with providing a general picture of the research problem. Thus, by proving a general picture of the problem, analysis through the use of a qualitative phase offers clarification, explanation and in-depth knowledge of the general picture (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Figure 3.1 provides a general overview of the research process. Data collected in the survey informed the collection of data for the case study (Figure 3.1).




**Figure 3.1 Design of study**

Previous studies carried out in this area were usually quantitative in nature (Al-Busaidi et al., 2016; Al-Khairi, 2015; Javid, 2011) which means the students' voice was absent. It was anticipated that the qualitative design used in this study would help to address a gap.

### *3.7.1 Participant recruitment and selection*

Saudi participants in three EAP centres in Australia in the preliminary survey were invited to express interest in participating in the case study, both through interview and classroom observation. Interested participants were then contacted. The research sites were three EAP centres in Australia and are similar in that they prepare students from non-English speaking backgrounds for university study and receive international students from different countries to study their courses. EAP courses taught in these centres have a focus on developing English for high level academic skills, grammatical competence, pronunciation, computer literacy and specific discipline-relevant vocabulary for future programs (see section 1.3). Depending on the availability of resources and depth of analysis required, Fugard and Potts (2015) suggest that for case studies similar to this study, 6–10 participants are recommended for interviews. The participants in this study were adult (aged 18 and above) Saudi and international students.

A purposive sampling strategy was used in this study as the main concern was to acquire in-depth information from the participants. Explaining the objective of using purposive sampling, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggested that:

> though they may not be representative, and their comments may not be generalizable, this is not the primary concern in such sampling; rather the concern is to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p. 157).

All the participants who met the following criteria at the time of the study were asked to participate: a) they are over 18 years old at the time of data collection; b) they are international students; c) they are enrolled in an EAP program in adult Australian English language centres. The data were collected from the adult Saudi and international students as this was helpful in suggesting whether there were any variations between the perceptions of various groups in terms of an effective English language teacher.

The rationale for choosing participants from academic English programs in particular was that the students graduating from these programs gain entry to a university degree program. The participants were not identified by their real names and were given pseudonyms. Participants in the study signed the consent form and were made aware of all aspects of the research procedure. The details are provided in the ethical considerations section of this chapter.

The principal study comprised six Saudi students, three male and three female EAP students who had participated in the survey some months earlier. All six participants were interviewed while they were still studying EAP in Australia. The participant age ranged between 21 and 32, with four participants self-identifying as married and two as single. The demographic information e.g. age, gender and marital status of each participant is shown in table 4.1 The participants will be called Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 when referring to them in reporting of results (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Cases**

| Participant | Gender | Age | Marital Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Participant # 1** | M | 22 | Single |
| **Participant # 2** | M | 26 | Single |
| **Participant # 3** | F | 27 | Married |
| **Participant # 4** | F | 25 | Married |
| **Participant # 5** | M | 32 | Married |
| **Participant # 6** | F | 24 | Married |

All the participants reported that they had studied English in Saudi primary or secondary education, as well as studying EAP as part of a university ‘Preparatory Year Program’ (PYP),

which aims at advancing the existing knowledge of students prior to entering university specialised courses. Moreover, participants 2, 4, 5 and 6 reported that they had attended more than one English preparatory language centre in Australia. Participants' spoken English proficiency ranged between intermediate and advanced, so their communicative competence was sufficient to present their views during the interviews and make themselves understood. Quotes are reported verbatim and no correction has been made in terms of sentence structure or grammatical errors[1].

All participants reported they wanted to return to their home country after the completion of their university degrees in Australia, as returning to Saudi Arabia is one of the important conditions of the King Abdullah scholarship. None of the participants expressed an interest in settling in Australia after completion of their intended course.

### *3.7.2 Data generation methods*

As mentioned, the data generation methods employed in this study were interviews as the primary source, and classroom observations as the secondary source. The observations were carried out before the interviews as the interviews could offer the opportunity to clarify points that the researcher noted during the observation sessions.

#### *3.7.2.1 Observations*

The purpose of observations was to provide further insight into the reasons for Saudi student perceptions of an effective teacher and to raise questions in the researcher's mind that could be followed up subsequently in the interviews. The observations were intended to inform both the conduct of the interviews and the interpretation of the interview data. As Saudi participants were in various different classes so only those classes were selected where interviewees were engaged. Saudi students represented 16% to 20% of the total number of students in each class observed. Due to time constraints, it was only possible to observe each participant once during their lesson (see section 3.7.5)

The focus of observation was the various teaching practices, classroom organisation and communication styles of four teachers, and the behaviours of the students in different activities and tasks using an observation schedule (see appendix G). The researcher collected information about classroom behaviours, features of the EAP classrooms, seating arrangements and Saudi

[1] Grammatical errors are ignored as they did not interfere with the intended meaning. Participants were not asked to correct their grammar so that they were able to express naturally and freely.

students' interpersonal relationships with other international students and their teachers. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer in that she did not intervene or take part in the activities that the students were doing. This role of the researcher as a 'spectator' allowed her to comfortably note down the points of interest and also stay focussed during the observation sessions. It allowed jotting down important information as it occurred without the need for discussion with the participants during the observation session. Saunders et al. (2012) argued that being an 'observer as participant' disadvantages a researcher in terms of losing emotional involvement with the participants; however, since the researcher was interested in exploring classroom behaviours and features of EAP classrooms and students, emotional involvement with the participants at this stage was not necessary. In addition, the researcher did not want to disrupt the flow of activities during the lesson.

It was a time-consuming process and organisationally complex to observe these classes, but the process offered some useful data to support interviews with the participants. The classroom observations offered first-hand information and assisted the researcher in understanding the perceptions of students given in their interview accounts, by relating them to what was observed in the classroom. As limited data were collected during the observations due to the problems discussed in section 3.5.2, the points of interest that were noticed during the observation session using a schedule (see appendix G) will be reported alongside the categories related to attributes of teachers in the findings and discussion chapters.

#### *3.7.2.2 Semi-structured interviews*

In this study, semi-structured interviews provided opportunity for exploring the individual and subjective understandings of the participants. This method of data generation allowed the researcher to directly contact the participants and at the same time respond to the incoming information either in the form of verbal or non-verbal cues (Huberman & Miles, 2002). This further allowed the researcher to clarify, summarize, further explore and verify participants' understandings about effective English language teachers. Moreover, the researcher also had the opportunity to confirm the participants' understanding of the questions and to ensure they understood and attended to the topic (LeCompte, 2000). The interview protocols were developed from the previous studies examining effective language teachers (Barnes & Lock, 2010, 2013; Raymond, 2008; Shono, 2004) and informed by the results of the preliminary survey. One-to-one interviews and telephone interviews were conducted with six participants who agreed to participate. The interviews took approximately 45 minutes to an hour long.

To conduct the interview sessions, the researcher booked a comfortable room in the premises of the university. It was planned that all the interviews would be carried out face-to-face but four participants opted to be interviewed by telephone. This was mainly requested by the female participants of the study because of their reluctance to participate in the study due to their culture. The male participants also expressed reluctance to be interviewed by the female researcher and opted for telephone interview while female participants expressed time concerns. As a result, one male and one female were interviewed face-to-face and four were interviewed by telephone. The interviews were conducted in English and participants were asked to use the Arabic language if they liked. The participants were also given the interview questions translated in Arabic prior to the interview to be better prepared. The translated interview questions were also aimed to minimise language barriers and to further facilitate their understanding of the interview questions. The researcher welcomed responses in Arabic and explained to the participants that the responses in Arabic could be translated into English language. At the end of the interview, the participants were asked to write in English or in Arabic if they wanted to add any comments on effective language teachers. The purpose of this question was to provide the participants with the opportunity to express anything which they forgot to say or were shy to share during the interview. Furthermore, participants were also informed at the beginning of the interview that if they were unsure about any English words or examples that they could not properly express in English, they could write in Arabic after the interview. Prior to carrying out the interviews, the recording device was checked to make sure it was working. The time of interviews was chosen by the participants. Some participants were in their home country at the time of the interview; therefore, the researcher made use of a voice application that suited both Saudi and Australian communication networks. The voice application, which offered a good sound quality, was downloaded for the interview sessions by the researcher and the participants. Before the start of the interviews, the participants were informed about the study. They were also informed that they would be recorded. Some students opted to participate in the interview session and wanted few instances to not be recorded; therefore, the researcher performed note-taking to keep valuable information in data collection.

### *3.7.3 Data analysis processes*

All the interview sessions were transcribed by the researcher and the notes collected from the observations were referred to. Then the analysis of qualitative data was undertaken. Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that there are various ways in which qualitative data could be analysed stating

that ‘There is no one single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data; how one does it should abide by the issue of fitness for purpose’ (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 461). For the purpose of this study, the following steps proposed by Nomnian (2008) were kept in consideration when analysing the data. The data were: 1) organised; 2) read by the researcher for familiarity; 3) categorised by main themes; 4) coded by sub-themes; 5) interpreted for themes; 6) searched for alternative understandings and 7) written up.

The first step involved filing the interview and observation data so that they could be managed efficiently. The second step involved reading all the transcripts to gain a familiarity and overall idea of the dataset. The third step involved the process of identifying themes and coding. Content analysis requires coding of data by creating labels in order to achieve meaningful categories that can be analysed and interpreted. The researcher used a grounded theory approach of identifying emergent themes from the interview transcripts informed by the Barnes and Lock framework, the researcher’s own identified cultural perspective (see sections 2.8.1 and 2.9), and the literature review as a whole. During the process of coding, the researcher kept on returning to the research questions and the literature that supported the study. Instead of using NVivo, the researcher chose to code the printed data manually by using different colour highlighter pens to identify different codes. The rationale for not choosing NVivo was: firstly, it was time consuming to learn about the various features of the NVivo programme in the time allocated for data analysis; secondly, coding software is recommended when analysis requires quantifying data which was not the purpose of the analysis; thirdly, the researcher was comfortable using this approach for personal preference as it helped in working tangibly with the data to obtain quality outcomes. Reading the transcripts multiple times allowed more familiarity with the data and the researcher began locating the pages and comments in order to build connections efficiently. A list of emerging themes was compiled through coding.

Data analysis involved making sense of the data which was carried out by sorting the data into meaningful units to make it easier to analyse (Creswell, 2008). Chunks of data, whether they appeared as phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs were coded if they stand on their own (Spiggle, 1994). Limit was not placed on the number of categories and a new category was created if a unit of response data could not be placed into an existing category. This approach was used by Faranda and Clarke (2004) which required the responses to be first analysed by listing attributes identified by two or more respondents. Once the responses were compiled by constantly comparing and contrasting, the elaborations were collated under each attribute of teachers’ effectiveness. These explanations contained information concerning the selected

attributes along with some suggestions on how they were demonstrated by teachers. The themes assisted in identifying the perceptions of Saudi students of effective English teachers.

As themes started to emerge during the deeper analysis, there was a need of cultural perspective on the basis of many of the themes identified from the data and the comments within those themes. The 3Ps model played an important role alongside the Barnes and Lock's framework of attributes in organising different characteristics into themes and organising them in the 3Ps model. Information gathered about students' perspectives on teacher effectiveness provided evidence covering the 3Ps and the responses containing cultural elements helped in making a decision for placing the various attributes in tacit and explicit segments of the model (see section 6.3). The 3Ps in conjunction with Barnes and Lock's framework as viewed from a cultural lens, therefore, provided strong evidence for the presence of intercultural competency when looking at different attributes of effective English teachers from Saudi students' perspectives.

### *3.7.4 Ethical considerations*

According to Mertens (2010), ethics in research is crucial and should be taken into account during the planning stage and should be followed throughout the research process. Johnson and Christensen (2019) discussed ethics with regards to research carried out in the field of education and highlighted that it varies from one discipline to another and studies conducted in the field of education have a rare chance of running the risk of inflicting severe mental or physical harm to the participants. There were no foreseeable risks involved for participations in the current study and the results will be purely used for educational research and not for any other purposes.

In the designing stage and carrying out the research, it was ensured that participants' rights were protected and respected by taking different measures. An application was submitted to the University's ethics approval committee to seek permission to undertake the research. After the approval from the university ethics committee, Directors of the Australian language centres were contacted to access participants and seek consent to carry out the research. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were given the right to withdraw from participation at any time. The cover letter explained the aim and goals of the study and anonymity and confidentiality was assured to the participants (appendix D). Participants who were interested to participate in the study signed a consent form and were made aware of all aspects of the study procedure (see appendix D & E). The researcher did not conceal her identity.

Inviting students to comment on teachers' effectiveness was deemed to raise some possible ethical questions. However, in order to avoid that, the preliminary survey used a general statement 'effective language teachers', rather than the direct 'your teacher' in order to encourage students to give their perceptions rather than specifically evaluate their teachers. Moreover, at the end of the questionnaire, the students were asked to provide their names and email addresses only if they wished to be contacted for an interview and were assured their personal information would not be identified in the report. The interview session started after the participants signed the consent form and participants had the choice to leave the interview if they felt uncomfortable at any stage. There were also suitable warm-up questions added in the beginning of the interview and direct questions were avoided.

The confidentiality of the participants and the participating centres was protected in the analysis and reporting of results and findings. Names of the participants or participating centres were not revealed in the research report, instead pseudonyms were used. The privacy of all the participants was preserved by de-identifying and coding any parts of the data that could identify individual participants. The names of centres were not mentioned and simply reported as language colleges in Australia. All the audio-recordings were stored in a secured location and will be destroyed after a certain number of years in accordance with human ethics guidelines.

### *3.7.5 Limitations*

As mentioned in the literature review, the present investigation explored an area that had not previously attracted much research attention particularly with this cohort (i.e. Saudi students studying English in Australia). Therefore, the study is bound to have some limitations and the findings will need further verification through future research in this area. As the study depended on having access to international students specifically from EAP courses, it was difficult to recruit a large number of participants for the preliminary survey. Based on the email responses and telephonic conversations with the managers of language centres after consulting with their teaching staff, reservations were expressed concerning investigation into students' perceptions on the notion of effective lecturers because it may have the potential to harm the reputation of the centre. Although the participation was voluntary and was confidential, this gave the centres the right to protect their own interests especially when the EAP market is extremely competitive in the current neoliberal context (see section 1.1 and 1.3) in which they operate as private businesses. In addition, some education centres did not allow the collection of data and publication of findings as part of their policy. Moreover, finding a balanced recruitment of Saudi participants (in number and gender) was challenging as Saudi male

participants felt reluctant to be interviewed by a female researcher in compliance with their culture. As the data was collected during a busy time of year, during Ramadan which is the holy month where Muslims fast from dawn till dusk following the Eid celebration, the researcher faced challenges collecting data which resulted in low participation of Saudi students in the survey. In addition, EAP courses are intensive and if students achieve the required score, they could exit the EAP course and enrol in a university program at any time. Therefore, waiting for more Saudi participants could mean losing the participants that participated in the survey for interviews. The limitations as a result of this will be further discussed in the last chapter of this thesis.

### *3.8 Chapter summary*

This chapter explained the methodology which guided this study. The discussion focussed on the appropriateness and provided the justification of using the qualitative methods for this study. In order to understand Saudi learners' perceptions of an effective EAP teacher in Australia, qualitative data were collected and analysed to address the research questions. The small-scale preliminary survey was helpful in informing the study, capturing a broader picture of students' perceptions of effective EAP teachers. The points of difference and interest captured from the survey guided the interview protocols that were used in collecting data in the principal study. Using a case study research design allowed a deeper understanding of the perceptions of how Saudi students perceive teacher effectiveness in the EAP context and why. The data collection procedure and the instruments used in the study were described in detail in this chapter. Moreover, this chapter explained how the results were obtained from the qualitative phase of analysis. The importance of ethical considerations was explained and how it was followed in this research was detailed in this chapter. The chapter ended with limitations related to the collection of data. The next chapter will present the findings in response to the first research question.

# Chapter Four: Factors influencing Saudi students' perceptions of effective language educators

## *4.1 Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Saudi students on the notion of effective English teachers in EAP classrooms in Australia. However, in order to set a context for those perceptions and understand them better, the first subsidiary research question asked: *What are the factors that influence Saudi students' perceptions of effective language educators?* This chapter will report findings from the case study data that relate to that question, based mainly on the interviews. There are two themes that emerged as influential factors: learner motivation and the context of English language learning. While the influence of motivation on Saudi students' perceptions of effective language educators is primarily indirect, the influence of context is noticeably direct.

## *4.2 Learner motivation*

In order to understand the motivation levels of Saudi students as a factor in their perceptions of teacher effectiveness in Australian EAP settings, it is useful to be aware of the choices made before arriving in Australia (4.2.1) and the feelings associated with those choices (4.2.2). This provides context for more direct consideration of motivation in participants' Saudi Arabian and Australian experiences (4.2.3), which is further clarified through the comparison of contexts of English language learning in section 4.3.

### *4.2.1 Choosing Australia as a study destination*

For Participants 3, 4 and 6, family was an important factor for choosing Australia to study. All three female participants reported that they particularly chose Australia because they had some relatives who were studying in Australia before they arrived. For example, Participant 3 explained that her choice depended on her husband's previous choice: 'because my husband study here before me'. Similarly, Participant 4 explained her 'good chance' to study in Australia due to her family's presence, and Participant 6 said, 'because my husband came before than me and he stayed here in Adelaide for two months and then we came. (Participant # 6). This indicates that social support was an important factor in determining the choice of study destination of Saudi females. These results are not surprising as Saudi female students must have a husband or a legitimate non-marriageable male relative as part of the mandatory conditions of the King Abdullah Scholarship.

However, male participants had different views about choosing Australia as their study destination. Participant 1 explained that he believed it was easier to study a degree in Australia as compared to other popular destinations such as the US and UK. His belief in an easy acceptance in an Australian university had persuaded him to choose Australia over another destination.

> I have just heard about Australia and America and just comparing and I chose Australia because I heard as I told you it's easier studying Health Sciences and nursing ((Participant # 1).

For Participant 2, the fact that he thought it was easier to obtain an Australian visa as compared to a Canadian one was what made him choose to study in Australia. In his interview, he explained that the procedure for obtaining an Australian visa was not lengthy. It was a matter of two days for him to obtain the student visa electronically with the assistance of an agent. He further explained that exiting and re-entering Australia was not an issue once the visa had been granted, unlike other destinations. He considered that it was 'too hard' to enter and exit Canada even once the visa had been granted. Consequently an easy student visa policy was a determining factor for choosing Australia as his study destination.

> ..for Canada, It was because of the visa. I didn't go there .. because it was too hard to get even if I want to renew the visa (Participant # 2).

> Yes I actually get it in two days. I sent my details to an agent and he sent to me after electronically, Yeah and I had no issue with that even I went back to my country and came again and there is no problem with the visa like it's easy (Participant # 2).

From the quotations presented above, it is evident that Australia was not the participants' number one choice based on its reputation for study, whether for male or female participants. On the contrary, it was other factors such as social support and manageable entry requirements as compared to other English-speaking countries that played a major role in choosing Australia as their study destination. Thus the motivation for studying in Australia was not related to the study conditions themselves, although this may not have any impact on their perceptions of effective teachers.

#### *4.2.2 Participants' fears associated with studying in Australia*

In designing the interview protocols, it was thought that any participant fears associated with studying in Australia may influence their perceptions of the notion of teachers' effectiveness in an indirect way, and consequently participants were asked about this. After examining the transcripts closely, it became evident that the Saudi students had various initial fears which

disappeared after arriving in Australia. This could be attributed to the fact that as Australia is not a popular destination to Saudi students as compared to UK and USA, the participants naturally felt emotionally challenged. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

> I fear to be far away from my family and what else. I won't have good friends maybe (Participant # 1).

> I will be alone there in Australia. I don't know anyone there. This was my fear. (Participant # 3).

Another male participant felt that travelling between Saudi Arabia and Australia due to long duration flights meant that returning home in an emergency could be a challenging task.

> Just like that because it's too far and if I need something and if I had to get back to my country, it will take one day to go back so that's one of my fears (Participant # 2).

However, none of the participants reported the existence of fear related to homesickness after arriving in Australia. This can be explained by Saudi students' unique position as compared to other international students in regard to the generous allowances they receive for themselves and their families when studying abroad which allows them to travel to their home country frequently.

All those participants who had the chance to travel abroad before coming to Australia expressed not having fears before coming to Australia. For example, Participants 5 and 6 explained that they had the chance to study English in the USA prior to their experience of studying English in Australia and felt comfortable before coming here. Participant 5 described how his exposure to international destinations made him feel relaxed and calm before coming to study in Australia.

> No, I didn't fear. I didn't fear anything before coming to Australia because I had experience like overseas my country so just when I came to Australia the same as when I want to go to other country. Just it's fine (Participant # 5)

Similarly, Participant 4 had experience of studying and living abroad and stated she was 'happy' and 'excited' to complete her education in Australia. This suggests that participants who reflected on living abroad had positive expectations, and fewer fears as compared to those who did not have an international experience before coming to Australia. One such participant was also encouraged to expect to find Australia a safe place for her family. This is illustrated in the following quotation.

> When I first came I felt comfortable because my husband came before than me and he stayed here .. for two months and then we came, me and my son he says for me that it's ok, it's better, safe (Participant # 6).

Since Participant 6 also had experience studying in the USA before, she compared the USA with Australia and stated, 'it's better'.

To summarise, all the female participants had social support (family, friends) in Australia. The remaining male participants expressed no fear since they either had some family members in Australia or had travelled abroad before coming to Australia. Thus social support and previous travel abroad facilitated participants in overcoming fears. This could also influence the maintenance of motivation to study while in Australia.

### *4.2.3 Motivation for learning English in Saudi Arabia and in Australia*

When asked about effective English teachers in Saudi Arabia, two participants explained that they were not motivated to learn English in Saudi Arabia and were therefore unable to comment on whether their English teacher was effective or ineffective. The two participants took a long pause and explained that since they were not interested in learning English in Saudi Arabia, it was hard for them to comment on the qualities of a teacher's effectiveness and ineffectiveness. Both the participants had had a poor experience but could not recall the particular challenges they faced in the classroom. The following quotations illustrate the point.

> She just speak English. She talked to us about different things but at that time I can't understand anything in English. Just yes and no (Participant # 5).

> But as I said for you that I wasn't interested and I hate English at that time so I didn't want to learn it (Participant # 6).

Participant 6 explained that she was not motivated to study English and could not follow the teacher's instructions because of her low level of English proficiency. She said she could not give an opinion about the qualities of ineffective English teachers in Saudi Arabia because she had no knowledge of English when she was studying in Saudi Arabia. Since she was not motivated and was a fairly novice learner, she found it difficult to talk about her experience. Similarly, Participant 5 was not interested in the English language subject so he could not recall his experience learning English:

> ..because I wasn't interested about all this language so I can't remember anything about this (Participant # 5).

They added that there were several reasons for not being interested in the English classes in Saudi Arabia but mainly based their reason on their own lack of interest. This clearly suggests

that motivation plays an important role in establishing one's perception of the notion of effectiveness and ineffectiveness. This point will be further elaborated in section 4.3 regarding the perception of effective and ineffective teachers in Saudi Arabia.

In regard to motivation to learn English in Australia, the picture is very different. None of the Saudi participants indicated that they lacked motivation or interest in studying English in Australia at any stage of their interview. On the contrary, all the participants had their goals set to study a bachelor or a master's degree after completion of the EAP program and knew that success in their EAP course was an essential gateway to achieving that goal. These Saudi male and female students were serious about learning English and wanted to complete their education. They had a clearly delineated instrumental motivation. The differences between the Saudi Arabian English language learning context and the Australian are elaborated in the next section, further illuminating the differences in motivation.

## *4.3 Context of English language learning*

This section and several parts of the following chapter together indicate that the context of English language learning is a particularly strong factor in influencing Saudi students' perceptions of effective English language educators. This section focuses on participants' views related to the Saudi Arabian context, and also their understanding of the differences between ESL and EFL settings.

### *4.3.1 Native vs Non-Native English speaker teachers in Saudi Arabia*

All the participants were asked about the notion of effective English teachers in Saudi Arabian settings. The purpose of asking this question was to understand what was important to these students at the time, and whether these perceptions differed after arriving in Australia. To answer the question of the researcher, the participants reflected on their experience of learning English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in Saudi Arabia and presented different qualities of effective EAP teachers in that country where English is a foreign language. After reading the transcripts closely, a pattern emerged in responses dealing with effectiveness of a teacher in Saudi Arabia. When the researcher asked the participants about things they liked about English teachers in Saudi Arabia, four participants first of all referred to teacher origin. Five participants reported that they had had at least one native English speaker teacher (NEST) in Saudi Arabia, and four of these discussed in some detail the personality of these perceived effective teachers.

#### *4.3.1.1 Attributes of effective teachers in Saudi Arabian English classes*

Participant 1 perceived an effective teacher to be a native speaker and one who has a good personality. Participant 1 believed that his teacher was effective because he was a native speaker and friendly. He used the words 'friendly' and 'helped' to show his admiration of the warm personality of an effective teacher, and particularly referred to the quality of treating the students like 'sons'.

> I: In my college the teacher was from America. All the teachers
>
> R: So, were they native speakers?
>
> I: Yes. Native speakers
>
> R: So what did you like about them?
>
> I: Friendly. They helped us like …they treat us like sons, the students. (Participant # 1)

Participant 2 expressed having a positive experience in learning EAP in Saudi Arabia. He also had a native English speaker teacher (NEST), and this NEST had some knowledge of the Arabic language and was aware of Saudi culture. Participant 2 mentioned the religion of NESTs and stated that all the NESTs in Saudi Arabia were Muslims. The participant also talked about the personality of teachers who he considered to be effective. In his view, an effective teacher does not only have a good personality but also understands a student's personality.

> I remember they are like all native speakers. One of them was actually almost all of them Muslims, one of them he understands Arabic, understand very well …They are like very friendly and didn't say anything when they heard us speak about them or the lecture when we says it's boring or something like that by our language they just like smile And he changed the topic suddenly and we didn't recognize that until he told us he understand everything. He was quite understanding like he understand us when we say like we are bored from this topic or something, we want something like that, improve writing, more listening, we prefer to do speaking at the first because we had tutorials sometimes and sometimes we asked him to do the tutorials in the morning (Participant # 2).

This quote highlights that Participant 2 believed that an effective teacher must be flexible and adapt to the changing needs of the students. The above quote from Participant 2 also indicates that the flexible teacher understands the students' mood and adjusts their lesson plan accordingly to meet the expectations of the students. Participant 2 suggests that a lesson could be made interesting with the help of an effective teacher who can adapt the lesson plans according to the daily needs of students. The above quotation explains that there is a close link between the notion of effectiveness and the NEST. The pattern seems to be clear that the

participants first indicated their teacher was NEST and then attributed different personality attributes to him and then linked the whole concept with the effectiveness of the teacher.

Participant 3 also expressed a favourable attitude towards NESTs. When Participant 3 was asked to shed some light on her experience learning English in Saudi Arabia, she first stated the origin of her teacher and then referred to the personality attribute of her teacher using the word 'kind'. This participant was also able to point to two specific practices that she saw as characteristic of an effective teacher: explaining the rules of English and explaining the lesson itself.

> Yes it was British I remember. Yeah because she was kind. She explains the rules
>
> R: aha.
>
> I: clearly and also explains the lesson as well as we can understand it well (Participant # 3).

Participant 4 also had a NEST, and admired her teacher specifically because the teacher supported and encouraged students to be independent learners of English. She explained that with the support of her teacher, she was encouraged to learn English by enrolling in different English courses and worked on learning English skills at home. From her experience, she believed that an effective teacher facilitated independent learning. Participant 4 also mentioned the appearance of the teacher, bringing her teacher alive in memory.

> There was like Canadian teacher. She was beautiful! […] She was like a great teacher and actually she supports me and encourage to learn this language and to be like a professional speaker in this language and then I start to work on myself at home and I like register in some courses online and I started to develop myself at home (Participant # 4).

As indicated earlier, Participant 6 was not interested in learning English in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, even though she believed that an effective teacher is a native speaker, lack of motivation did not lead to effective learning. This is illustrated in the following quote.

> I: It was good, British teacher there. From Britain (Participant # 6).
>
> R: What did you like?
>
> I: She just speak English. She talked to us about different things but at that time I can't understand anything in English. Just Yes and No (Participant # 6).
>
> R: Were you motivated at that time?
>
> I: Umm. No really' (Participant # 6).

Participant 5 did not have the experience of learning English from a NEST. He was not satisfied with the way English was taught in Saudi Arabia and was also not interested in learning English. He explained that he had limited knowledge of English, therefore he 'didn't learn anything' and felt unable to talk about the notion of effectiveness in regard to his experiences in Saudi Arabia.

> I didn't have that knowledge to explain this teacher good or no because I couldn't speak English very well at this time so I didn't learn anything (Participant # 5).

In addition, Participant 5 pointed out that only high achievers in Saudi Arabia had the chance to learn English from NESTs. He believed students with low grades had to study with non-native English speaker teacher (NNESTs) who are Arabs in most cases. From the quotation below, Participant 5 felt demoted when taught English by a NNEST.

> I: It means if you get the 5 in IELTS exams, that means .. maybe you get the native speaker teacher.
>
> R: But if you are in low level?
>
> I: No just in the Arabic just the Arabic teacher (Participant # 5).

Participants 5 and 6 seem to share similar experiences. Both participants were uninterested in learning English and felt unable to comment on teachers' effectiveness in Saudi Arabia. However, Participant 6 was taught by a NEST and Participant 5 by a NNEST.

From all the quotations, it is evident that five out of six participants perceived being a NEST to be a core attribute of effectiveness in Saudi Arabian EAP. Four participants were interested and motivated about learning English and spoke positively about the personality of their NEST and could identify different positive aspects of their personality. Two participants did not comment on the effectiveness of their teachers as they were not motivated and interested in learning English. Out of these two, one participant did not have a NEST and was dissatisfied with having an Arabic teacher and being taught English through Arabic, finding himself unable to learn English in his home country. Broadly speaking, students deem NESTs to be effective in Saudi Arabia and comment specifically on teachers' personality. Those students who had NESTs had positive aspects to discuss about their teachers' personality and shed light on different aspects of effective teaching behaviour. Figure 4.1 summarises the attributes of an effective teacher in Saudi Arabian EAP settings as identified by four participants.

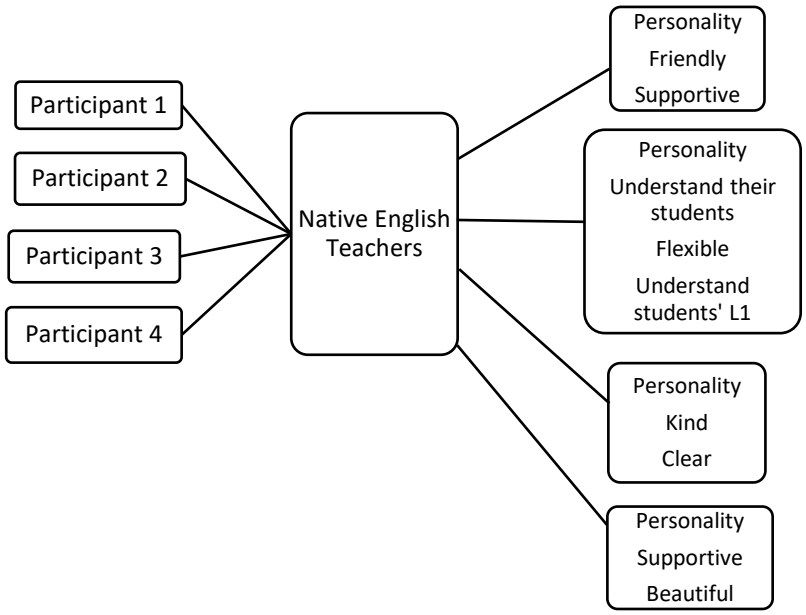



**Figure 4.1 Attributes of effective teachers in Saudi Arabian EAP settings as identified by four participants**

#### *4.3.1.2 Attributes of ineffective teachers in Saudi Arabian English classes*

After asking about the notion of effective teachers in Saudi Arabia, the researcher asked the participants to talk about what they saw as attributes of ineffective teachers. The reason for asking about the notion of effectiveness and ineffectiveness was to validate participants' responses and to better understand the relationships between different characteristics.

Participant 3 explained that an ineffective teacher from her perspective was a non-native speaker and she associated this with the communication style of the teacher. She insisted that the teacher's rapid talking speed was a problem which made it difficult to understand what she was saying.

> She is fast. She was talking faster and we can't understand too much from her (Participant # 3).

Like Participant 3, Participant 5 also associated the idea of ineffectiveness with NNESTs, but making a direct link with lack of teaching competencies. In his perception, it is a drawback that NNESTs have learned the English language rather than acquired it by growing up with it.

> The first one is that the most of the teacher is not like native speakers and they already learned the English (Participant # 5).

Participant 1 also referred to NNEST shortcomings, explaining that he did not find English lessons interesting as the teacher taught the English subject in Arabic. He found teaching English in his L1 an ineffective way of teaching English.

> I didn't feel comfortable because just one teacher who speaks Arabic and English as well. Just teach and translate. That's it (Participant # 1).

Participant 4 highlighted the same issue of NNEST as teaching English in Arabic when she said, 'No she was like speaking Arabic'. What participants meant by teaching English in Arabic is when a teacher uses the Arabic language in class throughout teaching, organising, conveying meaning. Similarly, Participant 6 believed that an effective teacher needs to explain in English and should avoid the use of Arabic language.

> Who explain the word. Who tell us the meaning in English and not in Arabic so we just focus in English and not on the meaning for words in Arabic. So we know the definition for the words in English (Participant # 6).

Participants 1, 5 and 6 show a negative attitude towards the use of L1 in the English classroom in Saudi Arabia.

Participant 1 further explained that he found that the English subject was dry, and it was difficult to follow teachers' instructions. He made the point that learning English was challenging because teachers did not take students' proficiency level into consideration. Participant 1 associated the idea of ineffectiveness with the teacher's lack of knowledge about students' ability level. The following quote highlights:

> Yup it was difficult, and some teachers was like more serious when they teach us. They don't know it was the first time we were learning English (Participant # 1).

Participant 2 highlighted a range of aspects of ineffective teachers, associating the idea of ineffectiveness with the teacher's lack of teaching competencies. He pointed out the issue of monotone voice used by ineffective teachers which could lead students to become bored in class. He also critiqued an example of a teacher-centred classroom in his middle school, in which he perceived a lack in variety of activities in class. He did not like the teacher using a lecture format as a teaching method in the English class. He also discussed the ineffectiveness of the teacher when the lessons lacked balance in the organization of receptive and productive skill activities.

> Some of them their way of teaching. Some of them know what they will teach know but they doesn't know how to explain it for their students. Their way like when they speak, they speak like in one rhythm that make students sleep. There is no

> activities like no writing all the class for example. In mid school there was one teacher he whenever he speak one rhythm and always like whole class will be sleeping in all the lesson… if it's listening, we all listen, if it's speaking we all talk and that's the most activity thing that will make us like speak but if it's reading and we if all read from the same book half of the class will sleep (Participant # 2)

In addition to the issues discussed above, Participant 1 considers an ineffective teacher in Saudi Arabia as non-passionate about teaching. Referring to the behaviour of ineffective teachers, he insisted that ineffective teachers look at financial incentives which take over their passion for teaching.

> Yeah. he just look for money. Not for .. how to teach.. not to teach students and not how to make students learn English (Participant # 1).

It is evident that participants had negative attitudes towards NNESTs and associated NNESTs with a variety of ineffective classroom practices, most frequently with the practice of teaching English through Arabic.

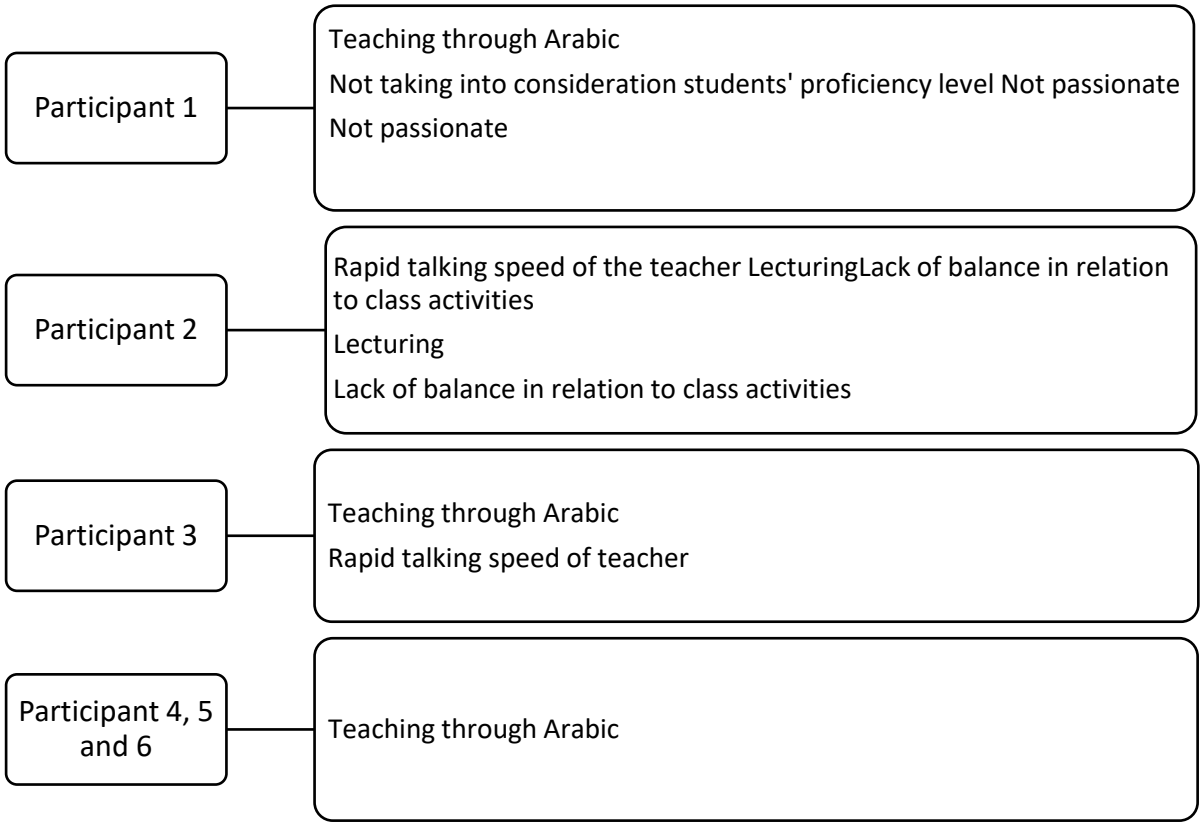



**Figure 4.2: Characteristics each participant deemed negative in Saudi Arabian English classes**

### *4.3.2 Understanding of differences between ESL and EFL settings*

Participants were asked to shed light on similarities or differences in their experience of studying EAP programs in Australia and Saudi Arabia to provide further context for their perceptions of effective teachers. When asked to explain similarities or differences between experiences of learning in Saudi Arabia and Australia, all participants perceived a low degree of commonality between the two experiences. Most participants highlighted the differences rather than any similarities in the EFL and ESL classroom settings, suggesting that they understood the challenges that the teacher could face in the two settings. For instance, when Participant 1 was asked about the similarities or differences in learning experience between Saudi Arabia and Australia, he believed that no similarities existed between the two experiences. He added that since there is only one common language among international students, all students in an Australian EAP class must speak English.

> No similarities. But had some differences. In class, the students in Saudi Arabia are just from Saudi Arabia just speak only one language. And here in Australia, many students from many countries and we have to speak only English. Just the point of communicate is English language (Participant # 1).

Similarly, when referring to the linguistic atmosphere (EFL and ESL), Participants 2 and 5 explained that in EFL contexts it was difficult to practice the English language in real life settings making it difficult to learn English (refer to 1.8).

> The problem is from the environment. English is practice, of any learning of language any language. Any language you want to learn it's practice so the problem we had was we weren't practising it at all so when we finished from class we go outside whatever, coffee shop, restaurant we ask by our language (Participant # 2).

Participant 5 highlighted the same issue as Participant 2 when he stated that lack of practice outside the English classroom was a factor that contributes to challenges of learning English.

> It's not the time to do the practice and no people I can practice with, so when I learn from the school or attend the classes and the school and after that when I go out of the school I can't use English because most of the people this country language so that's why it is very poor (Participant # 5).

The participating Saudi students highlighted the advantage of studying EAP in the ESL context. They believed that they have the linguistic atmosphere to improve their language which gives them the advantage of learning EAP in Australia. Participants' understanding of the ESL and EFL atmosphere suggests that they were able to identify the challenges of learning English associated with the teacher and non-teacher related issues in the ESL and EFL context. Within these participant experiences it became clear that insight for understanding the concept of

teacher effectiveness occurred in phases: participants progressed from having little knowledge about teacher effectiveness when they started learning English in Saudi Arabia to greater familiarity in the ESL context of Australia.

### *4.4 Chapter summary*

This brief chapter sets a context for considering students' perceptions of effective and ineffective teachers in their Saudi context. It has done this by addressing the question: *What are the factors that influence Saudi students' perceptions of effective language educators?* The two themes that emerged as influential factors were: learner motivation and the context of English language learning. While the influence of motivation on Saudi students' perceptions of effective language educators is primarily indirect, the influence of context is noticeably direct. The next chapter will address findings that seek to answer the second subsidiary research question for this study.

# Chapter Five: Saudi students' perceptions of effective and ineffective EAP teachers in Australian settings

## *5.1 Introduction*

This chapter will present findings that seek to answer the second subsidiary research question for this study: *What are the perceived qualities of an English language educator in an Australian EAP course that contribute to Saudi students' perceived improvement of their English language proficiency?* All six participants expressed overall satisfaction with the way English is taught in Australia. They all provided considered reflections on the interview questions relating to effective teaching, and some participants also gave examples of some perceived effective methods that teachers used in the classroom to teach English.

In the analysis of interviews the main themes were identified as 'Personality and associated qualities', 'Communication and cultural understanding', 'Fairness', 'Subject knowledge and credibility' and 'Methods of teaching'. These themes relate to those identified by Barnes and Lock (2010, 2013) and in fact most of the attributes of effective teachers covered in their framework became part of the themes that emerged in this study. However, while Barnes and Lock identify 'Organisation and Preparation' as a category of attributes, in this study that category has not become a theme because the students did not refer to it particularly, apart from in relation to the use of a textbook, which is included under 'Teaching Methods' (section 5.6.3). However, its absence in this study does not diminish from its value as an acknowledged attribute, as the absence merely signifies students' lack of information on that topic outside of the use of a textbook. As pointed out in section 2.8, the Barnes and Lock (2010, 2013) framework lacks a cultural perspective which is seen by the present researcher as necessary for teacher effectiveness in an EAP program in an Australian setting. The data presented in this chapter endorses this view, as it includes a strong cultural perspective not only in response to the culturally oriented questions in the interview protocol (Appendix C), but as independent reflections by participants.

## *5.2 Personality and associated qualities*

When the participants were asked about the notion of effective English teachers in Australia, the personality attributes of teachers were seen as significantly important. All the participants believed that effective teachers have a good personality, associating particular characteristics with a teacher's personality and behaviour. Figure 5.1 shows subthemes for personality and associated qualities. Mainly the participants believed that kind and friendly teachers are

sympathetic to students' needs, flexible, and make themselves available to help their students after class. The attributes such as 'kind' and 'friendly' were viewed by the participants as key characteristics that help teachers to demonstrate positive behaviours such as being flexible, respecting their students, and giving them their time by being available after class.

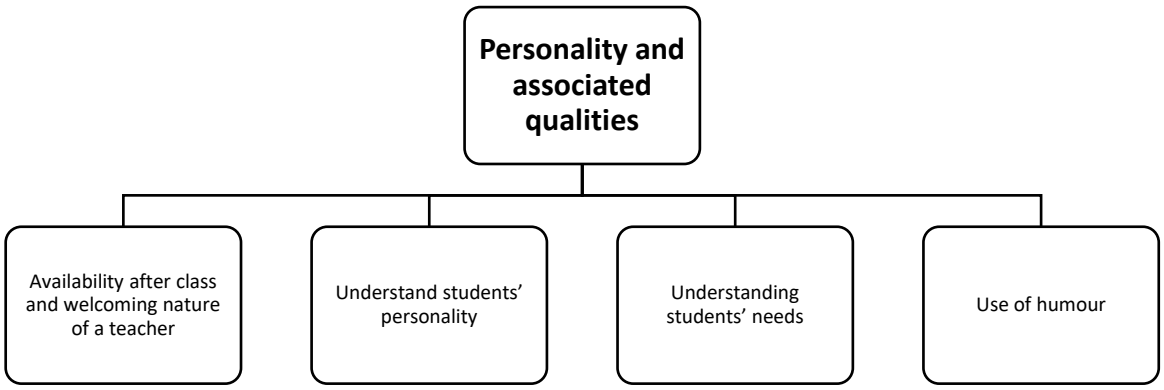



**Figure 5.1 Subthemes for 'personality and associated qualities'**

All the six participants used the term 'kind' or 'friendly' for effective teachers. For Participant 2 an effective teacher was someone who cares about their students, frequently asks how students feel about learning English and makes students comfortable in the classroom.

> Friend with the students. Friendly with the students and try to understand the student before explain to him (Participant # 2).

Participant 1 shared the same idea with Participant 2 in terms of friendly nature of teachers who he considered was related to the notion of effectiveness. He further added that friendly teachers take students on excursions and encourage their students to learn English.

> There are still some teachers are friendly like. They go with us on some trips (Participant # 1).

> .. and they encourage the students – how to learn good English and to speak with others (Participant #1).

Similarly, Participant 4 discussed the importance of the teacher being friendly for all international students.

> She must be first of all friendly for all the students from different nationalities (Participant # 4).

Participant 3 mentioned the word 'kind' and discussed the welcoming nature of teachers which she thought was an important characteristic of effective teachers.

> ..but in the same way she is kind and she is smiling (Participant #3).

Participant 6 believed that an effective teacher makes a student feel comfortable in class and frequently asks their students about how they feel about learning.

> Every week she asks us: How do you feel at this time? Do you think you understand everything? (Participant # 6).

The participant 6 used 'polite' and 'kind' for one her effective teachers. This implies that Saudi students not only perceived personality attributes as an important characteristic of effective teachers in the Saudi context but also deemed them important in the Australian context. The findings also reveal that in both Saudi and Australian EAP contexts, the importance of the personality of a teacher played a central role in facilitating students' learning.

Participant 5 summarised the importance of teacher's personality in the following way:

> I think the personality. Because the good personality is a kind of topic and have a lot of things under it good personality. If you are good personality that means good to teach, it's fair it's respectful .. everything. I think if the personality is good, he is good. I choose the good personality…If they have personality, they will be respectful, they will be everything. Yes. Just if you imagine my life, if you think about the people who are around you, you will never find someone who is good personality but he is not kind. You will never find if he is good personality and he is not fair. You will not find if he has a good personality, and he is not organized (Participant # 5).

Participant 5 is emphasizing that a teacher with a good personality is effective because a good personality encompasses key attributes such as being kind, respectful, fair and organised. For participant 5 various admirable attributes can be acquired if a teacher has a good personality. When discussing personality of an effective teacher, participant 5 used 'friendly' several times during the interview.

As presented in the following sub-sections Saudi students discussed several qualities related to personality traits that they saw as important in teacher effectiveness, or alternatively as a factor in teacher ineffectiveness if they were absent.

### *5.2.1 Availability after class and welcoming nature of a teacher*

A teacher's availability to listen to students after class was another behaviour that Saudi students deemed as an important characteristic of an effective EAP teacher. Participant 2 believed that meeting the teacher after the class to discuss his issues was something he admired about an effective teacher. This is illustrated in the following quotes from Participants 1, 2 and 3.

> She explains ideas. You can meet her after the class to explain anything …..And we ask her about anything about the course or the lesson, she is welcome to answer it and she gives us examples and anything to understand us (Participant # 1).
>
> They give you the whole answer that you want to listen. They start from beginning to the end even if it takes 5-10 minutes to explain it or answer it. If they doesn't have time, they will tell you after I finish this point I will explain it to you or write it because or give it to me later because he don't have enough time or something (Participant # 2).
>
> I will remember she gives us her time always. She replies the email even if its vacation or holidays, and after class she gives her time also to correct our writing and she is very kind (Participant # 3).

However, when such behaviour was not demonstrated by the teacher, it was seen as a characteristic of an ineffective teacher. Participant 1 stated:

> I had teacher who tell me that if you need to tell me about your problem, you have to tell me in the class….
>
> R[2]: Do you like this?
>
> I[3]: No. because we may be don't have enough time to tell teacher about the problem. He told me you have to wait until tomorrow or the other class (Participant # 1).

Participant 3 found difficulties with accessing teachers after the class as well:

> Yes, some teachers if sometime I ask him or her after class they can answering me, explain to me. But some of them no (Participant # 3).

The above quotes reflect students' appreciation for kind and friendly teachers who give them their time in class or out of class to support their learning. The participants perceive a teacher's availability after class as a gesture of kindness and linked both these qualities to teacher effectiveness.

### *5.3.2 Understand students' personality*

The participants believed that not only the teachers' personality was important, but they also stressed the importance of teachers' understanding of their students' personalities. All participants had the concept of supportive student-teacher relationship which they recognized as something that facilitated their learning. Participant 2 explained that in his perception 'kind' and 'friendly' teachers understands students' personality and respect them. Participants 2 and

[2] R refers to the researcher

[3] I refers to the interviewee

5 explained in detail why personality was a key concept for them. Participant 5 explained that if the teacher respects their students, the students would love the teacher and that would facilitate learning. Both Participant 2 and 5 perceived that the student-teacher bond facilitates learning in the classroom. The following quotes illustrate:

> Some teachers are really good because they understand when the students ask them something about the tense, about grammar, about speaking, about writing or whatever…but the teachers must understand the students. (Participant #2)

> ..if the teacher understand us, respect us that means I feel comfortable while I am talking with them and this means I am learning (Participant # 5).

> Respect the students because the students coming from different countries, different cultures and they didn't speak your language so you to respect them and respect their culture and religion and have to respect everything. If you respect them, they will love you…if they love you, they will learn from you (Participant #5).

Similarly, Participant 3 explained that an effective teacher in her view is someone who shows empathy and understanding of a student's personality and their behaviour in different settings. Participant 3 gave an example that a perceived effective teacher understood that some problems that may occur when giving a presentation were related to anxiety and shyness, suggesting a caring and tolerating attitude. This is illustrated in the following quote:

> ..Because when the teacher asks students to do the presentation for example and the student was shy. She can understand that he or she makes mistakes in grammar because of the nervous and shy (Participant #3).

Participant 2 mentioned teacher's personality many times in the interview. He associated the idea of personality with the quality of teachers to understand their students. In his experience an effective teacher understood students' personality and their needs. He gave an example of an effective teacher who he thought was flexible and understood his students' personality and their needs.

#### *5.2.3 Understanding students' needs*

Participant 2 considered that by understanding students' needs, a teacher engages a student in learning. In his view, an effective teacher demonstrates a combination of personality characteristics to facilitate student learning. The effective teachers understand when they have to be flexible with their students by understanding their needs during the lesson and addressing them. He gave an example of an effective teacher who understood when the students were bored or tired during the lessons and showed flexible behaviour to make them engage in the

lesson. He described flexible behaviour as giving quick breaks to the student or when the students were tired from one activity, the teacher switched to a more interesting one. The following quotations illustrate that:

> He knew students, all the students. He knew all the students when they get bored. He knew all the students when they are excited. He know all they students what they need like when he looked at the faces he knows that this student now need a quick break (Participant #2).

> He was quite understanding like he understand us when we say like we are bored from this topic or something, we want something like that, improve writing, more listening, we prefer to do speaking at the first because we had tutorials sometimes and sometimes we asked him to do the tutorials in the morning (Participant #2).

From the observation, it was also noted that the teacher was flexible to schedule a student's presentation to a later date as there was another assessment coinciding with the pre-agreed date. The teacher explained to the student that the decision was made to make it convenient for the student so that they can focus on both assessments. The student was grateful to the teacher for understanding and admired the teacher.

Participant 1 explained who he thought was an ineffective teacher and what made the teacher ineffective in terms of the personality attributes. He believed that an ineffective teacher is someone who is not passionate about teaching.

> He just give the subject or something give us like an assignment and he didn't teach from heart (Participant #1)

#### *5.2.4 Use of humour*

Interview data indicated that other aspects that influenced Saudi students' perceptions involved the use of humour by their teachers. Use of humour was not perceived positively by the participants. Three out of six participants specifically mentioned that it was important for an effective teacher to balance the serious aspect of teaching and the use of humour.

Participant 1 believed that there must be a balanced approach in the use of humour demonstrated by the teacher, saying that 'I like to be serious and funny at the same time'. Similarly, Participants 3 and 4 thought that only a few minutes should be reserved for a sense of humour in class and did not expect the teacher to demonstrate it all the time. The following quote illustrates that.

> Ok to be funny, but not all the time. Just 4 minutes or 2 minutes in the class. Not all the time (Participant # 4)

> Fun but not like that other teacher who is making jokes every time and making us boring. Fun in limits (Participant # 3).

Participant 5 held a negative view about the use of humour in the class and called it a waste of time. He gave a detailed explanation of why he believed that sense of humour should not be used in English classes. He believed that humour played no role in effective teaching as the study time should be reserved for studies. He acknowledged that the teacher used humour to change students' mood and to make them more engaged but still perceived that humour should not be integrated in the lesson.

> They want to change their (students) mood. But for me in the class, I am coming to class to learn this means teach me to learn. After the class, we joke together its fine…Study time, Study time. Teaching time, teaching time. Eating time, eating time (Participant # 5).

He explained that humour may have a place outside the class but not inside the class. He believed that effective teachers should not waste students' learning time in class, illustrating his point with an example '..So if I joke 5 minutes in the class 60 minutes this means I have just 55 minutes to learn. If you joke more time, this means I have less time to learn. So that is kind of wasting time'. The following quote further highlights Participant 5 views.

> ..I like in the class that teacher will be serious. Because while he's is joking, while she's joking that means I lost my time….But for me in the class, I am coming to class to learn this means teach me to learn. After the class, we joke together its fine.
>
> R: Right.
>
> I: Study time, Study time. Teaching time, teaching time (Participant 5).

Another pattern that was noticed in the interview transcripts was the association of use of humour with the cultural competence of the teacher. For instance, Participant 2 and Participant 3 thought that teachers should not joke about religion or culture. Participant 3 regarded such humour as 'silly jokes'. Similarly, Participant 2 perceived ineffective teachers as those who use humour about the culture and beliefs of students.

> One of the teachers made jokes about something he thought it's funny but it's not funny. I mean he said something about religion or your beliefs or something like that and he thought it like a joke and when he finished he said like "oh I am just kidding" he thought like I will understand what he said' (Participant #2).

Participant 3 also described how one of her teachers used humour ineffectively by not showing respect for her country when discussing Saudi Arabia's new law for granting women the permission to drive.

> And also she makes jokes about women driving in Saudi Arabia. Oh! Finally!! *(critical tone)* (Participant # 3).

Participant 3 perceived the 'Oh! Finally!' remark as sarcastic and offensive. She gave another example where one of the teachers demonstrated inappropriate humour when they learnt that it is not common for some Muslims to celebrate birthdays: 'Oh, you are not born! Haha! [laughing]'. Participant 3 mentioned that ineffective teachers joke about political and religious issues, which she thought was highly offensive.

The researcher noticed that while some participants were hesitant to give examples of jokes, Participant 2 was confident to state his opinion about the issue of humour. His input is provided here in some detail as it is considered valuable in order to fully understand how and why use of humour was received as a negative feature in the EAP class by some Saudi students.

Participant 2 first explained why he thought the teacher uses humour. He believed that some ineffective teachers used humour to show that they were in control of the situation, noting that ineffective teachers laugh at their own jokes. He gave various reasons why he believed that humour should not be exhibited in the classroom. For example, based on his own experience he noticed that jokes during the lessons could disrupt learning. He explained that an effective teacher should not use humour when the students are already focussed or engaged in the lesson as this could interfere with their learning. He believed that if humour is used when the students are already engaged in the lesson, then the teacher can lose the attention of students. Participant 2 also emphasized that humour should not involve hurting students' feelings or disrespecting students' cultures. In addition, he believed that humour should only be reserved for start of the term when the teachers are getting to know their students, as this may help to build the bond between the teacher and students. He believed that when teachers use humour at the beginning of the term, students gain an idea about the teaching style of the teacher and do not hesitate to ask questions. The following quotation highlights:

> Some teachers want to make joke just to make themselves laugh or make one or two people they or he found them like on the same humour..same sense of humour like (unclear) make himself laugh. But some of them make all the students laugh and it's just at the beginning [of term] not at the serious things like if the teacher says something like funny and make students laugh it is a good thing. But not always even in the serious things. When he speaks something serious even in the lecture he speaks about something and he tries to explain for students and he says some jokes during this explanation while the students really focussed on that stuff then he get: What? What you said. What is that joke? Like I am really focussed on your explanation so that's what I mean. Like some of them, it is good and most of them is bad (Participant # 2).

Similarly, when the researcher asked participant 6 if it was important for a teacher to be funny, participant 6 stated:

> No! Yes, sometimes it's good, but if we didn't understand he will think he is not funny (Participant # 6).

In sum, participant 2 and 6 considered that most teachers used humour in an ineffective way. Nevertheless, participant 2 believed that if the humour is used at the right time and in the right way, this can help teachers to build a good relationship with their students.

> But if you break the ice between the students, teachers and students, and if you make them some jokes that not hurting his feelings [..unclear] like something funny so he will make other students feel he is cool. We can ask him whatever we want. He is like one of us (Participant # 2).

Participant 1 directly linked the teacher's cultural competence in the use of humour with the notion of an effective teacher, giving an example from his experience. A teacher who he perceived was effective used humour in which the teacher demonstrated an understanding of Saudi culture. He stated in his example that when Saudi students came back to class after break, the teacher asked if they went to eat Kabsa (a Saudi traditional dish). Participant 1 admired the teacher's understanding of his cultural food and humour at the same time.

> When she, she gave us like more jokes when we go to the lunch break: you go to eat Kabsa? (laugh) who knows about Kabsa in lunch? (Participant # 1).

From the above quotations and analysis of the results, it is clear that participants' perception of an ineffective teacher was connected to poor use of a sense of humour and lack of cultural understanding. This connection to lack of cultural understanding may explain why participants perceived a sense of humour as a negative aspect and did not want teachers to use it in class.

### *5.3 Communication and cultural understanding*

Communication and cultural understanding of a teacher were viewed as important characteristics of EAP teachers. The participants gave examples of teachers who were able to communicate well and had a cultural understanding which they perceived were important aspects of effective teachers. The participants also believed that if teachers lack these qualities, those teachers would be ineffective. Figure 5.2 shows subthemes for the theme of 'Communication and cultural understanding'.

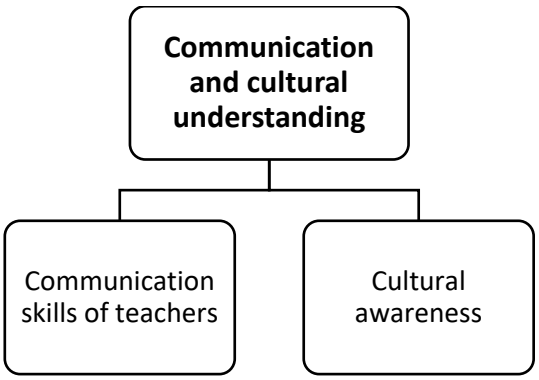



**Figure 5.2 Subthemes for 'Communication and cultural understanding'**

### *5.3.1 Communication skills of teachers*

All participants viewed communication skills as an important characteristic of effective teachers. Participant 4 pointed out that teachers may have knowledge about the subject, yet they fail to deliver it effectively to their students, and that means they are ineffective. Participant 4 believed that problems related to communication can prevent teachers from fully understanding students which, in turn, can lead to ineffective teaching.

> Sometimes the teacher has all the knowledge and they know what they want to talk about but they can't explain it well. They can't communicate well with the students. So they can't understand even if they have correctly understand the idea (Participant # 4).

One participant described communicating with a teacher as a problem and associated it with the age of a teacher. Participant 2 described how the teacher was unable to address his questions as the teacher could not fully understand the student. The participant submitted that older teachers tended to be good listeners but were unable to respond to his needs.

> But the aged people or the seniors they will listen to the end and then they will give you one whole lecture about your answer .. You know old people just wait and listen that's it. Then when he finishes you tell him that's not my point. My point is simple.. That and that, So sometimes you get misunderstood by old teachers (Participant # 2).

Participant 4 viewed her teachers to be effective because they tried to understand and help their students.

> They have like a good communication skills with the students. And they actually try hard to help the students if they don't understand something (Participant # 4).

Similarly, Participant 5 thought that the teacher who he viewed as effective had good communication skills and he kept in touch with her through emails. He used the word 'great' for the teacher who he viewed was easy to approach and communicate with.

> No. I didn't find like that. It's easy to ask teacher and easy too. Not all the teachers. But my teacher was great. I talk with them and sometimes I send them email like that (Participant # 5).

Participant 1 observed that when he was in a low level of EAP course, it was difficult for him to communicate with the teacher in English language. His teacher was welcoming and tried to understand the students in order to address their needs, which Participant 1 perceived was a quality of an effective teacher.

> Maybe when I was in level 1. I can't speak very well. This was the problem. But still .. the teacher knows about this problem and they try to understand us and they still friendly and welcome us (Participant # 1).

It was also noted during the observation session that if the students did not understand, the teacher rephrased the instruction to match the students' proficiency level.

Discussing an effective and ineffective teacher, Participant 6 shared an example where she emailed her teacher for feedback. She expressed that an effective teacher gives feedback when students need it even after the class via email.

> He said for me ok send for me I will give you the feedback. That's good and he give me the feedback on the day when I had to assess my assignment (Participant # 6).

A particular feature of effective teacher communication skills raised by several participants related to the talking speed of teachers. As reported in the previous chapter, speaking fast was deemed ineffective by Participant 3 in the Saudi Arabian context, and in the Australian context speaking slowly is specifically mentioned by Participant 2 as effective behaviour. The following quote details this:

> she speaks slowly so we can understand each word. And she repeats whenever we want her to repeat anything (Participant # 3).

This implies that Saudi participants prefer EAP teachers to speak slowly and repetition is highly valued.

All participants viewed communication skills of the teacher as an important skill that effective teachers should have in an EAP classroom because international students must speak in English to communicate with their teachers to express their needs and concerns inside and outside the classroom. The participants admired the teachers who tried to understand their students despite language barriers and who were welcoming to respond to their needs. This finding suggests that Saudi students deemed effective teachers to be easier to approach than the ineffective ones.

### *5.3.2 Cultural awareness*

Cultural understanding of teachers that students emphasized would contribute to their effectiveness was also addressed in the interview. All six Saudi participants perceived culture as a concept that incorporates beliefs, nationalities, knowledge and norms, and all considered cultural understanding of a teacher as an important characteristic of effectiveness.

Participant 5 admired those teachers who had a good understanding of students' culture and were respectful towards cultural differences in class. He appreciated the teacher who made adjustments for diversity that often arose in EAP classes as a result of the range of international students joining the class. He affirmed that when the teacher was respectful towards his culture and religion, he not only felt comfortable in class, but it also facilitated learning.

> The most thing that I liked in Australia .. umm .. is most of the teachers know about the cultures of other countries. Like for example the teacher now is teaching a lot of people from the different country from maybe China, Middle East and whatever this country. And the teachers knows everything about the culture of this people and respect all of them. Even the culture is different they respect it. Yeah. That's I like it. When I find someone who respects me and my culture and respects my religion, respect everything this mean I feel comfortable in the classes. So I can understand (Participant # 5).

Stressing the importance of culture, Participant 6 gave an example that her teacher understood that Saudi students had to leave for prayer and would return to class a few minutes late after the break. She perceived the knowledge of the teacher about Saudi students' beliefs as a good characteristic of effective teachers.

> They know if we have at the time. The time for prayer. If I late for the class I tell them that's why I am late. They respect that (Participant # 6).

Participant 4 expressed that her teacher was aware of students' cultures, and specifically that Saudi students show reluctance in working in mixed gender groups. Participant 4 told the researcher that she only felt comfortable working with the same gender and that the teacher understood her concerns and assigned her to a group that she could comfortably work in.

> Yes. They always put me in a group of females and she always asks me if it is OK to and to sit here or there if it is ok to do this and that (Participant # 4).

Participant 5 considered that the teacher's understanding of students' culture helped to establish a good learning environment, giving an example where a teacher explained the culture of Saudi students to another international student to establish a positive learning environment.

> They (teacher) understand me. For example, I make joke with my friends. If my friend from the other country, and they feel uncomfortable with my joke, the teacher explain to them this is kind of culture, this is kind culture of them, this is Ok. Don't be sad. Don't feel uncomfortable. That is kind of culture (Participant # 5).

The above quotations suggest that a better knowledge of student's culture may help a teacher to manage cultural differences in class.

When Participant 1 was asked if he viewed the cultural understanding of the teacher as an important characteristic, he insisted that effective teachers should read about and understand the different cultures of their students.

> the teachers should read about the students' cultures and understand everything because everyone has a different culture. Teacher should know about that (Participant # 1)

He was impressed with his teacher's knowledge of the Saudi traditional dance and food, telling the researcher that his teacher was aware 'about our dancing, for example *Ardah*, and our food like *Kabsa*'.

Whereas the understanding of culture was viewed as a quality of effective teachers, the participants expressed a lack of cultural understanding as a characteristic of ineffectiveness. There are certain behaviours or actions that do not fit in Saudi culture and are viewed as inappropriate. For instance, mixed-gender classes are not common in Saudi Arabia and often the classes are taught by the same gender teachers. Participant 3 negatively perceived the interacting style of a male teacher who did not consider her personal space. This is highlighted in the following quote:

> Because one teacher of mine was male and he feel free to sit beside me and to touch my hand to take a pen or pencil. I feel this attitude was not good from him (Participant # 3).

Lack of cultural understanding can also be demonstrated through misplaced humour. As mentioned in section 5.2.4, Participant 2 had an unpleasant experience where the teacher made a joke related to religion, and he found the humour of the teacher offensive. He consequently viewed having a poor understanding of culture, which may or may not directly link to religion, as being a characteristic of an ineffective teacher. And lastly, differences in cultural understanding may also be related to the concept of fairness.

### *5.4 Fairness*

All participants perceived that effective teachers should be fair, also discussing unfairness in relation to ineffective teachers. It was noticeable that those participants who perceived that they did not experience an unfair teacher had no examples to share with the researcher, while those who thought they experienced unfairness did have examples to share. The findings suggest that fairness was perceived as relevant to grading of exams/assessments and also to differences in expectations between co-teachers (Figure 5.3).

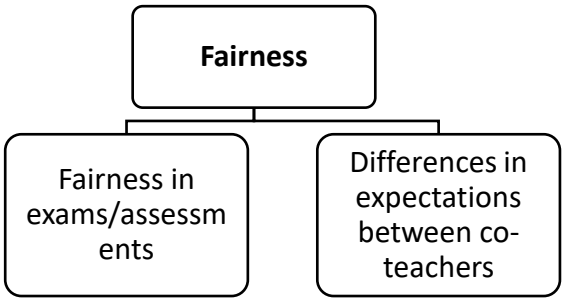



**Figure 5.3 Subthemes for 'Fairness'**

#### *5.4.1 Fairness in exam/assessment*

Unfairness was expressed in a unique way by Participant 6, who was not satisfied with the low grades she received in one of her EAP courses. She believed that an effective teacher should be flexible to pass the students if they have achieved a marginal passing score. From her experience, Participant 6 explained that the teacher could have given 2 or 3 points so she could have achieved the required level of competence.

> I experienced this with teacher... I failed the level because I miss two grades or three. And I did very well and I worked hard but I failed it and I filed an appeal and nothing changed (Participant # 6).

Participant 6 also explained that she was not sure why she was marked down and received a low score for some exams.

Sharing the view with Participant 6, Participant 5 also believed that an effective EAP teacher was flexible with their grading and gave some extra points to students who are a few points below the passing score. From his experience in the EAP classroom, he believed that effective teachers based their decisions of passing the marginal score achievers on different factors. He explained that some teachers understood that certain language skills were more important than others and therefore some points could be given to pass a student in those skills that may be less important. In his explanation, the most important skill in EAP was writing, where teachers

could be strict when marking the exam as compared to marking a listening or reading exam. The following quotation from Participant 5 highlights:

> No, until now no. I think all the students fair. Because there are some students fail and some students pass the exams. And some classes, all the students pass the exam. And the teacher always trying to help the students. Is not make it fail.
>
> R: So do you think that's why they are fair?
>
> I: I think yes. Fair and more than fair by helping. For example, if you get 14 out of 15, maybe they will give you one score to make it 15 to pass the exam but if you get 15, they will not give you 14 to fail.
>
> R: So they are lenient?
>
> I: Yes. Soft but not in all the way. For example, the important skills in the future needed in the university. For example, if you get a low score in the reading, that's ok. Listening that's means ok. But in the writing, No. I can't give you an extra marks because that's important for you. If I pass you now, the teacher in the uni, they will not pass you. Yeah.' (Participant # 5)

Participant 5 added that unfairness was demonstrated when the teacher showed signs of favouring some students over the others. From his experience in Saudi Arabia, he viewed the behaviour of a teacher as unfair when the grades of students were affected by favouritism.

> I: When they correct the exam, just pass the students she like. Other students all fail.
>
> R: Alright
>
> I: That means around 200 people, 10 people just pass, other people all fail (Participant # 5).

While this participant's experience raises questions regarding institutional systems of moderation of results, these are beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, the data presented here show that the participants framed the concept of fairness in exams/assessments from two perspectives: the teacher's flexibility in marking assessments against set criteria, and not favouring some students over others.

### *5.4.2 Differences in expectations between co-teachers*

Another issue highlighted by one participant was when a communication gap occurred between a teacher and a co-teacher giving rise to differences in expectations. Participants indicated that lack of communication between the teachers and their co-teachers made it difficult for students to have a clear idea of what was expected of them. Participant 1 believed confusion arose when

teachers did not communicate with their co-teachers, leading to unfairness and frustration in students. The following quote illustrates:

> Yes, the teacher I told you. The two teachers. Different teachers. The other teacher who was unfairly because she didn't understand that I told her that it's not from me, from the other teacher she just didn't believe me (Participant # 1).

Thus it can be inferred that effective teachers should avoid differences in expectations between co-teachers.

### *5.5 Subject knowledge and credibility*

In the category of 'Subject knowledge and credibility' an effective teacher as perceived by Saudi students was understood in two ways: knowledge and use of students' first language, and credibility in terms of qualifications, including nativeness and non-nativeness. An effective teacher understood features of students' first language (L1) and could apply that knowledge in teaching English. In contrast, an ineffective teacher was someone who was fluent in the language of one cohort of students and used that language too frequently in teaching English. Thus there is an important distinction made by participants between understanding and using L1, and also the degree and purpose of L1 use (section 5.5.1). The credibility aspect was also related to teachers' nativeness or non-nativeness and to their qualifications (section 5.5.2). Figure 5.4 represents subthemes for Subject knowledge and Credibility.

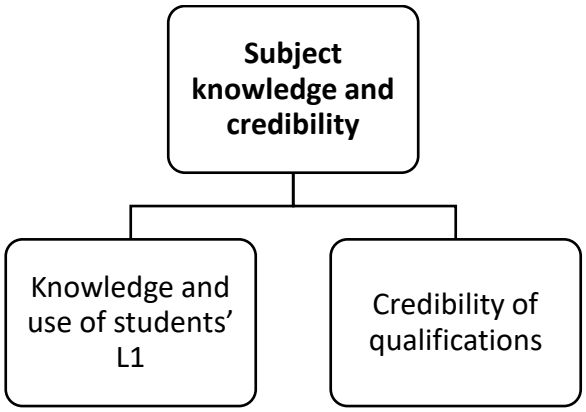



**Figure 5.4 Subthemes for 'Subject knowledge and credibility'**

#### *5.5.1 Knowledge and use of students' L1*

All participants agreed that it was not important for effective English teachers to know students' first language. In fact, it was often perceived as a negative aspect because participants felt less connected to the classroom community when a teacher fluently spoke the language of

a majority of students in a class. For instance, participant 2 recounted his experience of being isolated when the teacher communicated through the language of other international students. It was difficult for him to follow the teacher and he felt disengaged during the lesson. He gave an example of a class which he attended in Australia that had a majority of students from one nationality who spoke the same language. Coincidently the teacher spoke the same language of the students. He explained that the teacher and the students spoke and joked in their language other than English and he felt completely isolated in the lesson.

> Sometimes when there a lot of students from the same nationality or, what do you say.. the same language. […] And if the teacher knows that language, the teacher speak in that language too so I don't, students don't understand what they say even when the teacher when they laugh: what they laughed about (Participant #2).

Discouraging the idea of speaking students' language in class, Participant 6 also believed that an effective teacher should not use students' native language in EAP class to teach English. She had a bad experience in one of the EAP classes she attended and had to leave the course as she felt that English was taught in Chinese. Since the Chinese teacher was targeting Chinese students by speaking in their language, the non-Chinese students did not feel comfortable and felt isolated. The participant explained that when the teacher was asked by non-Chinese students to avoid the use of some students' language (Chinese), the teacher ignored the request and suggested the participant be respectful of Chinese students' needs.

> Yeah I study EAP… the teacher was from I think __. Most of the students were from China. I was only the one not from China. So she speaks Chinese with other students. Translate the word in the Google translator for the students. And when they speak, 'they say be polite, there is another student. She can't understand'. I studied there just 5 weeks and then I stopped (Participant # 6).

Similarly, Participant 2 expected to use only English in the EAP class and in his perspective, effective EAP teachers should encourage their students to speak only English in class. Even in certain instances when he could not understand the meaning of words, he favoured the use of a dictionary over the teacher's use of L1.

> No I will not allow him to speak Arabic because I prefer to hear it by in English even if I didn't understand it, I will translate it one or two words by my phone. I will translate the word from English to English. If I didn't understand it I will translate to Arabic. That's all. But encouraging students to speak by their own languages, I think that as a negative because he encourages the students to speak by their own languages (Participant # 2).

Participant 1 believed that it was not important for a teacher to know his native language however, the use of some Arabic words was not a problem. The following quotes highlight this: 'I don't expect that from the teacher but few words is not a problem' (Participant #1).

Participant 5 shared similar ideas with Participant 1 and believed that the limited use of students' language makes learners comfortable in class. He believed that a teacher's use of basic vocabulary words in the student's language helps in establishing a comfortable environment for students at the beginning of a new class term. In addition, he believed that understanding the language of students is only important for teachers who have to teach low-level EAP classes.

> If you know a little bit. For example, Asalamualikum in Arabic, Kaif halek, shukran, Afone, that's fine because the student will feel comfortable: "Ahh, he knows my culture so he will understand me so I can understand him. And the teacher who is a smart teacher will learn this language to make it like in the first expression for the students. When the coming the new students today, for example, the first day of class English and the coming students from different country and they start directly in the English way. They will be scared because different country, different language they.. ah surprise because they didn't know what the teacher say. Exactly in the elementary level. But when they come and say "Oh welcome", "Asalamulaikum, kaifahaluk, shukran", "Nihau" in Chinese or "yeah" in Korean the student will feel little bit comfortable. Yeah (Participant # 5).

Participant 3 did not think that understanding students' language is important for effective teaching, but she explained that sometimes knowing the students' language helps in addressing students' problems. At the end of the interview, when participants were asked to write anything further they wanted the researcher to know about effective teachers, Participant 3 wrote an example of an effective teacher who understood the language of Saudi students. She mentioned the letters V, P and B which were hard for Saudi students to pronounce. The teacher who Participant 3 perceived was effective understood this problem and addressed it with Saudi students.

> It is not important if they know my language but if they can know the students language they can understand their weakness in speaking. For example, in Arabic we don't have the alphabet V most of Saudi students they did not pronounce it good also P and B. I remember one teacher was trying to correct one of Saudi students she said p like Pentagon not Bentagon (Participant # 3).

Participant 2 highlighted that effective teachers not only use English in class but also encourage students to speak English inside and outside the classroom to facilitate students' speaking skills.

> In some courses, they prohibit speaking in your own language in class even if the all class speak, you are prohibited to speak your language. […] I remember some classes in program they say "do not speak" .. or "say only English" or "speak by English even in the library" "Speak by English in lounge". Unless you are in dining room or you in the kitchen you can speak by your own language. Like I remember sometimes we escape outside to speak by our language (Participant # 2).

From the results above, it is evident that Saudi students did not perceive teachers' understanding of students' language as important because using the language of a few students may disadvantage other students in a class. However, speaking a few words of target students' language can make students feel comfortable in the class. The difference between understanding students' language and using students' language is worth mentioning here. The data suggest that understanding students' language could help address students' needs. However, all Saudi participants preferred teachers and students to speak only English in the EAP class in Australia.

#### *5.5.2 Credibility of qualifications*

According to participants, the credibility of a teacher closely relates to the teacher being native or non-native. This was discussed in section 4.3.1 in relation to participants' experiences in Saudi Arabia, where the view held by all was that native speaker teachers (NESTs) had credibility and non-native speaker teachers (NNESTs) did not. However, their experiences in the very different Australian context caused them to change their views.

The participants all had experience of studying English with both NESTs and NNESTs, and could therefore compare their experience of learning English with both types of teacher, and also across their two different contexts of English language learning – one EFL and the other ESL. They also had experience of learning English with unqualified NESTs (volunteer/tutor) in Australia, who they compared unfavourably with qualified NNESTs.

Participant 2 perceived some native speaker teachers in Australia to be ineffective: 'not having the qualification to teach English but they teach English because English is their language'. Participant 2 held a negative attitude towards a NEST who was considered incompetent to teach English.

> I really hate because he is teaching English because he knows English, he is not like Bachelor in teaching. He is teaching because he is a native speaker (Participant # 2).

Participant 5, who was not satisfied with the way English was taught in Saudi Arabia by non-native speakers, also discussed that not everybody who could speak English knows how to

teach, and that sometimes a NEST may be unable to deliver knowledge to students. In the above quotes, Participants 2 and 5 highlighted that effective teachers should have the qualifications to teach EAP. They highlighted the qualification of teachers to emphasize that not all NESTs are effective.

When the researcher asked participants about their perception of teacher effectiveness in Australia, participants believed that it was not important for an effective teacher to be a native speaker of English. This is highlighted in the following quote:

> For the effective teacher, it is not necessary to be native it is enough to be fluent with good pronunciation (Participant # 2).

Contrary to his views regarding non-NESTs teaching in Saudi Arabia, Participant 5 explained that it was not imperative for an effective teacher in an Australian EAP class to be a native speaker of English. When questioned, he answered:

> No. Anyone can teach English if you speak English very good, very fluently. If you speak English very fluently that means you can and you know the teaching method, how to teach, both is important. If you know English very well and you know how to teach, its ok you can teach. And how to teach doesn't mean how to deliver your words or how to deliver your knowledge that means a lot of things to do. Not just saying the words or saying sentences (Participant # 5)

Participant 3 also viewed that it was not important for an effective teacher to be a native speaker of English, explaining that in her perspective, 'for good teacher, it is not necessary to be native, it is enough to be fluent with good pronunciation'. Participant 1 also thought an effective teacher could be from any part of the world and that nativeness did not matter: 'No, it is ok. There are teachers who are from Greek, China, USA, (that is) not a problem'.

Participant 4 gave an example of an effective English teacher from Saudi Arabia who was NNEST when researcher asked if it was important for an effective teacher to be a native speaker of English.

> Not native speakers. Speakers were from home. It's Saudi boy but he is like a professional speaker in English (Participant # 4).

The above quotes explain how the students' perceptions of an effective teacher needing to be a NEST changed after arriving in Australia. Learning in two different contexts had given them the opportunity to learn from both NESTs and NNESTs in Saudi Arabia and Australia and to evaluate different aspects of their teaching. Participants valued the pedagogical qualifications

and skills of their NNESTs and were dissatisfied with NESTs who had not learned how to teach English to international students.

### *5.6 Teaching methods*

The 'methods of teaching' attribute of teacher effectiveness comprised three distinct aspects for the Saudi students in this study: use of technology, group work preferences, and teaching from a textbook (Figure 5.5). As will become apparent, students' views on all three of these aspects either link directly back to their prior learning experiences or carry some cultural undertones.

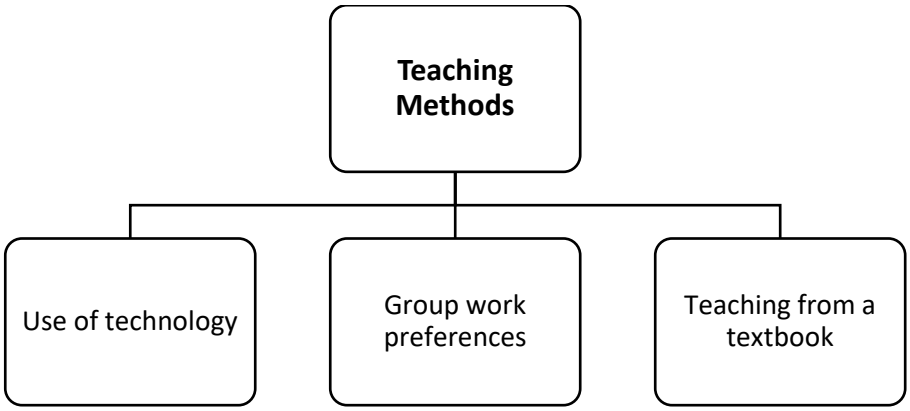



**Figure 5.5 Subthemes for 'Teaching methods'**

#### *5.6.1 Use of technology*

For Saudi participants, use of technology meant using computers, electronic dictionaries and electronic books to assist their studies. Two participants did not see the role of technology in EAP as important. They associated their opinion with their own learning style and believed that they learned better without the use of technology; they learned better from books than screens.

> R: Do you think the use of technology is important in the class?
>
> I: For me no. Because I like books as you know and I like writing by hand. Writing by hand that help brain to remember words and things and technology for me doesn't work at all (Participant # 1).

Similarly, Participant 5 preferred learning without the use of technology due to his preferred learning style. He argued that tactile loss and technology glitches may result in failure to learn effectively.

> I: I learn in different way. I learn from the [text]book and also I learn from the technology from the laptop, Ipad, the iPad, yeah. I think [text]book is good to write notes to write something to write to do the teacher highlight, to translate some

> words if you don't know and is good to write information more and more and explain it with different colours. But in the technology there is not all the iPad, not all the technology you can do it what you do it in the book.
>
> R: humm Yeah.
>
> I: and if the technology has some problem that means you will lose the information. Yeah, (Participant #5).

Participant 5 preferred the teacher to assist him with his learning and avoided the use of an electronic dictionary. He believed that an effective teacher should assist students and perceived the teacher as an important figure who should present all information needed by students. He believed that an effective teacher helps a student by assisting them in finding the meaning of a word rather than depending on electronic dictionaries. His quote indicates that he preferred the teacher as the sole provider of information.

> We use dictionary at classroom but not everyone because the teacher was like a dictionary. If I found some word I didn't know the meaning, just I said to the teacher 'What does it mean of this word? She explained to me and she gives me some example about it (Participant # 5).

The above quote from the Participant 5 suggests that the opportunity to use a dictionary was provided by the teacher but the participant preferred a teacher rather than a dictionary to check word meanings. This suggests that while the participant understands the role of teacher as a facilitator, he still views the teacher as a central figure to support students' learning. The notion of perceiving the teacher as the sole provider of knowledge may have been established as a result of his previous classroom experience in the Saudi context. This further suggests that the pre-established perceptions of effective teachers in the Saudi context did play a role in his perceptions in Australia, and that transition from a teacher-centred classroom to a student-centred classroom may have influenced the notion of teacher effectiveness. To elaborate this point, a teacher in an Australian EAP classroom may encourage dictionary skills as an important facet of learner autonomy. This strategy, however, may be perceived differently by a student who is used to a context where the teacher plays a dominant role in the learning process and students rely on the teacher's knowledge (teacher-centred classroom). Participant 6 viewed an effective teacher as a 'dictionary' suggesting that an effective teacher was a source of knowledge that he relied on and expected to be actively involved in the learning process. These differences in teachers' and students' perceptions in relation to the use of resources in classroom to support learning may appear small but sometimes may significantly influence students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness.

All the classrooms observed consisted of a whiteboard and TV. It was observed that students found it difficult to read information on the TV screen as the text could not be adjusted to adapt to the students' need. The teacher was also unable to use the solid surface of the whiteboard which when accompanied by the projector can provide a display surface. In the presence of a projector, teachers can use a projector and whiteboard for projection and dry-erase in an accessible way by speaking and highlighting information with writing and drawing at the same time. Some students did not talk about their experiences of how technology could help them in learning effectively due to the absence of projectors or interactive whiteboards.

Participant 2 had a mixed view and initially stated that technology was important but then described from his experience that the traditional way of writing on the whiteboard helped him learn better. He explained that there were times when he could not understand his teachers through PowerPoint slides, so the teacher adopted the traditional method of using the white board. Thus Participant 2 believed the use of technology was not always helpful:

> R: Do you think the use of technology is important in the class?
>
> I: Yes. Not ..always. Yes I really miss some technology that we used to have. Umm some technology that like helpful that make students more active, have more attention to the teacher. If you want to understand the teacher and you couldn't because they, teachers, don't know no way to explain it unless he writes on the board white board and that's it but the easy way is to understand not even by slide.. something like he explain it previously, understand that, he erase it and explain it by another way, erase it (Participant # 2).

Participants 6 and 3 both had the experience of the teacher using audio and video clips to assist students' learning and thought that an effective teacher should use such technology. Both participants, however, believed it was not important to have a TV in class.

> They have to use the smartboard to show us video / to teach us pronunciation. And to show us some TED talk. TED talk usually help us (Participant 6).
>
> They use the technology they show the videos to explain everything. We use different media to understand (Participant 3).

The findings from students' interviews and observations imply that the attitude of the participants who had the opportunity to learn from teachers who adopted a variety of technology was different from the participants who were not taught using technology. Those students who were taught by teachers who adopted technology were able to explain different usages and thought it was important for an effective teacher to use technology in the classroom. The participants who had basic equipment (TV) were unable to explain how technology could

be placed in practice to make learning more meaningful to them, and said they preferred traditional methods, associating that preference with their own learning style.

### *5.6.2 Group work preferences*

The participants' perceptions of the usefulness of group work were also revealed in the interview. All the participants were satisfied with the use of group work in the classroom. These Saudi students valued the effectiveness of classroom activities in which they were asked to work in groups by their teachers. They seem to have sufficiently adapted themselves to the EAP culture in Australia and perceived those teachers effective who assigned group work.

Participant 3 valued the significance of the group work as she perceived that it was a way of supporting students' learning. She believed that sometimes the student could only understand half of the lesson and that the other half of the lesson could be facilitated by group work that gives students the opportunity to interact and support each other's learning.

> I think it's important because some students don't understand everything in the class. They can understand maybe half of the lesson. So we can help each other (Participant # 3).

In the quote above, Participant 3 also highlights that through group work, students could offer help to each other by transferring knowledge, which is possible through collaborative learning. Participant 4 made a similar point:

> Yeah I like it. I like it because when I work in group we support each other. And everyone come with like new idea, new solution, you know. Yeah we help each other. I think it's good way to learn (Participant # 4).

Participant 6 specifically commented on the value of group work as a way to foster speaking in English:

> Because when we have group work specifically with international students like if I work with students other than my country. I have to speak in English so it make us speak and try to talk in English. Try to speak in English (Participant # 6).

The same point was made by Participant 2, linking group work interaction with having fun and engaging a variety of student-centred activities.

> I prefer student-centred classroom will be better to make class more fun to increase the students' interaction with each other to make more activities like for example searching words, or writing exercise different and what I mean by writing exercise. I have a good example of writing exercise, speaking, listening at the same time (Participant # 2).

Bringing together the two aspects of collaborative support and opportunity to enhance communicative skills, Participant 5 explained precisely how he benefited from group work:

> …we have tutorial. That means I can organise my idea. I can discuss my ideas with students and that means I can learn from them and I can teach them as well. So if you have group work you will communicate more and the students will feel comfortable to talk with other students (Participant # 5).

While all participants perceived group work to be a significant part of learning English, the issue of the composition of the group, was highlighted by three participants. Participant 1 perceived group work to be effective but held a negative view about it if it consisted of international students from one country. He expressed that he felt uncomfortable working in a group comprised of one majority.

> If there are like many students from one country, I did not like that but if students from many countries I like that and I like to share ideas and make friendship (Participant # 1).

> I: Maybe when I didn't enjoy the groups. I will give you some examples. In my class was many Chinese students and.. I can't enjoy their group because they are from same countries and I wasn't welcome to join their groups…I am just the only Saudi (Participant # 1).

Participant 2 highlighted the same issue of group composition. He also found it hard to take part in group activities when the other students were all from one country: 'They all speak the same language. You don't understand anything.' He believed that group work is effective when the group is composed of students from different nationalities: 'if they not from the same nationalities'.

In the observation sessions, the researcher observed that the students were sitting in pre-assigned groups. Where the group consisted mainly of students from one country, the group members felt comfortable to speak in their first language, which did not allow learning opportunity for the student who could not speak the language of the group. However, the teacher kept reminding students to use English when interacting with each other. The teachers allowed sufficient time for the group activities and monitored the progress of each group. Across the various classes, the groups comprised five or six students with a majority of them from China. It was observed that Chinese students lacked interest in participation in the discussion and were engaged in writing during the group work activities, while Saudi students were actively participating in group discussions and also in the group reporting back session.

When the participants were asked if they enjoyed working in a group of Saudi students, participants primarily responded in terms of gender. Two participants reported that they were happiest working with the same gender and would avoid working with the opposite gender. Participants 2 and 4 had no issue working with male or female students, explaining that they felt comfortable interacting with any student of either gender. Participant 4 did not feel shy to work with male students and expressed her willingness to work in a group as she thought that the classroom was a place to learn, share ideas and help others.

> No, No. I don't have any problems to talk with them about our study or the English class because we are here to, like, help each other and to make, like, practice and we are here to learn English and not to be in the corner (Participant # 4).

Participant 3 avoided working with male students and believed that the teacher was understanding towards her preference about working with females. She believed that an effective teacher understands students' preferences and their comfort zone when learning in the class:

> I haven't worked with male because the teacher was respectful. She always put me with females (Participant # 3).

Similarly, Participant 6 also felt uncomfortable with Saudi male students and reported that the teacher would change the group or change the partner in case of pair group activities. She also expressed that the teacher understood the Saudi culture and would let Saudi female students choose the partner for pair or group work. The following quote illustrates that:

> Yes, they understand that. Sometimes they changed the partner or group (Participant # 6).

#### *5.6.3 Teaching from a textbook*

It was observed and also reported by the Saudi students that all their EAP courses have a textbook. Teachers who teach from a textbook were deemed as effective by participants as they found the course more structured and planned when they had a textbook or a course book. The use of a textbook further influenced students' perceptions of effective English teachers because all their past experience made them believe that an effective teacher used a textbook to teach students. To have a course book made them feel that the teacher was organised and that they had a clear structure for the course. Three out of six participants preferred a course book in order to have a clear outline. Participant 5 thought it was easy to take notes on physical books saying 'book is good to write notes to write something to write to do the teacher highlight'.

Participants 1 and 2 perceived that the structured nature of a book makes it convenient to know in advance what will be taught in chronological order. In addition, it also helps in setting clear goals and understanding the course expectations.

> It was helpful because there is a, like, plan for the study so you know what you will study. For me I like to know what I will study and I like to see the contents of the book and what I need to pass the exam and what I need to get high marks and it was like an intensive course (Participant # 2).

> I know what to prepare and put plans how to study this and the next week'… (Participant # 1)

> Maybe to make everything clear (Participant # 1).

Although it was important to have a textbook to give students an idea of the course as a starting point, too much dependence on the use of a course book was seen by some participants as possibly problematic. Participant 1 suggested that an effective teacher should not over-rely on a textbook and should give students information from other resources to fit the needs of students.

> If there are something students have to know out from book. The teacher .. the good way who go out from the book and teach students (Participant # 1).

As mentioned in section 5.6.1, Participant 5 had particularly ways of using the textbook to serve his learning needs, ways which his iPad could not support.

> 'I think [text] book is good to write notes to write something to write to do the teacher highlight, to translate some words if you don't know and is good to write information more and more and explain it with different colours (Participant # 5).

None of the participants perceived using a textbook as negative, and only Participants 1, 2 and 5 mentioned adapting the course book in order to tailor the provision of information according to student needs. Given that Saudi students are taught from a textbook in EAP courses in Saudi Arabia, learning without a textbook in Australia could have influenced their perceptions of effective teachers if a coursebook was not used. Hence, in Australia using a textbook offered them a sense of security and a guideline about the EAP course.

### *5.7 Chapter summary*

This chapter has reported students' perceptions of effective EAP teachers, addressing the second subsidiary research question of this study: *What are the perceived qualities of an English language educator teaching in EAP programs in Australia that contribute to Saudi students' perceived improvement of their English language proficiency?* The responses from

the participants comprised perceptions of both effective and ineffective EAP teachers, and covered the following themes related to the Barnes and Lock's (2010, 2013) framework: personality and associated qualities, communication and cultural understanding, fairness, subject knowledge and credibility, and teaching methods. These and their associated subthemes are presented in Figure 5.7.

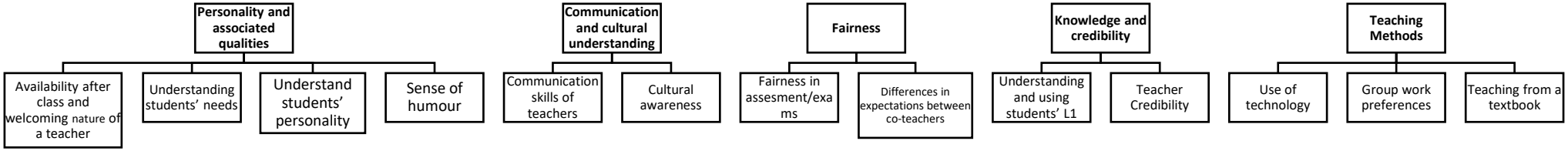



**Figure 5.7 Main themes and subthemes from the findings**

In most cases, participants agreed on the same aspects of the notion of effective teachers; however, differences of opinion were seen in some instances. Key findings are outlined in the following points.

- Saudi students considered a teacher's personality as the most important aspect of an effective EAP teacher. The participants admired teachers who were welcoming and available, who understood their individual personalities and needs, and who understood and respected their culture.
- Understanding of students' culture was deemed as an important aspect of an effective teacher as it gave students a sense of belonging in the classroom and helped them to feel comfortable and engaged in class.
- Students considered those teachers ineffective who lacked understanding about culture and joked about religion.
- Understanding students' language was not viewed as important for these Saudi students, but they considered it helpful when the teacher understands the problems associated with learning English from the perspective of Arab students.
- Teachers' use of a language that was common to a majority of students in the class was seen as isolating and neglectful of minority language students such as these Saudi students.
- Teacher awareness and use of some basic Arabic words was viewed as a sign of respect to Saudi culture which students admired.
- The concept of fairness was interpreted as directly related to assessment. For these Saudi participants, teachers who show leniency in marking assessments and exams were deemed effective.
- The Saudi students did not show any preference for the use of technology, which could be related to the fact that teachers may not have embedded the use of technology in their lessons. Therefore, the participants did not particularly associate the idea of effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the teacher with the use of technology.
- Use of group work was appreciated by all participants as long as the teacher supported the use of English even when the majority of the group had the same language. Participants admired those teachers who brought students' culture into consideration when assigning students to groups.

- The teachers who taught from a textbook were perceived effective as it gave students a clear outline of what they would be taught, and the textbook acted as a guide for students.

In the next chapter, a broad discussion of these findings will be presented, addressing both the overarching and the subsidiary research questions outlined for this study. A cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness will be proposed, and the discussion will elaborate on each component of the model based on the findings and connecting to the literature in order to provide in-depth answers to the research questions.

# Chapter Six: Discussion

## *6.1 Introduction*

This chapter will interpret the findings reported in Chapters 4 and 5 by addressing the overarching research question: *Who is an effective English language educator to a Saudi international student studying English for Academic Purposes in Australia?* To frame the interpretation, a cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness is proposed, building on the previous data analysis and on two models presented in the literature review – Barnes and Lock (2010, 2013) and the 3Ps paradigm from Standards for Foreign Language Learning (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999).

It is important to first establish the answers to the subsidiary research question: *What are the factors that influence Saudi students' perceptions of effective language educators?* Chapter 4 identified the key factors as 'learner motivation' and 'context of English language learning', and section 6.2 considers the implications of these factors in regard to the overarching question. The findings reported in Chapter 5 responded to the second subsidiary question: *What are the perceived qualities of an English language educator teaching in EAP programs in Australia that contribute to Saudi students' perceived improvement of their English language proficiency?* Sections 6.4 to 6.6 interpret those findings from a cultural perspective, shaped by the model presented in section 6.3 which constitutes the theoretical contribution of the study.

## *6.2 Motivation and context as factors influencing Saudi students' perceptions of effective language educators*

From the findings, it is evident that motivation was a key factor that influenced students' perceptions of effective language teachers, and that it was directly associated with the context of English language learning. Two participants indicated low motivation for learning English in Saudi Arabia despite needing it for their university studies. This could be related to the EFL context behaviours and pedagogical practices demonstrated by their particular English teachers, who may have been lacking in pedagogical skills and capacity to engage students. In contrast, none of the participants indicated low motivation in their Australian EAP courses. Since Saudi students are in Australia to pursue higher education and have worked hard to win a scholarship, their desire to be successful in the first phase of their overseas education is strong, particularly as success is an entry requirement for the second phase.

Newton, Ferris, Goh, Grabe, Stoller, and Vandergrift (2018) stress the importance of motivation in EAP, indicating that '[t]he relationships among motivation, engagement, and

achievement can be thought of in the following way: Motivation facilitates engagement, which, in turn, facilitates achievement' (Newton, et al., 2018, p. 24). Without engagement and achievement, students are unable to comment on teacher qualities that contribute to their learning, as evidenced by the two participants who said they could not comment on teacher effectiveness in the Saudi Arabian context because of their low motivation to learn English. In contrast, all six participants could identify teacher characteristics that contributed to or hindered their progress in the Australian context, since all had high motivation levels, and all were highly engaged in learning.

Motivation to learn also has a cultural dimension to it, and to understand this cultural dimension it is important to understand where motivation comes from. In Western cultures, intrinsic motivation is valued – meaning motivation that comes from within a learner (DeCapua, 2018; King, McInerney & Watkins, 2012). This suggests that teachers are meant to encourage processes that motivate students. For international students from collectivist societies such as Saudi Arabia, extrinsic motivation is more highly valued – meaning that, rather than focussing on personal goals or interest in the subject itself, learners are encouraged to gain knowledge in order to contribute to family, society, and the group they belong to. This helps to explain that such international students who come to Australia to pursue their education feel that they must perform well as this will reflect on the group they belong to (DeCapua, 2018, Lange & Paige, 2003).

While motivation is age-related and changes over time, positive or negative attitude toward learning a language, the teacher, the language class also plays a role in learning a language (Arnold & Fonseca-Mora, 2015; Lange & Paige, 2003). The context in which Saudi students were learning English played a role in their development of attitude towards the language and the language teacher. Learning English in an Australian context gave them the advantage of easy accessibility to native-speaker or native-like-speaker teachers and pressure to succeed in their study abroad program. The interaction of these contextual factors played a role in shaping their motivation in both cases. In Australia, the impact of the ESL immersion classroom and the need to interact in the local environment made them strongly motivated and gave them a contextual and cultural lens to view teacher effectiveness which they did not have in the Saudi context.

This contextual and cultural lens changed their perceptions of teacher effectiveness in the ESL EAP context. As section 4.3.1 demonstrated, in the Saudi EFL context native English speaker

teachers (NESTs) were preferred over non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs), while section 5.3 evidenced a complete change of view for the Australian ESL context. In Australia it was the pedagogical skills and qualifications of a teacher that were valued over and above 'nativeness'. Key to this change of view was the concept and practice of cultural awareness (section 5.3.2) within an ESL context. Teachers who demonstrated cultural awareness in their Australian EAP classrooms were seen as effective, whereas those who did not were seen as ineffective. This, along with the many references to cultural factors in participants' data, confirms the need for a cultural perspective on teacher effectiveness, as proposed at the end of the literature review (sections 2.8.1 and 2.9).

### *6.3 A cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness*

As an outcome of the literature review in Chapter 2, a cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness was proposed as a tool to inform the research processes for the study. In this section, as an outcome of the data analysis, an updated version of this model will be presented. Being based on the data, the updated version provides a better understanding of the characteristics of an effective EAP teacher for Saudi students in an ESL EAP setting.

As indicated in Chapter 2, the model combines two frameworks. It incorporates Barnes and Lock's (2010, 2013) framework of effective teacher attributes for EFL settings into the Culture Triangle put forward in the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999). To recap, the Barnes and Lock (2010, 2013) framework (introduced in section 2.2.4) is based on an extensive review of studies of teacher effectiveness and directly reflects the attributes proposed by Faranda and Clarke (2004): rapport, delivery, fairness, knowledge and credibility, organisation and preparation. The Culture Triangle (see section 2.9.4 and Figure 2.2) is also referred to as the 3Ps paradigm, where the 3Ps refer to cultural 'perspectives', 'practices' and 'products'. The 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness' proposed in section 2.9.8 located Barnes and Lock's five attributes under one or other of the 3Ps, so that they could be integrated within a cultural framework. The model also added an attribute that was deemed lacking due to the focus on EFL settings that are typically monocultural. This additional attribute was 'intercultural competence' (see section 2.9.7 for an outline of the concept), which was seen as an essential underpinning feature of teacher effectiveness in ESL settings (2.8.1).

In the updated version of the cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness, two changes have been made. First, in the literature reviewed on 'rapport' (section 2.3), it was noted that

‘personality’ was generally seen as a broader term than rapport, and that more studies referred to personality than to rapport (2.3.4). In the present study, as shown in Chapter 5, participants also highlighted personality more frequently than rapport, with the latter being represented as an aspect of personality rather than the other way around. Consequently, the updated model presented here uses ‘personality’ as the attribute name in place of Barnes and Lock’s ‘rapport’. Another change is to the notion of ‘delivery’, which was found to be too broad to clearly represent the perspectives of the Saudi students interviewed in this study. Consequently, and based on the data, delivery has been replaced by two distinct concepts: ‘teaching methods’ and ‘interaction styles’ as illustrated in section 6.5.

The Chapter 2 analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Barnes and Lock framework (section 2.8) was specifically related to its relevance to EAP teachers in ESL settings such as Australia. It clearly identified the need for a cultural perspective (2.8.1) to be incorporated in all of the identified attributes of effectiveness. Identifying this need led to a review of the related literature on the place of culture in language teaching (2.9). This review, together with the findings reported in Chapters 4 and 5, has in turn informed the development of the proposed ‘cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness’ as well as the discussion in the following sections.

The updated cultural model is shown in Figure 6.1 and discussed in sections 6.4 to 6.6 under the headings of perspectives, practices and products.

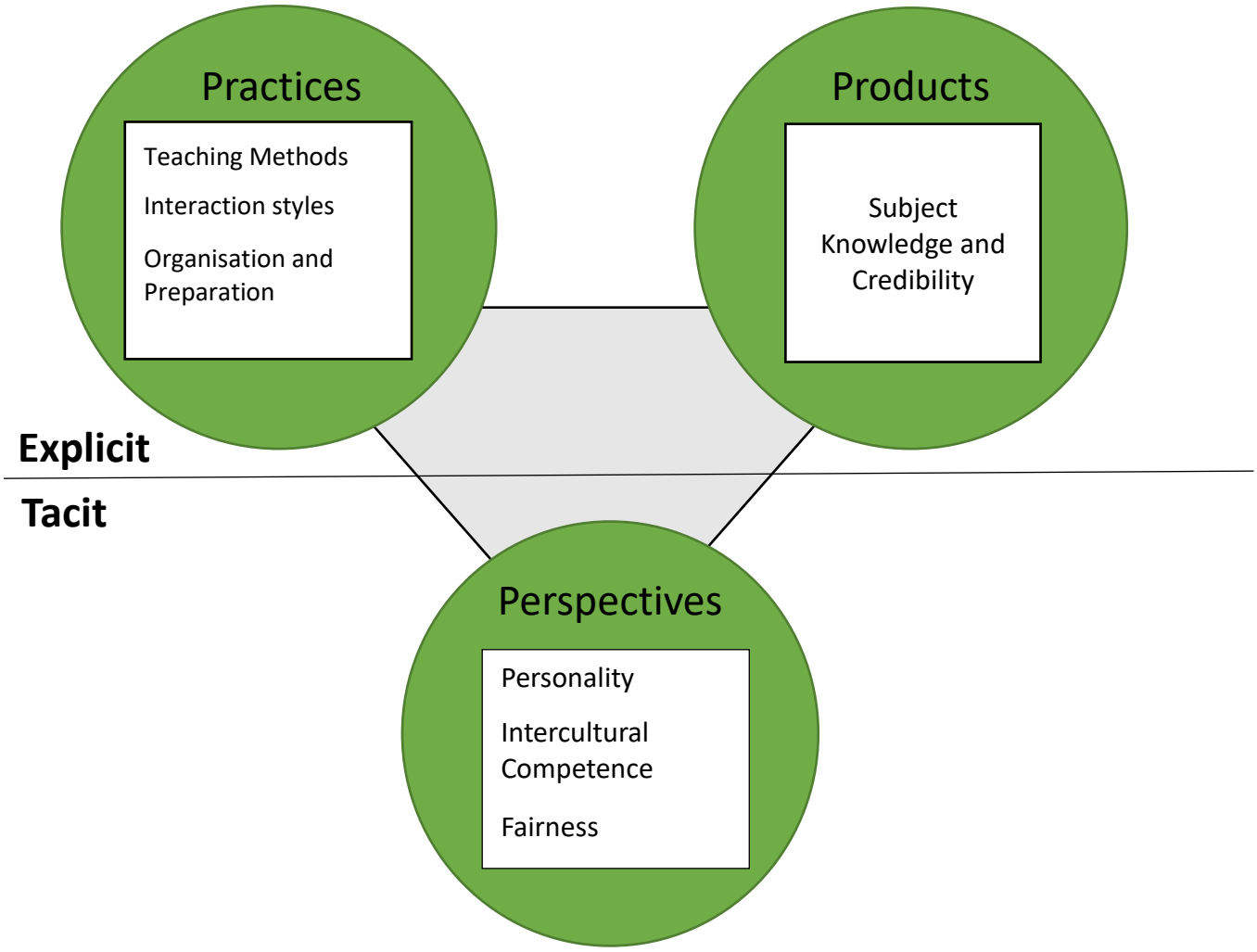



**Figure 6.1 Updated Cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness**

The model aims to promote a deeper understanding of teacher effectiveness with respect to culture, as elaborated in the following sections drawing on the data from the Saudi participants.

### *6.4 Perspectives*

The concept of perspectives in the 3Ps Cultural Triangle incorporates values and beliefs that are intangible and not visible and therefore are only accessible through interviews with those who hold the perspectives. Perspectives are important to understand because they underpin the cultural products and practices of specific groups or communities. 'The highest level of cultural exploration comes with the examination of both products and practices and how they represent a people's perspective' (Sullivan, Schmidt-Rinehart & Morris, 2011, p. 45). Within this

construct, three concepts – personality, intercultural competence and fairness (Figure 6.2) – will be discussed in light of the findings presented in Chapter 5.




**Figure 6.2 Perspectives related to EAP teacher effectiveness**

### *6.4.1 Personality*

The interviews revealed that the most important attribute that the Saudi participants perceived for an effective teacher were personality characteristics such as kindness, friendliness, respect, flexibility, and understanding students' needs. The Saudi students appreciated teachers with those qualities, referring to such attributes very frequently and with enthusiasm. The participants believed that kind and friendly teachers are sympathetic to students' needs, flexible and make themselves available to help their students after class. They not only admired these qualities in the Saudi context but also emphasised their importance in the Australian context. The interview data thus eliminated the perplexity around mixed results from the preliminary survey that showed non-Saudi international students scoring higher than Saudi students in regard to teacher personality except in the section where the ranking of attributes was asked. These findings are consistent with Raymond's (2008) and Saafin's (2005) results indicating preference among international students in general for personality attributes such as kindness, friendliness and understanding students' needs.

These findings are also consistent with the results of studies carried out in the Middle Eastern contexts which suggested that such personality traits were perceived as imperative by Arab students (Saafin, 2005). The findings similarly confirm the results of a study carried out by Al-Busaidi et al. (2016) that suggested the students from Turkey and Oman perceived personality characteristics to be of significant importance. In addition, their findings revealed that Omani students placed more emphasis on the importance of teachers' personality traits as compared to the Turkish students in an EFL context. In regard specifically to Saudi students, the findings of the present study are also aligned with the findings of the Al-Khairi (2015) and Javid (2011) studies in suggesting that teachers' personality is deemed important to Saudi learners.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that qualities besides personality were entirely disregarded from effective teaching by the Saudi participants in this study, merely that personality aspects were more pronounced in teachers whom Saudis perceived to be effective and other qualities besides personality were less pronounced. What was clear from observations was that teachers who were perceived effective by Saudi students clearly demonstrated positive personality attributes that had close connections to cultural understanding of students. For participant 5, a teacher with a good personality also has all the other admirable attributes which are closely related to teacher effectiveness (see section 5.2).

As the Saudi students in this study came from an education system which was teacher-centred, and where it was expected to maintain a distance between teacher and students, they admired the friendly nature of English teachers in Australia. Being friendly helps teachers to build rapport with their students and to tackle socio-cultural and pedagogical issues that teachers encounter in class (Green, 2020). McPherson, Kearney and Plax (2003) found that students perceived their teachers to be more credible and trustworthy when their expectations were positively violated, in other words when anticipated behaviours that were desired, preferred or appropriate were unmet. The violated action would only be noticed if the receiver perceived it as an anomaly (Dunbar & Segrin, 2012). Burgoon and Hale (1988) explained that there are occasions where a violation is not always perceived as negative by the receiver. Hence, violating the expectations is beneficial in circumstances where there is an ambiguity or where violation seems to be more relevant to the situation. For instance, if the teacher is viewed as friendlier than the students' expectation, the students would become more aware of the characteristics and qualities of the teacher. As a result, students will perceive the teacher as effective.

People from the Middle East belong to a collectivist society where in-group harmony is viewed as important and is promoted (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005; Hofstede, 1984). Culturally, Middle Eastern students' value personality attributes that contribute to good interpersonal relations (Saafin, 2005) and therefore they desire more affiliation. Saudi students highlighted that an effective teacher dealt with their problems compassionately by giving them time. In contrast, teachers who did not give their students time were specifically viewed as ineffective by two participants (see section 5.2.1) In this regard, it is important to recognise that the concept of 'time' has a cultural element to it. DeCapua (2018) explains that the students who come from cultures where relationships are emphasised, closed-time meetings and brief conversations could be very uncomfortable for students. Such meetings could make students

perceive the teacher as impersonal, disinterested and uncaring towards their students, which may lead to low satisfaction and low academic success.

Saudi students' perceptions have been developed as a result of their culture in which they socialize to build trust and perhaps that is the reason they viewed positive personality characteristics to be the most important characteristic of an effective teacher. This would also be true of many Asian cultures including Chinese; however, there are also differences between Asian cultures and Middle Eastern cultures. In China for instance, only one child per family has been permitted for several decades, which has affected the social dynamics of the family, even though Confucianism, which stresses the importance of family, is still regarded highly in China. This complicates the nature of the Chinese collectivist society and makes it qualitatively different from others. In an Australian EAP class where there are many Asian students particularly from China (as in the preliminary study), students also view the teacher as a source of knowledge and a figure who they highly respect. This has become a part of a moral standard. Huang and Brown (2009) state:

> The teachers do not only teach the students' knowledge but also help students choose their future careers. As a Chinese saying goes 'One day's teacher, a lifetime master,' which means students should always respect the teacher no matter how long he teaches them. Teachers can be very influential in Chinese students' lives. (Huang & Brown, 2009, p. 645)

Such a moral standard held by a majority of students in the class may shape students' perceptions of the teacher's expression of personality through behaviours such as respect and kindness and use of humour. These topics were deeply considered by the interviewees.

The above section has broadly discussed 'personality' in the light of the findings. The use of humour was the only aspect related to personality which was viewed ineffective by the Saudi participants (5.2.4). Furthermore, the use of humour, which was a topic deeply considered by the interviewees when presenting their views on teacher ineffectiveness with regard to lack of cultural understanding. Although the findings indicate that 'the use of humour' was interwoven in 'personality' (5.2) and 'cultural awareness' (5.3.2) attributes, it will be discussed as part of 'personality' attribute for the sake of clarity and consistency.

#### *6.4.1.1 Use of humour*

When Saudi students were asked in the interviews about the characteristics of ineffective teachers, they consistently recalled teachers who demonstrated humour in class, inappropriately as they saw it. This they perceived as negative, despite acknowledging the

teacher's likely intention to engage students or 'change the mood' (Participant 5). Two main reasons were provided by the participants for their negative perceptions.

First, demonstrating humour was viewed as a waste of learning time. This could be explained by the fact that international students have limited time to complete their studies due to student visa restrictions. Any element or activities that may not be seen as relevant to study related matters, may be viewed by students as a waste of time (Shepherd & Rane, 2012). To understand the cultural aspect of international students, Shepherd and Rane (2012) stated:

> Since the vast majority of Arab international students are sponsored, they are well aware of time constraints within which they need to complete their studies. As a result, any element of study that is perceived as a waste of time will be avoided. This includes activities that ordinarily would be viewed as positive, such as writing workshops or library tours. This is not to say that these activities are not valued at all, but within the time constraints that Arab students have, they are not the most productive use of study time at that moment. (Shepherd & Rane, 2012, p. 6)

A second reason provided by the participants was that the jokes told by perceived ineffective teachers led to feelings of hurt and anger if they have a cultural or religious dimension to them. In discussing the use of humour in the lesson, some Saudi participants suggested several factors that teachers should consider when using humour; for example, relevance and correct timing. This issue is central to the notion of effective teachers because ineffective teachers according to the Saudi students did not take the aforementioned aspects into consideration. Whereas humour is known to facilitate learning (Petraki & Nguyen, 2016; Wagner & Urios-Aparisi, 2011), ignoring such factors leads to negative consequences. Looking closely at the data, it is clear that Saudi students held negative perceptions about the use of humour wherever teachers used 'cultural-based' humour, a terminology used by Schmitz (2002). In other words, the students' negative perceptions arose from the fact that some of their teachers' jokes were based on insufficient knowledge of culture and society to generate positive outcomes. The Saudi students believed that ineffective EAP teachers lacked knowledge of Saudi culture and society that led to negative outcomes when using humour. As Wulf (2010) stated 'one must know who and what in a culture is lampooned and how' (Wulf, 2010, p. 159). Due to the geographical location of Australia, it is not a frequent practice for teachers in Australia to travel to the Middle East. Therefore, lack of cultural knowledge related to the use of humour offers some reason as to why Saudi students encountered cultural-based jokes in the classroom and consequently experienced stress.

The findings of this study reflect what Wanzer et al. (2006) reported about the types of inappropriate jokes. Those jokes that are against the favourable opinions of the students will be perceived as inappropriate and negative by students. Consistent with Wanzer et al's (2006) findings, the perceptions of Saudi students were influenced by cultural norms which was why humour was viewed as inappropriate in their ESL context.

Yue et al. (2016) suggested that could further explain participants' negative perceptions of their teachers' use of humour, namely that humour in class is not admired by collectivist societies. 'Sense of humour' has been identified as a least preferable attribute that Saudi students perceive for an effective teacher even outside the EAP context. For example, Al-Jobair and Alsarheed (2016) noted that Saudi students in Saudi Arabia preferred a teacher who does not demonstrate humour or tell jokes, expecting their teachers to be respectful to them and communicate effectively with their students. Similarly, Al-Mohaimeed (2018) found that Saudi students agreed that sense of humour or telling jokes was the least preferred attribute, and explained that the students believed demonstrating humour does not promote learning and professionalism. Both of these studies indicate that Saudi students believe 'sense of humour' is not a positive attribute of an effective teacher, across different contexts and areas of study. This gives insight to Saudi students' perceptions that an effective learning environment requires the teacher to focus on study material and deliver the knowledge in a respectful and safe environment.

EAP courses are intensive and Saudi students invest their time by staying away from their home country. They view EAP as an important and critical step in their education journey, and thus an intense situation, as highlighted by one of the participants. While Westerners relate the concept of humour in classrooms with positivity and engagement, collectivist society members emphasise the importance of seriousness. Learning is an activity that is viewed by Arabs as serious, which was particularly notable in Participant 5's comment, 'I am coming to class to learn; this means teach me to learn. […] Teaching time, teaching time. Eating time, eating time'. Learning English language to support subsequent professional and/or academic learning in higher education may also be viewed as an even more serious activity compared to other purposes for language learning. EAP classes are regarded as serious endeavour unlike General English classes where students expect a fun environment for learning to support interest and lower risk or anxiety.

In addition, the situation may be different in the context where Saudi students are studying English in their home country. Some studies have highlighted Saudi students' admiration for

humour by teachers. Fadel and Al-Bargi (2018) noted that Saudi students in intermediate English level were more comfortable with the use of humour by their teachers than the beginner students and further suggested that the most effective type of humour perceived by the Saudi students involved play, irony and self-deprecating jokes. In the Western EAP classroom, however, where teacher and students come from different cultural backgrounds, teachers may run the risk of offending students with their humour (Alabdali, 2017) which may lead to situations that can be fraught with tensions (see section 5.2.4)

Overall, this study clearly indicated that the Saudi participants felt that humour that is inappropriately demonstrated by teachers was not ideal for facilitating learning in the classroom and was the mark of an ineffective teacher. This indicates that attributes that appear positive to the teacher could have very different meanings for students. In addition, their demonstration and application may appear to be unproblematic but as we can see from the above discussion the use of humour and the cultural understanding of the teacher are tied together in understanding the notion of teacher effectiveness from the students' perspective.

### *6.4.2 Intercultural competence*

Intercultural competence is an important aspect of effective teaching in culturally diverse classrooms, to the extent that Byram, Nichols and Stevens (2001) suggest that those working in such an environment not only need skills that help in negotiating differences but to use those skills in a way that provides a rich and rewarding classroom environment for students. Interculturally competent educators are not only in a good position to use teaching methods that best address the needs of diverse learners but can also build rapport and are able to empathise with diverse learners (Murray, 2016), which is relevant to the issue of effective teachers.

The Saudi students in this study recognised and admired intercultural competence in their teachers and perceived it as a characteristic of effective teachers, comprising both cultural awareness and respect for cultural differences (see 5.3.2). Saudi students referred to the cultural awareness of an effective teacher in terms of someone who respects their culture and understands their religion. The students admired those teachers who understood their culture, giving examples such as the teacher making provisions if they were late or had to leave class for a short period of time to observe their religious duties (prayers). An ineffective teacher was viewed as someone who violated students' perceptions of culturally accepted behaviours and demonstrated behaviours that conflicted with the religious or cultural beliefs of the participants.

All participants gave some examples of teacher behaviours that were inappropriate in their culture and associated these with the notion of ineffective teachers. These were mainly to do with interaction style and are discussed in section 6.5.4. Overall, the findings of the study suggest that both male and female students categorized effective teachers as those who showed understanding of and responsiveness to students' culture by demonstrating their intercultural competence either verbally or non-verbally.

However, if an educator lacks understanding of students' culture, then the cultural principles, practices and products underpinning his or her teaching of English could be viewed very differently by students belonging to a different culture. Therefore, in an EAP classroom, it becomes paramount for educators to not only understand the culture of the academic English they are teaching, but also to understand the 3Ps of students' culture to ensure that students' expectations are met. Furthermore, if an EAP teacher has intercultural competence through understanding the 3Ps of students' culture, many conflicts in relation to perceptions on the notion of teacher effectiveness could be reconciled between teachers and students. The Saudi students' high emphasis on teachers' knowledge of students' culture as a critical attribute to the notion of effective EAP teachers suggests that future research should consider the teacher's cultural knowledge of the students as an important aspect in studying teacher effectiveness in EAP especially when it is taught in an ESL context.

Intercultural competence is important for teachers from the perspective of students because Nordby (2008) argued that if there are different stakeholders, different people with different interests and different understandings coming together, there needs to be some connectedness of meaning and there has to be a place where people understand the position of the other, before anything purposeful could happen. This requires a degree of intercultural competence. It is challenging to move the conversation forward or progress the teaching circumstance, if people are not on the same page. Being on the same page does not mean everybody has to be at the same position or agree on the same position; it just means understanding others' positions in relation to your own (Nordby, 2008). There may be scenarios when teachers need to be explicit about institutional purposes, about their positions, and there needs to be some form of negotiation with students in a learner-centred environment to be able to achieve the purposes and outcomes that the teacher, the students and the institutions all approve.

If no common understanding of cultural perspectives is negotiated then the risk is that students could feel excluded from classroom practices because of certain elements that are not

recognized or respected, for instance, their values, expectations, perspectives (see section 5.2.4 for examples from participants 2, 3 and 6). Therefore, it is critical to form a third space where persons (teachers and students) may have the opportunity to step into another culture and understand and negotiate their identities and culture in order to move away from the concept of fixed positions and the 'othering' of participants in the classroom setting (Karanja, 2010).

A key factor in achieving such a third space is the development of intercultural competence not only among teachers but also as part of the curriculum for international EAP students. One challenge to this process is that the EAP teacher in Australia aims for a small power distance in the classroom, whereas Saudi students and the majority of their East Asian classmates in the observed classrooms come from societies in which there is a large power distance. For example, the views of Chinese students and students from Hong Kong very much contrast with what Western studies have suggested of effective teachers. Highlighting the dissimilarities, Ko, Sammons and Bakkum (2016) stated:

> the effective teacher is seen as a figure of authority, morality and benevolence, conforming to the Confucian concept of 'ren' and the social hierarchy of teachers in Chinese society. It is also noted that the features of effective teaching in Hong Kong address the learning processes understood to be important in the cultural context of Chinese learners in their focus on providing many structured tasks, drills and memorisation of materials before deep learning is addressed; plus a very strong priority is given to promoting students' attainment in external examinations and tests by teachers in the Chinese culture context. (Ko, Sammons & Bakkum, 2016, p. 19)

This may also be the case with Saudi students who belong to a collectivist society. In the classroom, teachers of small power distance cultures ask for feedback and interaction, whereas in large power distance cultures teachers lecture (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2011). Therefore, the concept of 'respect' may be very different for Australian teachers. While in Western culture, asking questions of teachers in the classroom shows student engagement, such behaviour would be deemed disrespectful in a classroom in China, as in Saudi Arabia.

In an ESL context, Playsted (2019) reported an instance where more advanced students were doing the work for their classmates who had lower levels of English proficiency, holding their pencils and completing their work. This caused a concern for a Western teacher who found it challenging to evaluate the lower level students' performance and could not understand the logic behind the behaviour of advanced students completing work for their beginner classmates. These behaviours could be explained by an individualistic and collectivist mindset. Playsted (2019) explained:

> After some more reflection and reading, it occurred to me that my individualist mindset was having trouble coming to terms with the collectivist actions of my students. To me, they were hindering an individual student's progress. To them, perhaps they were viewing class progress as a holistic effort, and by helping someone else they were helping the group as a whole. Rather than singling out or reprimanding the students (which would only have confused and upset them), I spent more time at the beginning of each lesson making expectations and plans clear to the whole class before we began an activity. (Playsted, 2019, p. 14)

This is an example of one aspect of intercultural competence being developed through reflection on students' cultural perspectives.

Another aspect of developing intercultural competence relates to Australian EAP teachers' encounters with 'mute classes' or 'passive learners', which make them question their teaching abilities (Belchamber, 2016; Midgley, 2010; Orth, 2015; Richardson, 2012). This has occurred with Saudi students who have remained passive learners in their EFL context and regard the teacher as a figure to be much respected. They share these features with Chinese students. In discussing the problems faced by Australian and other Western EAP teachers in China, Yi (2016) believes that in that society, keeping a low profile is deemed as an admirable quality of a citizen. The same is applicable in the learning process. The students' and teachers' perceptions on the notion of effective teachers and effective teaching, therefore may not match due to differences in cultures. The practices that the teacher uses as a result of cultural perspectives, which may be deemed effective by Australian EAP teachers, could completely fail due to different meanings that international students and EAP teachers associate with concepts such as 'respect' (DeCapua, 2018; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2011). This is what Nordby (2008) emphasised that miscommunication arises due to differences in values, beliefs and lack of social and cultural understanding of contexts between different people. This suggests that due to different meanings given to 'respect' by Australian EAP teachers who are from a society that is individualistic in nature and students who are from collectivistic cultures, the concept of various qualities of EAP teachers from students' perspective may be influenced in different ways (see sections 5.2.4 and 5.3.2).

For example, Yi (2016) argued that integrating group work, debates and role playing would help turn students from being passive to active learners from a Westerner point of view. However, some international students, due to their prior educational experience, are accustomed only to teacher-student interaction where active listening is encouraged and participation is discouraged (Tatar, 2005). Other factors dependent on cultural perspective include face saving and identity that could make students hesitant to participate in class

(DeCapua, 2018). What may happen in the classroom is that in an effort to turn mute classes into interesting, interactive and vibrant ones, Australian or Western teachers make use of humour and group work. But the results from this study reveal that since these activities have cultural dimensions to them, they can in some cases complicate the situation if the teacher lacks intercultural competence (see section 5.2.4).

The discussion above suggests that intercultural competence is deeply important for building rapport with students. Once rapport is established, an educator can then use suitable teaching methods to address students' needs (Murray, 2016) which is relevant to the issue of effective teachers. Such educators are better able to promote what Lee and Herner-Patnode refer to as 'use of culturally responsive instruction, creation of a culturally sensitive classroom environments, and incorporation of various assessment tools' (Lee & Herner-Patnode, 2010, p. 222) which are closely related to effective teaching. The ability to assess learning in a fair manner is deemed important from students' perspective of effective teachers and will be discussed in the next section.

### *6.4.3 Fairness*

The concept of fairness was viewed as an important attribute of effective teachers in this study. For two Saudi participants, the concept of fairness was associated with the teacher's attitude to flexibility in the marking of exams. These Saudi participants perceived teachers as ineffective if they were not flexible in their grading/assessment practices. When the expectations in relation to the teacher showing flexibility in marking assessment/exams were unmet, the students perceived the teacher to be strict and linked that to being ineffective. According to the interviews, it was the grading practice of the teacher that participants deemed relevant in making a teacher effective or ineffective in relation to being fair. The system of marking in relation to the exams was important for students. However, it appeared that some of them were not familiar with the marking guidelines or the institutional policy relating to assessments, and expected flexibility where the teacher could not legitimately provide it. In support of this argument Hailikari, Postareff, Tuononen, Räisänen and Lindblom-Ylänne (2014) noted:

> ..if the students are not aware of the criteria by which they are assessed, they will not be aware of what they should do to achieve the desired goals or to improve their learning. This might also result in a perception of unequal treatment by the examiners. (Hailikari, Postareff, Tuononen, Räisänen & Lindblom-Ylänne, p. 103)

The researcher believes that the lack of awareness of the assessment criteria established the concept of unfairness that then became associated with the concept of ineffective teachers. This

is supported by Faranda and Clarke (2004) who included in their EFL category of fairness 'are flexible with grading'. The data in the present study suggests that the grading aspect which was deemed important in EFL context is also important in the ESL context.

The above results can also be explained from a cultural perspective that relates to a small-large power distance value pattern. To students accustomed to large power distance, the small-power distance in ESL settings may sometimes lead to confusion and misunderstanding which may lead to frustration. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) give a classic example that would further help to explain this. In an ESL context, teachers may expect students to call them by their first names and teachers also share their personal stories in relation to a variety of intercultural topics. However, in an assignment or a project, the students find that they have not performed well, and the teacher provides feedback addressing strengths and weaknesses. This could make students from a collectivist society upset. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) explain that the reaction could be attributed to the lack of understanding of expectations between teacher and students in relation to power-distance value patterns. When the teacher demonstrates attributes like being friendly and easy to approach, the students also expect them to be lenient when marking an exam or assessments. These are preconceived stereotypes associated with small power distance value patterns. As soon as the teacher places the large power distance role of an evaluated instructor (and from his perspective he is being a responsible teacher), it may leave you to think that this 'friendly, 'open' teacher is actually quite 'mean' and 'picky' towards the entire group. (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005, p. 64). The findings in the present study indicate that if issues of fairness are not addressed and negotiated properly, this can lead to confusion and frustration, ultimately leading to perceptions of the teacher being ineffective. If the power distance issue is negotiated well in an EAP classroom, the situations mentioned above could be avoided. The discussion above on the notion of fairness suggests that there is a cultural aspect underlying this attribute which makes a teacher effective or ineffective from students' perspective.

One participant connected unfairness with the issue of favouritism which is viewed as critical in relation to inequality in the classroom (Axelrod, 2008). Another participant associated the concept of unfairness with the lack of coordination between co-teachers when delivering an EAP course. The participant believed that he was receiving mixed messages in relation to assessment criteria from the two teachers who were sharing the teaching load. This left the participant confused about the expectations, consequently perceiving the teachers to be

ineffective and unfair as there were no clear guidelines that both teachers agreed on which left him to question teachers' ability to demonstrate fairness.

### *6.4.4 Section summary*

As indicated in the model, the notion of 'Perspectives' covers teacher attributes in relation to 'Personality', 'Intercultural competence' and 'Fairness' viewed through a cultural lens (Figure 6.2). In addition, a particular feature of personality has been identified as culturally significant to these Saudi students in terms of teacher effectiveness, namely teachers' use of humour, as shown in Figure 6.3.




**Figure 6.3 Perspectives related to EAP teacher effectiveness – expanded version**

From the discussion above on 'perspectives' the researcher believes that quality teaching occurs when the EAP teacher and students understand each other both as a person and as a member of a cultural community. When a good teacher-student relationship is established, a positive environment is developed, and this is when students start to trust their teachers. EAP teachers can then make choices on using effective practices in the classroom by respecting the learners' personality and their culture. Sowden (2007, p. 307) argued that the importance of appropriate personal qualities has always been recognised and that they are 'the key to overall success in the classroom' and in development of good intercultural competence; however, he considers that this 'fact' has been obscured over a period of time due to prioritisation of the latest techniques and methods in teaching activity. This supports the arguments that an EAP teacher's work is not limited to a pedagogical and instructional role but also a caring figure with intercultural competence who understands multiple facets of international students. Understanding the 'effective' attributes discussed in the above section may appear an unproblematic endeavour; however, they do carry various meanings for diverse learners because they involve culture. As perspectives lie beneath the iceberg (Moran, 2001), understanding attributes is challenging and complex due to their dependence on the values, beliefs, and attitudes of individuals (DeCapua, 2018). Thus, placing a cultural lens over the attributes plays a key role in understanding and explaining the students' perceptions of what

constitutes an effective and ineffective attribute' in relation to EAP teachers. The next section will discuss some of the key practices identified by Saudi students as reflecting these perspectives in relation to pedagogy in EAP classrooms.

## *6.5 Practices*

As argued in section 6.3, 'practices' are visible constructs that range from pedagogical activities to patterns of interaction and behaviours such as verbal or nonverbal communication. In other words, they help to understand what it is appropriate to do in the classroom, when and where (Dema & Moeller, 2012). In the proposed 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness', practices relate to three areas – teaching methods, interactive styles, and organisation and preparation. In this study, little data emerged relating to organisation and preparation, so it is omitted from the present discussion. However, this does not detract from its value as an attribute to be acknowledged in the model, it merely indicates the students' lack of information on that topic outside of the use of a textbook, which is included here under Teaching Methods. The features of teaching methods and interactive styles (Figure 6.4) will be discussed in the light of the findings reported in Chapter 5.

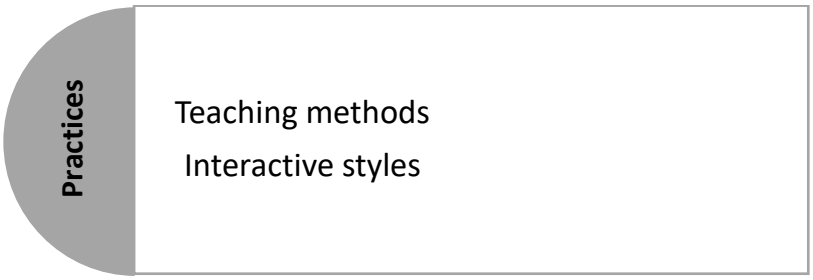



**Figure 6.4 Practices related to EAP teacher effectiveness**

### *6.5.1 Teaching methods*

In relation to methods of teaching, participants in this study emphasised group work, use of a textbook, and use of technology. These different practices used by their teachers were viewed variously by the learners.

#### *6.5.1.1 Group work*

Group work and cooperative learning are widely used practices in Western classrooms. However, Saudi students come from EFL contexts where group work is not frequently used in English language classes and students may see the role of the teacher as essentially to deliver subject knowledge. In such cases, students may view cooperative learning as a waste of time, as DeCapua (2018) explained:

> Anyone who has ever taught has most likely experienced a class where a carefully prepared lesson or activity fell flat. In diverse classrooms, lessons that don't work can be the result of a mismatch of teacher and learner assumptions about what constitutes good learning. (DeCapua, 2018, p. 107)

The results from the preliminary survey indicated Saudi students' low preference for a teacher who encouraged group work, tending to support the possibility of a mismatch of assumptions about what constitutes good learning. However, all interviewees in this study saw group work activities in class as an important part of learning if used effectively by the teachers and held positive views about teachers who encourage collaborative learning in class. This suggests that these students were adapting to the new education environment.

It was observed that the group work activities were frequently used by the EAP teachers and that students were comfortable with the idea of cooperative learning, although two participants put forward a caveat regarding the cultural composition of groups, stating that learning did not take place if students were assigned to the same language group. In the interviews, both male and female students referred to group work as an essential part of learning in the classroom and gave examples of their positive experiences in relation to working in groups. Some participants indicated that by means of group work they had the chance to interact with other international students which enhanced their learning and improved their cognitive abilities. The results are consistent with the findings from Altamimi (2014) in suggesting that Saudi students viewed group work to be effective in learning in an ESL context despite not previously being accustomed to such freedom of interaction.

Nevertheless, the interview data revealed a potential problem that the female Saudi students faced with group work. The problem was not directly related to group work itself but to the struggle of interacting with the male students, given that Saudi students come from settings where the education system is gender segregated (1.4.1). Female participants emphasized that the effective teacher was aware of cultural differences in relation to working with mixed gender groups. The female participants of this study admired teachers who respected and understood their culture and did not coerce students into working in mixed gender groups when they felt uncomfortable. These findings are consistent with Alhazmi (2013) and Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) in reporting that Saudi female students feel uncomfortable working with males in groups.

As these students in EAP were transitioning from a gender-segregated classroom to a mixed-gender classroom, these findings were unsurprising. They are consistent with Alhazmi's (2013)

study investigating the influence of gender segregation on Saudi students in the Australian context. The findings of Alhazmi's (2013) study revealed that Saudi students experienced difficulty in adjusting to the unfamiliar environment where gender segregation is not practiced, which in turn had an effect on their cultural identity. In education settings in Saudi Arabia, gender segregation is deemed as part of the religious identity which also overlaps with their cultural identity. In Alhazmi's (2013) study, the participants had fears and hesitation at the beginning of their study in Australia on the basis of gender segregation, since the education system of Australia is different from Saudi Arabia. Alhazmi (2013) explained:

> Gender segregation as a cultural practice has contributed to the fabrication of the Saudi cultural identity and it is not merely a practice or regulation that is easy to dispose. For some Saudis, the transition from gender segregation to mixed gender might be like transitioning from one religion to another (Alhazmi, 2013, p. 61).

The findings of the current study indicate that female participants in particular emphasized the importance of facilitating their learning by giving them the choice of working with the same gender. Their perceptions about effective English teachers in relation to working in gender-segregated groups could be explained by the fact that they were at the beginning stage of their education journey in Australia. Since EAP is their first step in the Australian education system, they view an effective teacher as someone who understands their culture; in other words, someone who is capable of making their transition to the new education environment as smooth as possible for effective learning to occur. Those teachers who were not aware of this cultural aspect were viewed negatively by the participants.

The issue of gender segregation was also highlighted in Saba's (2014) study of a problem faced by Saudi students in learning academic writing in an ESL context. Consistent with Saba's (2014) study, female students in the present study in particular experienced difficulty interacting in a mixed-gender classroom and also faced difficulty when taught by male educators. The present study also highlighted that female students faced more difficulty related to mixed gender issues in the classroom than male students. Similarly, in Groves's (2015) study, female students preferred female friendships with international students that facilitated development of their English language skills and avoided working with males. Almorshedi (2011) indicated that Saudi females avoided collaborating with male students in general and Saudi male students in particular. The findings of all these studies indicate that challenges in relation to mixed gender relate to the cultural aspect that Saudis are taught to avoid interaction between non-related men and women from a very early age. The findings of previous studies (Alhazmi, 2013; AlMorshedi, 2011; Groves, 2015; Saba, 2014) support the findings of the

current study that female students experience anxiety and on the basis of their experience, perceived an effective teacher to be aware of these cultural differences and responsive to them in order to better address their needs in EAP classrooms. This clearly indicates that an effective EAP educator needs to understand Saudi students, particularly the female participants' expectations, in relation to teacher effectiveness. The results from Alhazmi (2011), AlMorshedi (2011) and Groves's (2015) study provide reasoning as to why Saudi students have these perceptions and how they are developed as part of their culture.

#### *6.5.1.2 Use of a textbook*

In Australian EAP classrooms, students are expected to take responsibility for their learning and therefore, many arguments have been presented in favour of and against using textbooks in class (Menkabu & Harwood, 2014). The findings of this present study indicate that Saudi students held varying opinions (positive and negative) on the use of the textbooks. The results from the preliminary survey showed low scores, which indicates low preference towards the use of textbooks from Saudi and international students, but from the interviews it was revealed that three out of the six Saudi participants perceived the use of a textbook as important, due to their preferred learning styles.

The three Saudi participants perceived textbooks to be a central part of learning and highlighted that an effective teacher should know how to use them to facilitate learning in the EAP classroom. They stated that textbooks helped them to stay organized, gave them a plan of action, and made them feel that they were in control of their learning. Nevertheless, some participants considered that effective teachers should not overly rely on teaching from textbooks when using them in class as it may cause boredom. These views reflect the views of McGrath's (2006) learner participants in suggesting students' positive perceptions in relation to the use of a textbook as 'support' and 'guidance' while negative views include 'boredom'. In the light of the results, a balanced approach is required to make effective use of textbooks in the EAP classroom. The teachers should not completely ignore textbooks as there are some positive aspects that students associate with them.

Based on the observation sessions, some centres had prescribed books that a teacher needed to follow and cover in a particular time frame. In this regard, the teacher may have limited choice to add supplementary materials in the lesson plan to make lessons interesting. This may affect students' perceptions of an effective teacher in relation to the use of a prescribed textbook. To have a prescribed book may make a teacher appear well prepared and organised to deliver the

lesson (Tomlinson, 2010) while absence of a textbook may make a teacher appear ineffective. Lessons that follow a textbook necessarily follow the textbook writer's carefully designed plan which, from students' perspective, tends to make a teacher look organised and prepared for the lesson. As Saudi students are accustomed to have a textbook, absence of a textbook can lead students to think that there are no clear plans or guidance, which they can then attribute to the teacher being disorganised and unprepared for the lesson.

Due to the time constraints, teachers often choose to stick with textbooks that do not appeal to students which create feelings of boredom (Tomlinson, 2010) and demotivate students during the learning process. As students in the current study suggested, there needs to be a balanced approach when using a textbook and the teacher should use supplementary materials to teach, as well as developing materials themselves. Charles and Pecorari (2015) advised that EAP teachers may use their own materials when teaching EAP but this could be very challenging. Charles and Pecorari (2015) support the idea of teachers creating their own materials from a variety of sources, including the internet, to maximize the effectiveness. In creating materials, EAP teachers need to be aware of culturally sensitive content in order to suit students' needs, as Charles and Pecorari (2015) warned. No matter how relevant the material may be to the objective of a course, if it does not match students' needs and does not take students' cultural differences into account, a teacher may be viewed as ineffective by students.

Teachers need to be interculturally competent in order to make effective use of materials in a textbook and to present them in the classroom so that students can comfortably benefit from them. Certain topics and materials in the textbook may lead a teacher to demonstrate humour deliberately or unintentionally, which could make teachers ineffective especially when discussing political and religious topics as described by participants 2 and 3 in this study (see 5.2.4 Use of humour). This problem is usually tackled in EFL contexts by designing textbooks to fit local cultural norms and practices and eliminating practices that do not align with the local norms (Al-Asmari, 2008; Sulaimani & Elyas, 2018). However, this is difficult in ESL settings where students are from more than one cultural background. Careful selection and presentation of the topics is therefore critical for EAP educators in Australia especially if teachers are bound to follow a textbook or decide to go beyond the textbook to expose learners to cultural themes such as gender, religion or social class in order to develop cultural competence in their learners (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). The ability of teachers to tackle sensitive cultural topics is a key for becoming an effective educator and requires willingness and a lot of effort to understand diverse learners (Abacioglu, Volman & Fischer, 2020)

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the teacher's excessive reliance on textbooks, combined with lack of students' cultural knowledge to grasp textbook topics, may influence students' perceptions of effective teachers. However, the use of technologies in the classroom can support and enhance learning materials and resources, which will be discussed next.

#### *6.5.1.3 Use of technology*

In relation to the use of technology, the results indicated that four participants were aware of the importance of the use of technology in the classroom but did not directly associate it with the notion of teachers' effectiveness. The data collected from the interviews revealed that some participants explained how the teacher incorporated technology in the lessons but did not relate it to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the teacher. Two participants showed negative perceptions in relation to incorporation of technology in class and only one participant described how he benefited from the use of technology. These findings are consistent with Al-Mahrooqi et al's. (2015) results that suggested that Arab Omani students did not perceive the use of technology as an important attribute of an effective EAP teacher. The researcher believed that this could be attributed to the fact that some observed EAP classrooms have a TV mounted on the wall and there was no overhead projector in the classrooms. Perhaps the teachers may have been reluctant to embed technology in the lesson due to the limited resources or perhaps they were not trained to use technology. Therefore, for the participants, technology played a little role in the classrooms and in perceiving the use of technology as an important characteristic of an effective EAP teacher. Due to the teacher's limited use of technology in teaching the EAP course, students did not have the experience to feel the effectiveness of technology related to teacher effectiveness. The results revealed that those participants who experienced their teachers using technology in the classroom in the past had some positive examples to share with the researchers in relation to teacher effectiveness. On the contrary, participants whose teachers did not incorporate technology in the classroom were unsure about effectiveness of the teacher in using the technologies and did not prefer the use of it in the classroom. Hence, for them the use of technology in class did not make much sense and they did not associate it with the notion of teacher effectiveness (Liton, 2015; Shadiev & Yang, 2020). The participant who believed that technology was not important ascribed it with their own learning preference. Perhaps, if technology was properly used by their teachers in class and the students were taught about the benefits of technology in their learning (Shadiev, &

Yang, 2020), the students would have different perceptions of their teachers and their experiences in learning English.

The researcher believes that not only the learning style of the student is important in integrating technology in EAP classes but also the preference of the teacher to use technology is an important aspect that needs to be highlighted. The students' perceptions may be influenced in relation to teacher effectiveness if a teacher is a digital native and digital immigrant. The researcher is not suggesting that one pedagogical practice is more effective than the other that may influence teacher effectiveness but highlighting that perceptions of students may vary. A digital immigrant teacher may for instance make effective use of the traditional materials due to their vast experience in the industry and students may admire such practice. Clearly, the decision to adopt a particular pedagogical practice in class depends on the teacher and how students perceive that pedagogical practice to have an impact on the notion of effectiveness. Also, the students' learning background should not go unnoticed. The Saudi students who came from student-centred classrooms where technology played a very small role, or in some cases no role at all, have their perceptions established.

Overall, from the discussion with the participants, the researcher believes that the learners need to experience technology in EAP classrooms in order for them to establish a relationship between teacher effectiveness and the use of technology in an EAP classroom. The findings imply that the limited use of technology in EAP could not help participants in establishing connections between teacher effectiveness and the use of technology as far as the results of this study are concerned. Apart from the use of technologies, other classroom practices that contribute to effective teaching are the interaction styles of the EAP teacher which will be discussed next.

### *6.5.2 Interaction styles*

The students mainly referred to interaction styles that they saw as inappropriate and indicative of an ineffective teacher. For example, one of the female participants explained how the issue of proximity and position of teachers could be associated with lack of cultural understanding and making the learning experience uncomfortable (see 5.3.2). This issue closely relates to the non-verbal communication of the teacher. The participant believed that the close proximity of seating between her and the male teacher was inappropriate in her culture. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) highlighted this issue:

> Different cultures have different rules about touch. For example, same-sex touch and hand holding in Malaysia, China, Sudan, Japan, Nepal, and Saudi Arabia is considered to be acceptable and part of daily life. However, contact among the opposite sex is considered to be taboo (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005, p. 212).

If the same behaviour was displayed by a female teacher to a Saudi female student, it may be viewed differently, perhaps viewed as caring. However, because it was displayed by a male teacher, it was deemed as inappropriate by the Saudi female student. Harmer (2015) highlighted that the issue of proximity and position is very important especially in those classrooms where teachers and students do not share the same cultural background. There are certain positions, for example, crouching down at the student's side when they are working in pairs, which may be appropriate in one context but could be highly inappropriate in another.

One Saudi female participant gave an example of culturally inappropriate interaction style by referring to a teacher who laughed at finding out that it was not a common practice for practising Saudi Muslims to celebrate birthdays. The Saudi participant considered the act of the teacher laughing at religious or cultural practices as very disrespectful and regarded the teacher as ineffective. A male Saudi participant requested the researcher to pause the recording when explaining his personal experience of an ineffective teacher who lacked respect for his culture and religion.

In many EAP classrooms, discussion on topics such as religion, politics and opposite gender which may or may not be beyond the textbook is viewed as normal, whereas in a Saudi EAP classroom such discussions are generally avoided by teachers, and particularly Western teachers, to avoid frustration and negative consequences (Alasmari, 2014). Such discussions may not be viewed appropriate or the way they are communicated to students may carry different meaning for Saudi students. The EAP Australian teacher may view discussing culture and religion a means to establish rapport and demonstrate humour to keep students engaged, but Saudis may take this as an offense due to differences in culture and perspectives as a result of socio-cultural contexts (see Moran in section 2.9.2). These results could be explained by arguments presented by Cutshall (2012) who explained that limited cultural knowledge or restricted development of cultural understanding may lead to a negative impact on students' learning and cannot bring fruitful results.

Some teachers take it as a challenging task and become over-ambitious to transform their international students from passive to active learners by integrating particular practices. One participant highlighted that an effective teacher was like a 'dictionary' who he could rely on.

This signals a very important aspect – that an EAP teacher needs to be mindful when employing different resources in the classroom to support student learning. Resources such as a 'dictionary' or 'technology' are viewed as important resources in Australian EAP classrooms but in an early transition from a teacher-centred classroom to a student-centred classroom, this may make students feel uncomfortable and the additional resources may be viewed by students as a replacement of what they consider should be the main source of information, namely the teacher, which they have learned from their culture and previous classroom experiences. Such abrupt or sharp transition would affect students' perceptions of effective teachers in a way that the additional resource would be viewed negatively and the teacher using them would be viewed as ineffective by the students. Similarly, if activities such as group work are not well planned by responding to cultural aspects, the teacher will be viewed as ineffective and the atmosphere of the class will not be regarded as positive for learning to occur. An important point that Australian EAP teachers need to understand when interacting with their students at the beginning stages of their EAP journey is that turning students from passive to active learners requires time and cannot happen during short courses such as most EAP courses. Incorporating practices of Western classrooms which are deemed 'successful' by EAP teachers requires sound understanding of EAP students and their cultures before attaining any fruitful results. Personality characteristics such as being kind, respectful and friendly in turn become paramount as EAP teachers can build good rapport with their students and ask what works well and what does not with their students. Lee (2010) emphasised the importance of building a good rapport between language learners and their teachers in order to facilitate more and better interaction.

#### *6.5.3 Section summary*

The above discussion on 'practices' (Figure 6.5) identifies that an EAP teacher is not only a facilitator in the class who has good knowledge of teaching pedagogies but someone who also needs to be aware of students' cultures and their background; and how to integrate various practices that are deemed effective. In language classes where language is the medium of instruction as well as the object of learning, learners are continuously engaged in processes of interpretation. In the learning activity, they learn through established 'unconscious or unarticulated, interpretations of themselves, of others, of language, of culture, and of learning' and by engaging with other's established 'unconscious or unarticulated, interpretations' of the same construct (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 48). This is why the attributes that constitute 'practices' in the proposed model endorse the importance of a cultural lens when viewing the

characteristics of effective teachers, since limited cultural knowledge of diverse learners may adversely affect teaching in Australian EAP contexts. Placing a cultural lens on the attributes, therefore, helps to gain a deeper understanding of characteristics of teachers which may or may not be viewed effective from students' perspectives.

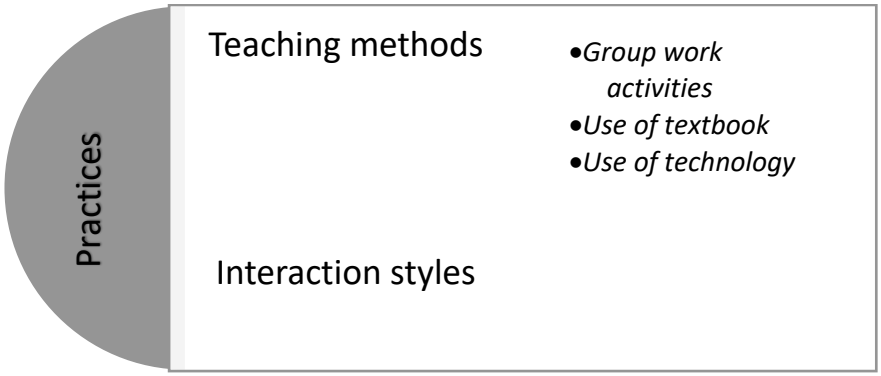



**Figure 6.5 Practices related to EAP teacher effectiveness – expanded version**

### *6.6 Products*

Products, like practices, are visible constructs. According to Moran (2001), they include objects ranging from tools and clothing, 'to more elaborate yet perceptible constructions such as written and spoken language' (Moran, 2001, p.25). They can be tangible or intangible (Dema & Moeller, 2012). In this construct, one concept, subject knowledge and credibility (Figure 6.6), which involves 'the use of students' language', will be discussed in the light of the results.

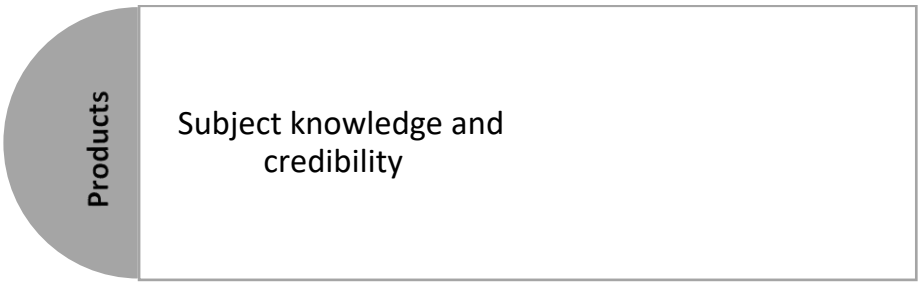



**Figure 6.6 Products related to EAP teacher effectiveness**

#### *6.6.1 Subject knowledge and credibility*

Subject knowledge is viewed as an important characteristic of effective teachers. The students may not have the knowledge to measure the teacher's subject knowledge by assessing their qualifications, but they receive information about this attribute when they sense the teacher's ability to speak their language or when they receive information through a teacher's race or colour. As Curtis (2006) points out:

> First impressions will continue to count, whether we like it or not, and whether such impressions are misleading or not. Having first impressions may be a natural human failing, perhaps accentuated by the image-obsessed media and marketing cultures that too many of us have grown up in and been shaped by. (Curtis, 2006, p. 17)

In an EAP setting in the Australian context where students come from different cultural and educational backgrounds, classes can be taught by native or non-native speaker teachers provided they have the right qualifications. The ability of a teacher to use students' language in EAP classrooms in the Australian context and how this attribute is viewed in relation to native and non-native English speaker teachers will be discussed in the following sections. Among the first piece of information students receive when they meet their English teacher for the first time is 'racial awareness' (Curtis, 2006; Llurda, 2005; Modiano, 2005); therefore, these issues are discussed as part of visible 'products' in the proposed model.

#### *6.6.1.2 Use of students' own language*

The use of students' first language was an aspect that was perceived negatively by most Saudi students. The Saudi students did not admire the incorporation of students' L1 in EAP classrooms in Australia. In fact, not only in the Australian context, it was also perceived negatively in the Saudi context. The Saudi students perceived teachers who excessively used Arabic in Saudi Arabia to be ineffective and perceived this practice to be a barrier to learning English in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, in the Australian EAP context, students did not view the use of L1 as a positive aspect of effective teachers. These results are not consistent with the outcomes of Kovacic and Kirinic's (2011) study in ESP classes where the students considered that limited use of L1 facilitates English language learning. These findings are also not aligned with those of Bhooth, et al.'s (2014) study in suggesting that the use of L1 in the classroom was perceived as a scaffolding strategy to enhance language learning. It is important to mention that the Saudi participants of this study did not view the use of L1 as positive in either the EFL or the ESL context.

From the data collected from interviews, Saudi students recalled some experiences in the Australian context where the teacher used the language of a few students which made them feel isolated in the class as they were unable to understand the teacher and participate in the activities. The Saudi students explicitly expressed that an effective teacher must not incorporate students' language in the classroom in the EFL or in the ESL context. The reasons for this will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, the Saudi students coming from an EFL background had experienced classes in Saudi Arabia where excessive use of Arabic language did not facilitate English language learning. In Saudi Arabia, Arabic is mostly integrated by Arab non-NESTs who make excessive use of Arabic in class to the extent that one participant described this situation as learning English in Arabic. The excessive incorporation of L1 had negative outcomes on students' perceived performance which made them react negatively about the use of L1 in class. In fact, the Saudi students felt that they had a disappointing experience of learning English when they were taught by teachers who made excessive use of Arabic in class in the EFL context. Saudi students who had had NESTs, however, did not experience this problem.

It is important to note that in some instances in an EAP context, NESTs had a little knowledge of Arabic and could sometimes use code switching to deliver meaning, which the Saudi students admired. The Saudi students described their experience to be positive in such instances and attributed their learning success to effective teachers who used limited Arabic or made occasional use of code switching in the class. Those participants who had experienced classrooms where English was taught in Arabic perceived the incorporation of L1 more negatively than those who did not experience such teachers. In addition, participants who had experienced classes that had a monolingual policy felt less negative about the incorporation of L1. The current study has only looked at the perceptions of Saudi students, therefore, it is hard to comment on the students' actual academic performance to elaborate if monolingual policy has actually helped them in learning English effectively, which some studies (Bhooth, Azman & Ismail, 2014; Latsanyphone & Bouangeune, 2009) have shown (see section 2.6.2).

A second explanation as to why Saudi students regarded the use of L1 in class as ineffective is due to the differences in the ESL and EFL contexts which were reviewed in detail in the first chapter of this thesis. In EFL classes, most students share the same home language and the teacher switches between two languages. In contrast, the EAP context in Australia or in any other English-speaking country is different because the international students are from different parts of the world and speaking different languages; therefore, it may be impossible to speak the language of all the students. In ESL contexts, if the teacher speaks the language of a few students and makes excessive use of it to give classroom instruction, deliver knowledge, and demonstrate humour, then the teacher may run the risk of making other students uneasy and alienate students who do not know that language. The Saudi students recalled how they felt lonely and isolated in such EAP classes. In the past, when the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Scholarship Program (KASP) was easily accessible and the number of Saudi students was high,

there used to be separate EAP classes for Saudi students. In those EAP classes where the class comprised students from the same linguistic background, perhaps code switching may have been an effective technique to facilitate students' learning. Such classes were very difficult to find when this study was carried out, and more research is needed to draw any conclusions at this stage.

The third reason as to why Saudi students did not react positively towards the incorporation of L1 and welcomed the monolingual policy at some of the English centres may relate to their level of English proficiency. The students in the current study had English proficiency ranging between intermediate and advanced. Gunn (2003) indicated that the use of students' L1 is beneficial for students of low proficiency level. However, there were some instances where the researcher's classroom observation indicated that the use of L1 by students facilitated learning. For example, after a teacher's presentation was finished, the Chinese and Saudi students discussed different concepts and teachers' materials in L1 to validate the teacher's instructions with other students sharing the same language. This suggests that although Saudi students negatively perceive the use of L1 by teachers, they felt the need to check their understanding with other students who shared the same language and expected the teacher to allow their use of L1 in class. This was easier for Chinese students as the observed EAP classes comprised more Chinese students than Saudis or any other nationalities. From the researcher's own experience and conversations with colleagues, it can be noted that there is often a student or students in EAP and ESL/EFL classes who translates the teacher's instructions, new vocabulary words or a concept to other students who share the same language, either to validate each other's understandings against the teacher's or for quick comprehension. This practice is common in many classrooms where the teachers do not share the language of students, but students share a language with other students. Such a practice in the researcher's own experience provides sufficient L1 input for quick comprehension to save teachers' time in facilitating language learning. But in such cases, the teacher often relies on the student translator which is indeed questionable. Paxton (2009) encouraged her students to discuss different concepts in the presence of a tutor. In those cases, a tutor would know the language of both the teacher and the students to validate understanding.

In the Australian EAP context of this study, the only instance where the teacher's use of students' L1 was admired by the Saudi students was when the teacher used some Arabic words to show understanding of the students' culture to build a rapport with Saudi students. The use of students' L1 by the teacher made them feel comfortable and respected which relates to

rapport building. Furthermore, they attributed that to the teacher's understanding of students' culture which was viewed as an important aspect for effective teachers from their perspectives. This then leads to another important question which is to what extent teachers in EAP settings in Australian contexts have the ability to speak to their students in students' language, recognising that a native speaker may or may not necessarily be a monolingual (Ellis, 2016). The issue of native or non-native speaker teachers is relevant to students' perception of effective teachers as argued in the literature review (2.6.1) and confirmed by the findings of this study (4.3.1) which will be discussed in the next section.

#### *6.6.1.3 Native vs Non-Native speaker teachers*

The findings of this study suggest that participants preferred to be taught by NESTs in the Saudi Arabian context; however, their perceptions changed in Australia. Since the Saudi students were exposed to NEST and non-NESTs, their perceptions are important to understanding effective teaching as the students are in a better position to make comparisons between the teaching of both. In the Australian context, they perceived NESTs to be equally effective as NNESTs. However, there were some issues around the NESTs in Australia that were perceived negatively by Saudi participants in the Australian context. These aspects relate to fast speech, lack of knowledge about teaching English (subject knowledge) and unawareness of Saudi culture. These results are not surprising as there are studies suggesting that students believed that learners of L2 focus more on the personal qualities and teaching methods of teachers compared to their linguistic backgrounds (Alghofaili & Elyas, 2017; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005). In addition, Kirkpatrick (2010) suggested that the notion of effective NESTs is becoming less relevant for students. There could be several reasons that explain the results of this study.

Kramsch (2013) highlighted the issue around native speaker teachers' lack of knowledge about student culture in language teaching.

> Many school systems prefer to hire native speakers (NSs) as language teachers because of their authentic relationship to the target language and culture, but native speakers do not necessarily know the home culture of their students nor the intellectual tradition of their school system (Kramsch, 2013, p. 58).

This suggests that due to the native speaker's authentic relationship with language, they are viewed as ideal to teach English language but Kramsch (2013) warns that teachers' perspectives on the notion of teacher effectiveness may differ from students' due to their lack of knowledge about students' cultures and the education system they come from (Midgley,

2010; Orth, 2015; Putnam, 2011; Richardson, 2012). Sowden (2007) emphasises that teachers, both local and expatriate, need to be aware of students' cultures in English language teaching and in the light of the findings of this study the researcher believes that this could be applicable in the ESL context particularly in EAP. Cultures may be different in different contexts and with the world becoming increasingly diverse, it would be difficult for a teacher to know what constitutes appropriate behaviour in each of the cultures. It would be easier for a teacher to be respectful and kind and to ask if they are unsure about different practices.

To be effective, teachers must be aware of and demonstrate interest in the cultures of their students, particularly in how their teaching practices may positively or negatively influence the learning of the students. As diversity is a key feature of an EAP classroom, it becomes imperative for an EAP teacher to understand various linguistic, cultural, religious, socioeconomic and geographic diversity to ensure that every student's needs are addressed and that students reach their full potential. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), provides descriptors of teacher standards, which are pertinent to ESL EAP even though developed for the school sector in Australia. These standards were developed for four levels of a teacher's career – graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead. The specifics of each of the standards change at each level. The first AITSL standard for Australian school teachers is to 'know students and how they learn'. Standard 1.3 focuses on 'Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds', and the graduate teacher requirement is to 'Demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds' (AITSL, 2017). Thus quality graduate teachers are expected to use pedagogical knowledge to ensure that the teaching strategies used in the class are responsive to the needs of the students by taking into consideration students' diverse backgrounds and a good understanding of cultural competencies that relates to empathy, sensitivity and equality (AITSL, 2017).

If teachers are sensitive to the cultural needs of the students in their classes as it affects their learning and accept that every class is different in its cultural make up and dynamics, then this becomes a more manageable task than trying to understand the complexities of each country's culture. Gradually the teacher will come to learn the diversity and complexity of cultures as they build a picture of each of the students' cultures that have entered their classrooms over time. Instead of trying to impose cultures of their own, the teachers must work with the cultures that they encounter (Sowden, 2007, p. 305).

The participants of the current study had the assumption that, in the Saudi context, they could only obtain the chance of benefitting from good NESTs if they performed well in their studies. In their experience, high achievers are usually assigned teachers who are NESTs or have an English proficiency level close to natives. Therefore, the participating Saudi students associate the idea of effective teachers with NESTs in the Saudi context (Figure 5.1). On the other hand, in the Australian context, the situation is different and Saudi students indicated neutral preference for NEST and NNESTs. This is perhaps partly because there is no formal policy in Australia of hiring NESTs for high achievers, or at least students are not aware of any even if it exists. In Saudi Arabia, after high school, students join a preparatory year course depending on their academic performance. The different streams (humanities, science, medicine) sometimes play an important role in deciding the appointment of English teachers. In majors such as science and medicine, NESTs are preferred as the general assumption is that high achieving students can greatly benefit from the NESTs. The students in humanities are assigned non-NESTs as students in this stream may not communicate in English with NESTs due to limited English language proficiency. In Saudi Arabia, it is a common practice to prefer NESTs on the basis of criteria such as nationality or accent (Alenazi, 2012) although this practice may change in the future due to employment opportunities available for Saudi citizens in the light of Vision 2030 (1.4.2). From the perspective of students, previous studies have shown that in the Saudi Arabian context, Saudi students preferred NESTs for learning of correct pronunciation and developing their speaking and listening skills (Alseweed & Daif-Allah, 2012).

In addition, it was interesting to note that due to the hiring preferences in Saudi Arabia by the universities and institutions, it appeared that students of the current study who were taught by NESTs were motivated to talk about effective teachers in the Saudi context more than those who did not experience learning from NESTs. Those Saudi participants who did not have the opportunity of learning English from NESTs in the Saudi context did not focus much on the linguistic background of their teachers. They felt disappointed with NNESTs in the Saudi context but when expressing their views of effective English teachers in the Australian context, they expressed that NNESTs were equally effective as NESTs. These Saudi students had the opportunity to be taught by both NESTs and NNESTs in Australia and presented strengths and weaknesses of both NESTs and non-NESTs but did not favour one over the other. However, participants viewed that anyone who can understand, and respect students' culture was an effective teacher, irrespective of whether they were a NEST or NNEST. This was also indicated

in the survey where Saudi students gave a very low mean score for 'effective teachers are native speakers of English' suggesting that they do not perceive an effective teacher to be a native speaker of English. Harking back to earlier research by Pacek (2005), the findings of this study support that in an Australian EAP context, the students perceived the 'personality' and not the 'nationality' of the teacher to be important for effective teaching.

Another reason that explains the students' neutrality in terms of NESTs and NNESTs in the Australian EAP context is that most teachers, and certainly all NNEST teachers, recruited to teach in EAP programs are qualified and have the knowledge to teach the English program; therefore, students did not highlight any issues that are commonly associated with NNESTs. When students associated the idea of ineffectiveness with NEST, lack of qualification and cultural understanding, however, were highlighted by some participants. These findings suggest that Saudi students do not associate the idea of effectiveness to NEST in the Australian context and have neutral preference towards NESTs and NNESTs.

In the light of these findings, it is therefore suggested that a teacher qualification that consists of content knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge is important for effective teaching. Stronge (2018) indicated that in preparing novice teachers to become effective teachers, programs that focus on the pedagogical knowledge as well as the content knowledge of teachers are more effective as compared to those programs that give little attention to pedagogical knowledge alone. This also makes it clear that for effective teaching, NEST and NNESTs need to have some pre-requisites such as content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge with formal TESOL qualifications. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) specifies Standard 2 as 'knowing the content and how to teach it'. Lack or incompetent knowledge of EAP content could make both NESTs and NNESTs ineffective in any contexts. Inadequate content and pedagogical knowledge was referred to by some participants in this study. While it was not clear whether a participant was able to differentiate between a teacher and a volunteer/teaching assistant in class, what was clear from the findings is that Saudi students perceive the knowledge of a teacher as important for anyone who is stepping in to teach a class. This issue was described by Participant 2: 'I really hate because he is teaching English because he knows English, he is not like Bachelor in teaching. He is teaching because he is a native speaker'. Such a situation is referred to by Cummins and Davidson (2007) who point out that a volunteer/teaching assistant may have in some cases no formal TESOL education and is hired to develop students' speaking skills. 'Teaching assistants typically have

significant gaps in professional knowledge and practical experience but these gaps are less apparent to policymakers' (Cummins & Davidson, 2007, p. 969).

Given that participants have not indicated any incidence of ineffectiveness related to NNESTs in the Australian context, and have expressed equal preference for NNESTs and NESTs, questions need to be raised in regard to the employment practices in EAL programs. 'There is a widely held perception that EAL (English as an Additional Language) students want native speakers as their teachers… and that a native speaker is of an Anglo (White) origin' (Mahboob, 2006, p.178). The researcher would agree with Mahboob (2006) that using students' beliefs may be an easy excuse for hiring NESTs and the results of Mahboob's (2004) study are consistent with the results of the present study that students do not have clear preference for either NESTs or NNESTs. The Saudi students' perceptions in the present study reflect that knowledge of subject and qualifications are important for an effective English teacher and that native and non-nativeness is not part of their perception of teacher effectiveness.

The results on this topic need to be interpreted cautiously as there are certain variables that may have influenced the perceptions of the participants in different ways. The Saudi students' perception of an effective teacher in relation to the attributes that are discussed in light of the findings may vary depending on the teacher's ethnicity. Perhaps what students find to be effective attributes and practices depend on their perceptions of a teacher's ethnic background. Students often label teachers to be Western and non-Western based on their skin colour and accent. For example, students may expect a Western teacher to be friendly, but the notion of effectiveness could be different for non-Western teachers. The researcher finds this issue to be significant, based on her own professional experience in both Saudi and Australian EAP settings, and also because it has been highlighted by several colleagues teaching EAP courses to international students. For example, Arab students expect that non-Western teachers understand that students feel uncomfortable working in mixed gender groups, whereas the same students will not expect that from their Western teachers. Similarly, students may expect Western teachers to develop a 'friendly' relationship with their students but focus more on 'respect' in the case of non-Western teachers. The differences in the perceptions of students on the notion of effectiveness could be distinctive in team teaching which involves two teachers teaching the same class of students. Non-native teachers may be confronted by their students to clarify certain pronunciation and to check their knowledge of English which students would never do with native speakers. Many NNESTs have touched upon this issue of the student's reactions when they view teachers to be from a different race (Llurda, 2005; Mahboob, 2006;

Modiano, 2005). This is not just a matter of skin colour and accent but there are many other cues that students pick to label teachers as native or non-native speakers. This issue is complex as it involves complex behaviours and attitudes that are not easy to gauge. In addition, it would be very challenging to measure to what extent students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness differ from one teacher to another on the basis of their ethnicity. However, it is an important issue that needs to be explored in future studies to understand students' expectations based on a teacher's ethnicity.

### *6.6.2 Section summary*

This section on cultural 'Products' in relation to teacher effectiveness has discussed subject knowledge and credibility in terms of Native vs Non-native language teachers and the use of student's native language (Figure 6.7). The discussion suggests that the use of students' language, which some studies have shown to be important for effective English language learning (Kovacic & Kirinic, 2011; Latsanyphone & Bouangeune, 2009), was negatively perceived by Saudi students in this study. The Saudi students viewed incorporation of students' language negatively in EAP classrooms both in Australia and in Saudi Arabia. Saudi students viewed excessive use of Arabic in EAP classrooms as a barrier to learning English and viewed those teachers who frequently used students' first language as ineffective. However, the use of some Arabic words by the teacher in an Australian context was viewed as part of that teacher's understanding of students' culture. Furthermore, the perception of effectiveness was not shaped by whether a teacher was NEST or NNEST. The perception was that teachers who understand students' culture, whether native or non-native, were effective, and that nativeness does not guarantee effective language teaching. This validates the importance of a cultural lens being placed on 'subject knowledge and credibility' and implies that certain characteristics need a cultural perspective for their successful application.

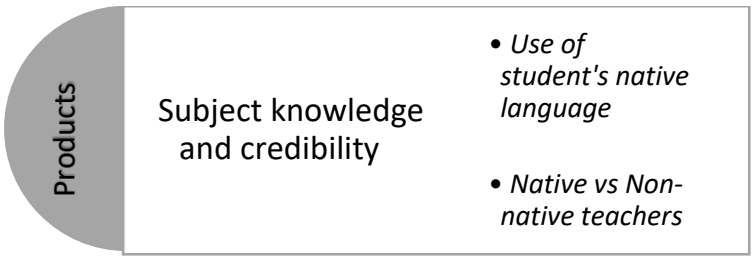



**Figure 6.7 Products related to EAP teacher effectiveness – expanded version**

### *6.7 Chapter summary*

This chapter has discussed the data in the light of previous findings and through the application of a proposed 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness' presented in section 6.3. Two key contributions are made in this 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness'. First, there is the cultural lens placed over the attributes in the Barnes and Lock (2010) framework, enabling a deeper understanding of the attributes through the concepts of cultural perspectives, practices and products. Second, a specific culturally oriented attribute of an effective EAP educator has been added to the Barnes and Lock framework, namely 'intercultural competence', which functions as an underlying perspective shaping practices and products. A further contribution is made specifically in regard to the detailing of some attributes in the light of the interview data, allowing deeper understanding of various features as shown in expanded versions (Figure 6.3, 6.5, 6.7)

The discussion using this model has indicated the reasons why Saudi students associated certain characteristics with the notion of effective and ineffective teaching. Culture plays an important role in understanding students' perceptions of effective EAP teachers. Certain attributes may appear to be effective from one cultural perspective but not from another. In other words, due to differences in cultures different meanings are given to certain attributes. In order to fully understand the perspectives, it is important to look at the deeper interpretations which include values and beliefs integral to those perspectives, which are deeply personal and complex. Through applying the proposed 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness' the Saudi students' perceptions became clearer. The data from the interviews suggested that demonstration of certain attributes that generally appear to be positive from one perspective may be different for Saudi students and this was not readily obvious because Saudi students attributed different meanings to them. Through the proposed model not only students but teachers may 'begin to see that products and practices are not 'weird,' just different, and through an understanding of cultural perspectives they can explore the 'why' of differences and similarities' (Sullivan, Schmidt-Rinehart & Morris, 2011, p. 46).

When aiming for best practice in language education, it is paramount to understand what best practice is considered to be in different cultures and in language education in a specific context. So, if EAP teachers aim at best practice, it is important to ask what best practice means and for whom. If best practice is chosen in language education for international students, it is then important to understand what meaning international students from diverse backgrounds attach to the notion of 'best practice'. How an EAP teacher understands best practice is different from

students' understanding of best practice depending upon their beliefs and values and culture. Developing understanding of other beliefs, values and culture would help teachers to understand how best to teach students in class. When teachers are not imprisoned by their own cultures, they cultivate a safe environment by building bridges between differences that occur due to lack of cultural understandings (Kramsch, 2013).

Educators in ESL EAP cannot adequately demonstrate the attributes of effectiveness without understanding of students' culture because the attributes have deeper meanings attached to them in students' eyes, which may not always be explicit. Thus, situating the attributes in a cultural frame has given them a meaning from Saudi students' perspectives which indicates that what is viewed as effective by teachers may not necessarily be effective for students, and what is viewed as ineffective by teachers may be effective from diverse learners' perspectives. When teaching EAP in Australian contexts, there is a need to emphasise the variability of cultures and the specific context in understanding the meaning of attributes and their manifestations.

# Chapter Seven: Conclusion

## *7.1 Introduction*

This final chapter will begin by providing an overview of the study (7.2) that will offer understanding of the problem under focus and how it was addressed, and then lead to an indication of the contribution of this research to existing knowledge in the field (7.3). Certain implications are then drawn from the study (7.4), followed by recommendations and scope for future research. A brief discussion on problematising this study is offered at the end of the chapter before concluding.

## *7.2 Overview of the study*

As there are many approaches to language teaching based on the purposes, prior knowledge and life experiences, language levels and learning needs of students, it becomes imperative for a teacher to carefully choose what works, when, and how to best address the needs of their class of learners (Shahmohammadi, 2015). In this study, Saudi students come from educational backgrounds where teaching approaches are very different from Australia. As there exist several educational and cultural differences between Saudi and Australian classrooms, it was anticipated that these students may have some different expectations of effective English teachers. Consequently, exploring the perceptions of this cohort was justifiable as EAP teachers may not be aware of Saudi students' expectations due to differences in students' cultures, beliefs, values and education systems, and may feel that their teaching efforts and classroom practices are ineffective at times in terms of contributing to improving Saudi students' language proficiency. Effectiveness is an elusive concept (Stronge, 2018) as discussed in section 2.2; therefore defining 'effective teacher' from a single perspective is inappropriate; the concept of effectiveness varies from one culture to another, and from one educational context to another. This study has, therefore, endeavoured to highlight the perceptions of Saudi students regarding the notion of teacher effectiveness in the context of ESL EAP in Australia.

Barnes and Lock's (2010, 2013) framework has helped to identify the components of the complex concept of teacher effectiveness and the 3Ps Cultural Triangle (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999) has facilitated interpretation of attributes related to teacher effectiveness through a cultural lens. By combining the two theoretical perspectives in the proposed 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness' this study has generated a model suitable for application in Australian EAP settings as well as other ESL EAP settings.

In this qualitative case study, interviews were held with six Saudi students and built on information from a preliminary survey as well as classroom observations. The preliminary survey was completed by 48 international students in Australian EAP settings - 11 Saudi students and 37 from other countries and revealed no significant differences between the Saudi and non-Saudi international students on attributes related to methods of teaching, communication style and cultural understanding, fairness, knowledge and credibility and organisation and preparation. The only significant differences were for the attributes related to the personality of the teacher, which non-Saudi students appeared to highlight more than Saudi students. However, this was later clarified in the interviews, where Saudi students strongly emphasised the importance of personality and cultural competence of an effective teacher by providing explanations of how the personality of the teacher facilitated their learning. This means that in their overall ranking of important teacher effectiveness attributes Saudi students did not differ from other international students despite coming from a different cultural background.

The interviews provided detailed information about the two influential factors that were learner motivation, and the context of English language learning. The perceived qualities of an English language educator in an Australian EAP course that contribute to Saudi students' perceived improvement of their English language proficiency were: 'Personality and associated qualities', 'Communication and cultural understanding', 'Fairness', 'Subject knowledge and credibility' and 'Methods of teaching'. In addition, the interviews gave some insight into those attributes that Saudi students perceived important in the Saudi context and not in the Australian context. For example, students' perceptions towards teachers' nativeness was viewed as an important characteristic of effective English teachers but was not viewed an important characteristic in the Australian EAP context. Another aspect that was viewed differently by Saudi students in Australian and Saudi context was the use of a student's language in class. While the use of students' language (Arabic) in the Saudi context was viewed as a barrier to learn English, it was seen as cultural appreciation in the Australian context.

### *7.3 Theoretical Contribution*

Based on the lack of cultural perspective identified in previous studies on the notion of teacher effectiveness, Chapter 2 concluded with a proposed 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness' supported by the findings of the current study. This model highlights that the various aspects of effective teacher characteristics identified by Barnes and Lock (2010) have cultural dimensions that teachers need to be aware of. This is particularly important as

differences in culture only become apparent in situations when misunderstanding or cultural confusion occurs (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016). In the light of the findings, an updated model of teacher effectiveness was presented in Chapter 6. The model has the teacher effectiveness attributes integrated in the 3Ps. It was concluded that a cultural lens placed over the various attributes helps to understand teacher effectiveness in the Australian EAP context. In the model, 'Personality', 'Intercultural competency' and 'Fairness' function as perspectives. The 'Teaching methods' and 'Interaction styles' function as practices while 'Subject knowledge and credibility' function as products. The 'Perspectives' are part of the tacit area while 'Practices' and 'Products' are placed in the explicit area. The model suggests that attributes have deeper interpretations depending on the culture of the students and that intercultural competency is critical for EAP educators when demonstrating certain attributes.

The ways students view practices, products and perspectives in relation to attributes associated with teacher effectiveness are not immediately obvious in ESL contexts as they have deeper meanings attached to them. Without understanding those meanings ESL EAP educators may find it difficult to address the needs of particular cohorts, as learner and teacher roles would be differently interpreted, and the roles and expectations are not as obvious as they appear (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016). It is, therefore, crucial for both teachers and students to develop intercultural competence by understanding underlying cultural dimensions and taking account of them in the way they communicate with each other.

The findings of this study have clearly demonstrated that the identified characteristics of effective English language teachers have cultural dimensions to them when put into practice in EAP classrooms in Australia. Constructs such as personality and fairness initially appearing to be straightforward traits of an effective teacher were found to have deeper interpretations depending on the culture. The study has helped to understand what constructs were perceived to be effective by Saudi students and why they were perceived to be effective in a certain way. The expanded figures of the 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness' draw out particular features of the attributes originally brought together overview model in Chapter 2, detailing them according to a Saudi perspective.

Given the findings of the preliminary survey that Saudi and non-Saudi EAP students shared similar views on teacher effectiveness, it can be suggested that this model may also have application for other international student cohorts and in wider EAP contexts. Nevertheless, in EAP classrooms where there are students from different cultures and subcultures, one cannot

assume that beliefs and expectations of students in relation to effective teachers are universal. There may be differences in students' expectations as a result of their prior learning and teaching experiences, so teachers need to be mindful that this would influence student learning and priorities in the classroom.

To the researcher's knowledge, this is one amongst few studies carried out in ESL contexts. The area of teacher effectiveness and Saudi students' perceptions in relation to effectiveness has been neglected in the literature; therefore, this study has offered understanding of students' perceptions of effective teachers from the students' perspective. The data adds both an Arab voice and a student voice to the academic literature of teacher effectiveness in ESL, particularly in the Australian context. The findings from this study also make several contributions to the current literature by providing an understanding of the construction of effective and ineffective teachers by students.

The findings from this study are useful in understanding the complex nature of culture. Through the proposed new model of an effective EAP teacher, teachers can evaluate and grasp understanding of the underlying beliefs and values which can help them to understand the rationale behind differences in perspectives of students on the notion of teacher effectiveness. For EAP educators, this study and similar studies will help them to understand and appreciate different cultures in diverse classrooms and to better address students' needs.

This study contributes an intercultural perspective to the general understanding that behaviours and practices used by teachers need to take account of contextual factors and that students have their unique perceptions influenced by various cultural aspects. In order to be effective, the differences and diversity that international students bring to the classroom need to be acknowledged and respected so that students are motivated and can succeed in their first step toward higher education at universities in Australia.

Finally, the current study and similar studies in the field of education help EAP teachers in Australia to better cater for the needs of Saudi as well as other international students. Australia can continue to attract international, including Saudi, students in the future if the needs of students are properly addressed. This could also result in scholarship allocations to countries that better address students' needs and thus help in producing a qualified skilled workforce in the home country. Collaboration between countries would help to facilitate academic and research growth.

### *7.4 Methodological Contribution*

Overall, the use of multiple methods – quantitative survey, classroom observations and qualitative interviews – strengthened and deepened interpretations of findings from the study. It would have been impossible to understand the complexities of students' changing perceptions in different contexts if a single method would have been employed to study the perceptions of the participants. The way Saudi students reflected on their past and present experience in relation to effective English teachers also highlighted that perception of effectiveness changes over time due to a number of reasons which will be discussed in the later sections of the discussion. Where the Saudi students differed from the results of the survey, a deeper understanding was required to draw any conclusions.

These findings offered two very important points to consider before drawing any conclusions from the results of this study. First, if we look at the broader picture from the results revealed from the survey, Saudi students did not differ from other international students despite coming from a different cultural background. Their expectations were similar to other international students in EAP classrooms in most aspects. These findings offer an overall picture of what Saudi students as well as international students expect of effective EAP teachers. Second, relying on merely the results of a survey could have led to an assumption that an international student prefers personality attributes to be more important than the Saudi students. However, the interviews with Saudi participants strengthened the idea that Saudi students emphasized strongly on the importance of personality and cultural competency of an effective teacher by providing explanations of how the personality of the teacher facilitated their learning which the quantitative data could not have revealed.

Therefore, the use preliminary study and principal study helped in drawing important conclusions of the results from the preliminary and case study. The quantitative analysis helped in gauging the broader picture of the EAP classroom which is usually comprised of Saudi as well as other international students and the interviews offered an explanation of whether Saudi students' perceptions of an effective EAP teacher was any different to other international students.

### *7.5 Practical contributions*

Teaching a language requires understanding of various professional attributes and approaches. Some attributes and approaches may be very successful in one situation with a particular cohort

but can completely fail in another situation or with another cohort or combination of both (Breen, 1985). The findings offer EAP teachers an understanding of their Saudi students and give them an insight into their conceptualisation of effective teachers. The results, therefore, add to perceptions of effective English teachers in order to best address EAP students' needs. An effective teacher needs to take an international student's cultural background and experiences into consideration when engaging in certain practices. Thus, the findings from this study are useful for teachers in EAP programs, teacher trainers, novice teachers and also the managers of EAP centres.

From the researcher's perspective, as an English language teacher who has a number of years of professional experience teaching in both Saudi Arabia and in Australia and who understands the cultures of both countries, the unpacking of students' perceptions is considered important for teachers as they may be unaware of the different expectations of the students and their struggles to tackle various issues which create barriers to effective learning. It is, therefore, important to understand characteristics identified by the Saudi students that contribute to the understanding of the notion of English language teacher effectiveness in an EAP setting. This should help prevent creating negative perceptions of teachers or at least help teachers deal with negative perceptions in situations or cases where perceptions are created as a result of misunderstandings related to different practices used in the classroom.

Managers working in the EAP industry could also benefit from the findings of this study and similar studies in the area of teacher effectiveness. For example, when managers are approached by students who are not satisfied with their teachers, these perceptions would help them to gain insight into students' expectations and to advise teachers on how to improve student engagement and to cater for their needs. By understanding the qualities of effective teachers from the perspective of students in an EAP classroom through the proposed 'cultural model of EAP teacher effectiveness', teachers will not fall into stereotyping international students by dichotomous concepts such as 'us versus them' (Kramsch, 2013). The researcher understands that EAP courses are intense and short in nature and that due to time constraints, EAP teachers are under constant pressure to address the content of syllabus. For an EAP teacher, understanding every student and addressing their particular needs in a very short time is indeed challenging. However, this can be facilitated through an understanding of how EAP students construct their image of an effective teacher, as international students have experience studying EAP in both EFL and ESL settings and are therefore in a good position to express their needs.

## *7.6 Implications and recommendations for practice*

It is important to point out that there were certain characteristics that were highlighted in the literature as effective teaching characteristics but were viewed differently by Saudi students. Saudi students' perceptions identified in this study could therefore act as a critical basis for a teacher becoming effective in an EAP class. Based on the results of this study, there are a number of implications regarding effective English language teachers that will be helpful for EAP teachers, EAP programs, as well as language teacher training programs. Some of these implications may be viewed as rather obvious; however, the results of this study have confirmed them through the use of its three investigative tools. In addition, some suggestions in this section are offered by the Saudi participants from this study. Since there were very few aspects where Saudi students differed from international students in their perceptions of effective teachers, teachers should be mindful in taking these suggestions on board in an EAP class. For the ease of understanding and clarity, this section will briefly present the key findings and recommendations will be made alongside.

### *7.6.1 Personality and associated qualities*

The results of this study indicate that personality characteristics were key elements in assessing an EAP teacher as effective, according both to Saudi and other international students in ESL EAP programs.

Teacher education programs can best highlight the importance of personality attributes to building good relationships with students by keeping in view that the meaning of 'friendliness' differs from one culture to another. Kindness and care are types of attributes that could be taught and modelled from an intercultural perspective. Pre-service teachers can be made aware of the importance of these attributes through the use of scenario-based problems in culturally diverse settings. To make teachers aware of the importance of friendliness, teacher education programs can also provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to interact with ESL students in non-formal settings. This will assist them in better understanding students' expectations when both teachers and students are away from teaching and learning pressures. The quotes from participants 'They go with us on some trips', 'they encourage the students' show ways that teachers could both express and learn personality attributes such as friendliness.

#### *7.6.1.1 Use of humour*

The discussion on use of humour suggests that teacher's personality and attitude towards integrating humour in class is an important aspect that may influence students' perceptions of effective teachers. Factors such as timing, relevance, context, culture, forms of jokes are all

critical in making decisions about whether humour should be incorporated or not, given that inconsistencies in perceptions of appropriateness may occur. When demonstrating humour, 'one must know who and what in a culture is lampooned and how' (Wulf, 2010, p. 159)

While the use of humour is undoubtedly embraced by Westerners and viewed as a characteristic of an effective teacher, English language teachers need to be particularly aware of the cultural aspect of humour when demonstrating it in an ESL EAP context. EAP teachers need to understand that when interacting with international students particularly from collectivist societies, culturally inappropriate demonstration of humour could lead to frustration. Many Australian teachers use humour with the intention of building rapport and to break down social and cultural barriers but perhaps do not realise that it may have the opposite effect depending on the context. In Australia, the teacher uses humour to become more socially acceptable to the students and bridge social and cultural distance. It is not just to capture students' attention but is also cultural in nature – Australian culture. However, it is problematic particularly as it relates to cultural specificities. To what extent should international students appreciate and understand Australian cultural practices then becomes an important question for teachers to understand. Successful learning involves teacher and student engaging in deep reflection of their own and others' values and attitudes so that they can better understand 'us' vs 'them'. Such reflection will allow teachers to create and better manage the cultural third space to negotiate what is appropriate and what is not and to what extent. While participants of the current study appreciated that humour was sometimes used to capture students' attention, its clash with the culture was viewed negatively. Therefore, participants associated appropriate humour with teachers' level of cultural understanding. Jeder (2015) suggests that teachers need to consider the ethical limits, and age of the students when using humour. Moreover, the use of humour should not target a student's disability, race, religion, or gender.

If the lecturers have to make use of puns or use unfamiliar scripts in class as a way of demonstrating humour and to make lectures interesting, 'sensitivity' and 'ingenuity' are critical aspects that need to be thoroughly understood by teachers (Nesi, 2012). Demonstrating humour and effectively using it in a classroom would require practising skills that could be discussed in training sessions. Teachers could be taught to focus on developing humorous analogies for the materials used in teaching; for example, using puns and anecdotal stories. Since EAP classrooms are comprised of international students, professional development programs could highlight the cultures of students to make teachers aware of cultural differences. Participant #5

praised an effective teacher for creating a positive learning environment for students by understanding students' culture and managing cultural differences between students in class.

Professional development and training programs could discuss the gestures, communication styles, verbal and nonverbal communications that may be viewed as negative by students depending upon their nationalities. For example, from the researcher's own professional experience, some language centres in Australia run professional development programs for their teachers to make them aware of their international students' cultures and to best address their needs. In this way, teachers learn the cultural differences of their international students and gain an idea of what is appropriate and what is inappropriate humour for their international students. Moreover, professional development could be delivered by the staff who had good familiarity of the students' cultures or a guest speaker who has knowledge of the culture and the profile of the country in focus. Professional development sessions can focus on one country's culture per term to give staff members an opportunity to learn about the cultures of different international students in EAP classes. This may take some time as achieving cultural competence cannot take place in one day of professional training. It is also a matter of interaction with international students and committing to professional development. Teachers can share their ideas and experiences to gain deeper understanding of cultures and incorporate appropriate humour to establish a non-threatening and congenial environment when teaching EAP students.

### *7.6.2 Fairness*

The findings of this study draw attention to the importance of fairness in functioning as an effective teacher. In light of the participants' views, it is important to raise awareness amongst the teacher on the issue of providing clear and timely feedback and producing clear assessment guidelines for students. Giving explicit grading criteria to students will allow them to develop understanding of what is expected of them and what they are assessed on. The teachers can share and collaborate in raising awareness in EAP students from the very beginning of their course. In addition, students should be given clear feedback that will give them the opportunity to improve and will equip them for their future needs. This does not apply merely for individual pieces of assessment, but to help them understand the whole process of assessment. Making students aware will help them consider their grades critically and allow them to ask for clarification and justification if they are dissatisfied. Such practices would help teachers to create a positive learning environment by addressing students' needs and also in setting an example of good teaching (Axelrod, 2008). For the teachers, it is vital to be transparent about

assessment criteria and the meaning of flexibility in grading so that students do not develop false hopes of passing an exam especially if they are on the borderline score. In addition, teachers need to be aware that students see the concept of fairness in relation not only to aspects such as favouritism or discrimination but also to marking of exams (Axelrod, 2008). The importance of being fair has been highlighted in the literature review (section 2.5) of this study further indicating its relevance to the issue of teacher effectiveness.

#### *7.6.3 Intercultural competence*

In the light of the findings, it can be concluded that teachers' understanding of student culture is an important attribute of an effective EAP teacher. The dataset provides evidence that effective teachers have good understanding of students' cultures, which help to create a comfortable environment that supports learning.

It can be concluded that teachers need to have 'an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries' (Byram, 1997, p. 53). This would help them to use suitable teaching methods and appropriate ways to interact with their students to enhance classroom learning (Romijn, Slot & Leseman, 2021). Therefore, teachers need to have the ability to obtain insight of other cultures' products and practices rather than sticking to their own. The discussion on 'products' signifies that to be effective, NEST and non-NEST teachers must take account of cultural diversity and how it influences the attitudes and study styles of students. The teachers, therefore, need to deal with the cultures they meet in the classroom rather than pushing their own cultures in the classroom.

Disregarding the cultural stance and viewing the attributes as effective only through the teacher's own perspective may run the risk of interpreting situations as 'they are doing wrong' because 'we do it right' (DeCapua, 2018, p. 13). In doing so, the teacher reacts by interpreting behaviours and expectations of students from their own cultural position. However, if teachers develop an understanding of elements such as knowledge of others and self, skills to discover and interact, valuing other beliefs and behaviours, which make up intercultural competence (Byram 2006, as cited in Deardroff, 2006, p.247), they will be in a better position to understand that the students' behaviours, actions, expectations are not 'right' or 'wrong', 'better' or 'worse', 'rude' or 'considerate' (DeCapua, 2018, p. 13), but that they have reasons which are 'tacit' or 'explicit' (Moran, 2001) that a teacher and a student may or may not be aware of. Interculturally competent teachers, therefore, would bring observation and reflection skills

which they can also cultivate in their students so that negative evaluations, stereotyping, and overgeneralizations could be avoided on the part of both teachers and students.

### *7.6.4 Teaching methods and culturally responsive teaching*

From the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that teaching methods need to be viewed through a cultural lens as their appropriateness depends on the culture of students and the context in which they are used. Appropriate teaching methods, which are a central part of cultural 'practices' in the classroom, can be adopted when teachers build rapport with their students and have the compassion to understand differences (Murray, 2016) by keeping students' cultural perspectives in consideration.

#### *7.6.4.1 Group work*

An important aspect of teaching methods was the use of group activities in the EAP classroom. Lecturers often assume that pedagogical practices in Western environments may be universally applicable and deviating from them is viewed as against social, cognitive or behavioural norms. Where Saudi students acknowledged the effectiveness of group work and cultural features associated with it, this should not be ignored by the teachers.

Working in groups is not a new idea for Saudi students but working with mixed gender groups certainly is. Therefore, the cultural awareness of the teacher when assigning groups is a key element that EAP teachers need to be aware of. Harmer (2015) reminds us that not all contexts see men and women working together as a norm. In such contexts it is important for a teacher to understand the norms, culture and context in order to make an informed decision.

If a teacher finds that students do not admire or are not interested in group work without any cultural issues related to it, then a brief classroom explanation that focuses on the rationale behind group work must be given to students. Another possible suggestion to manage this issue could be to integrate the use of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) to facilitate collaboration in learning. This would improve the interaction between students by respecting their cultural values and giving them opportunities to learn by avoiding face-to-face interaction. In addition, this would ease the tension between the students that relates to mixed gender discomfort, so they can benefit from the working together by respecting cultural and religious beliefs of students (Elsden-Clifton, Jordan & Carr, 2016; Saba, 2014).

#### *7.6.4.2 Use of students' own language*

In light of the findings in relation to the use of students' own language in the classroom, it can be affirmed that it is not important for effective teachers of intermediate students to have

knowledge of students' L1. From the perspective of Saudi students, EAP teachers do not need to have a command of the students' language but it may be worth learning about students' culture and a few words of their language. The suggestion here is not to teach the students in their language but to show respect and build rapport with students. This was highlighted by one of the participants of this study. The participant admired the teacher who spoke some Arabic words and viewed it as a gesture of respect for his culture. Welcoming students' language will ensure that multiculturalism is respected and would help in creating a motivating environment for students. In addition to establishing rapport, teachers could help students learn better if they are aware of some basics of their language. Teachers who are aware of the grammar and phonology of their students' languages are in a better position to understand why students make certain mistakes and to predict the problems students may encounter as a result of their native language. For instance, if EAP teachers are aware that Arabic language does not have /p/, /v/, /n/ and /r/, teachers may find focussed ways to help their Saudi students. It is of course challenging for an EAP educator to know the language of all students in EAP classes due to their diversity but it may be possible by finding out through an online survey about class representation of languages at the beginning of a course. This would help teachers visualize what languages will be the focus of interest during course delivery. Studying learners' languages will not only help in engaging students but would also help teachers understand how challenging it can be to learn another language, which in turn sensitises them to their own use of language in the classroom – choice of words, speed of delivery, clear enunciation and so on. Asking their students about similarities and differences across languages would help when drawing students' attention to language structures. This in turn would help teachers to learn some basics of their students' language. Training programs could highlight features of certain languages and problems faced by students from different nationalities. This could help the pre-service teacher to be aware of these challenges in advance so that they come well prepared to deal with such issues in class.

#### *7.6.4.3 Use of textbooks*

The use of a textbook to teach depends upon a number of factors that need to be kept in consideration. Based on the findings, it is recommended that students should be given a course outline or a syllabus at the start of their course, so that they are aware of their study plans. This would give them confidence and help them to keep track of their studies. Supplementary materials could be used if the institution's policy requires teachers to make use of a prescribed textbook. It is recommended that the teacher may look at such a textbook as a toolkit and should

be allowed to modify, change, eliminate or add to the material in the prescribed textbook as discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Teachers must remind themselves that a balanced approach is important when making decisions on the use of a textbook. It is also important that perceptions of students be considered in order for teachers to understand whether to adhere to prescribed materials or to use their own or find some middle approach to address students' needs to fit with their concept of effective teachers.

The textbook could be used as a resource to develop cultural competence in language learners and teachers may avail themselves of such opportunity to explain the cultural aspects of some classroom practices they use. Given that the language teacher has the responsibility to develop intercultural competence in EAP learners, Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) suggested that the teacher needs to go beyond the textbook by exposing learners to various cultural themes such as gender, religion, social classes that offer deeper understanding of different cultures (as cited in Newton et al., 2020). However it must be remembered that for successful cultivation of intercultural competence in learners, an effective teacher needs to be culturally sensitive so that unintentional offence can be avoided.

#### *7.6.4.4 Use of technology*

The benefits of using technology cannot be ignored in this era when technology has revolutionized teaching in a number of ways. Although participating Saudi students do not see the use of technology as being associated with effective teaching, teachers need to be aware of the benefits associated with its use. One participant of this study highlighted that the teacher made use of internet-based resources (Ted Talk) but did not state whether it was helpful for language development and did not relate the notion of teacher effectiveness to the use of technology. In the future students in EAP will most likely be digital natives and may have different perceptions regarding the use of technology and teacher effectiveness as compared to the perceptions of Saudi students in this study. Therefore, the use of technology cannot be ignored by effective teachers. Integrating the use of technology in lessons may appear difficult to implement especially when there is a need to convince 'digital immigrant' teachers to embed it in their lessons. But this issue could be dealt with by promoting the benefits of using websites to encourage students' participation in learning. This could be promoted through newsletters, brochures, library boards and professional development programs. The teachers may be made aware of the available internet resources for learning such as game-based learning platforms (Kahoot) as suggested by one participant and how to practically use them in class. Teacher training programs need to make teachers aware of available resources and teach them how to

effectively use them in class. Demonstrating the use of technology in an EAP lesson is important to make teachers aware of the power of technology in saving their time and facilitating learning. Therefore, teacher education programs may focus on new ways of engaging students that promote their interaction with technology to foster students' learning. Another aspect that needs to be raised in recommending the use of technology is the availability of resources in classrooms. Availability of resources cannot be ignored when considering teacher effectiveness. The use of overhead projectors is important in classrooms and if smartboards are affordable then this could further facilitate teaching. If resources are limited, then the role of EAP coordinators would be important in collecting online resources for teachers to use in class. Online resources could be given by teachers to featured students for independent learning.

#### *7.6.4.5 Culturally responsive interaction*

Overall, in the light of findings of this study, the area of culturally responsive teaching becomes significantly important in EAP classrooms. It is important to remember that culture is 'at the heart of all we do in the name of education, whether that is curriculum, instruction, administration, or performance assessment' (Gay, 2010, p. 8). Teacher use of humour, use of students' language, choice of materials to teach, group work activities, personality all have cultural elements to them. This also draws our attention to the need for skills in intercultural communication in teaching and learning in EAP classrooms. The participants of this study draw our attention to the fact that an effective teacher makes use of intercultural awareness to address students' needs (Jin & Cortazzi, 2017). This helps in creating an environment that has a sense of respect and strong bonding where students feel they are treated respectfully and equally. The teacher may use the knowledge of students' cultures and attributes of effective teachers to facilitate students' growth and learning. In doing so, a teacher creates an environment that makes students feel comfortable to voice their opinions about different behaviours that are associated with ineffective teaching practices in the classroom. Students' perceptions would therefore be helpful in exploring the activities and pedagogical practices and behaviour that have cultural elements to them (Jin & Cortazzi, 2017). This would make EAP teaching more meaningful to students and help teachers to reflect on their teaching practices.

### *7.6.5 Native vs Non-native teachers*

The findings revealed that the Saudi participants perceived some aspects related to NESTs in a negative way in the Australian context. The issue relates to a lack of cultural knowledge and also to subject knowledge associated to some poorly qualified NESTs present in the classroom.

The myth around 'who knows the language can teach it' was not supported by the students. In order to qualify to teach EAP programs, Australian language centres must have lecturers who hold a recognised university undergraduate degree or higher or equivalent and a recognised AQF 8 or higher TESOL Qualification or equivalent or a recognised university undergraduate degree in any discipline with CELTA or TESOL Certificate IV qualification. These core requirements are already in place in Australia and help to filter the issue that relates to a lack of teaching knowledge for effective teachers. However, the practice of hiring volunteer native speaker tutors to help students practice their speaking skills should be carefully considered in regard to qualifications. Based on participants' perceptions, it is recommended that educators should be hired on the basis of qualifications, and this should not be compromised at any cost. Ignoring this issue would lead to ineffective teaching based on a lack of the necessary knowledge for teaching English language and which cannot be compensated for by native speaker fluency. It is hoped that Saudi participants' views of effective English teachers encourage administrators and managers in Australian EAP contexts to employ qualified NNESTs to teach in their programs.

### *7.7 Recommendations for further research*

Based on the contributions that this study has made to knowledge, the following are possible areas that future research studies may explore:

1. Focus on teacher effectiveness in ESL contexts. When carrying out this study, little empirical data was available on effective English teachers from the perspective of students in an ESL context. This study will help to advance the concept of effective English teachers in ESL EAP contexts. There was also no survey available on English teacher effectiveness in an ESL context. In future research, a questionnaire could be designed by conducting further interviews with students to then develop an instrument that could be used in the ESL context. The students in the interviews will identify attributes that may not be present in the existing questionnaires and in previous studies.
2. Comparing teacher and student perceptions. Future studies may look into the perceptions of teachers and Saudi students in order to see the similarities and dissimilarities in their views. This would help teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and behaviours in order to best address their Saudi students' needs.
3. Levels of English proficiency. Future studies may collect data from students with low level English language proficiency in order to capture the differences in perception

from low and intermediate EAP classes. Perhaps there are variations in opinions between Saudi students in various levels across English language proficiency.

4. Use of humour. Little empirical data is available on the use of humour with international students in ESL contexts. Future studies can look into the effectiveness of humour with ESL students particularly in an EAP class. In addition, types of appropriate humour that may be suitable for EAP students can be explored in depth in order to create a language culture to enhance the English language learning of students.
5. Group work. The effectiveness of group work can be explored in detail. The participants of the current study perceived group work to be an important aspect and that if the teacher is culturally aware when assigning groups, good results can be achieved. However, it would be interesting to see whether it helps in developing EAP students' language proficiency. While a group composition of host and international students helps in improving language skills, this may not be the case in EAP classes where all international students are on almost the same English proficiency level. It is worth unpacking whether group work helps building all language skills that are required in EAP classes or whether certain specific areas are improved as a result of collaboration. This may help EAP teachers to reflect on their pedagogical practices and review them to achieve maximum gains from them.
6. Assessment. There is a lack of research in the field of assessment in EAP courses. More research is needed that focuses on students' and teachers' perceptions of exams, grading and assessment criteria, which has been shown to have links with a teacher's effectiveness. Future studies may look into this issue so that a teacher's effectiveness can be viewed in relation to student achievement.
7. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT). There is limited literature available on CRT in EAP classrooms in Australia. Research is needed to describe the practices of an effective EAP teacher in relation to CRT. This would help teachers learn about the trends and practices used by effective teachers and respond to learners from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds by incorporating students' learning styles. DeCapua (2018) advised that teachers need to learn students' expectations for teaching and learning and how pedagogies differ to students' cultures, which is a point that could usefully be researched.
8. Use of textbooks. Little is known about the relationship between the use of textbooks and teacher effectiveness in ESL contexts where students' perceptions may be impacted because of their different learning experiences and learning styles. More research is

needed to expand the knowledge of what works in EAP contexts in relation to the use of textbooks with different learners, experiences and teaching styles (Menkabu & Harwood, 2014).

9. Access to adult education. Researching with EAP students presented a challenge in collecting data for this study. It was extremely difficult to convince the education program directors to collect data from international students even after receiving approval from the university's human ethics committee. In the future, researchers might make use of the TESOL community platform or conferences to draw EAP centres' attention to the importance of students' perceptions of teachers' effectiveness. It is important that the centres be reassured about research exploring students' and teachers' beliefs on the notion of teachers' effectiveness. The idea is not to evaluate a teacher's performance but to explore beliefs and how these impact on students' learning. Once this awareness is brought to educators in the centres, data collection should be easier and future research in the area of teacher effectiveness could advance.
10. Survey use. If the current survey is to be used in future studies, the following are some recommendations to improve it for EAP settings. The first recommendation is to add a section on how to satisfy students' needs and expectations with the curriculum of the EAP. This would help to learn whether the perceptions directly or indirectly relate to teachers and also separately address issues that relate to teaching and the problematic areas of curriculum. Second, a teacher's knowledge of students' cultures must be taken into account when framing research in the area of EAP teacher effectiveness by adding topics in the questionnaires and also in interview protocols. Third, translating the survey into students' own language can help to ensure that students fully understand the items. Although this would be difficult because EAP classes comprise students from different language backgrounds, the results will help in understanding the perceptions of effective teachers in relation to students' English language proficiency. This would help to capture perceptions from students studying at different levels of EAP. Fourth, while a number of different attributes emerged in the analysis (e.g., motivation, humour, fairness), the findings do not speak to their interplay. Using a survey with a substantial sample size of at least 10% of the targeted population and performing MANOVA analysis would help in understanding the interplay of different attributes affecting students' perceptions.
11. Teacher ethnicity. There has been little research carried out on the relationship between teacher effectiveness and teacher ethnicity. This could be a sensitive topic, but the

findings could be useful to many teachers teaching EAP around the world. It would be far more beneficial in the current global circumstance to look at whether teachers are monolingual English speakers or multilingual English speakers and to investigate the professional competence of English language teachers, including linguistic competence, academic discourse competence, communicative competence and intercultural competence, whether a native or non-native speaker of English. It would also be beneficial to investigate the teaching qualifications and experience of English language educators in EAP settings, whether native or non-native speakers. The results could then be compared with the perceptions of students and teachers to see if there are matches or mismatches. This would help to understand whether students have different perceptions of effectiveness for teachers from different nationalities. The findings would also be useful for native and non-native teachers to better understand their students in order meet their expectations and address their needs.

12. Students' EAP performance. The academic literature strongly suggests that an effective teacher directly influences the academic achievement of the students (Stronge, 2010). Effectiveness of a teacher can be studied in relation to students' academic performance in EAP. Future studies can look into students' perceptions of effective English teachers and then measure the impact on students' learning outcomes. This would help to establish the connections between different qualities and their impact on student learning. The students' perceptions of effective teachers could be compared with students' learning performance to better understand what works and what does not in the reality of EAP contexts. This will allow a better understanding of students' perceptions in relation to their academic achievement to capture the concept of exemplary teaching in EAP.

### *7.8 Limitations of this study*

As mentioned in the literature review, the present investigation explores an area that has not attracted much attention to Saudi students studying English in Australia. Therefore, the study is bound to have some limitations and the findings will need further verification through future research in this area.

When carrying out this study, it was difficult to access books and journals related to Saudi students studying EAP in their home country. Because the literature could not be found in Australian universities' libraries it was difficult to know whether the literature did not exist at all or was simply not available in Australian libraries. The researcher tackled this issue by

drawing on past connections and building new ones with some key academics based in Saudi Arabia, and also following key researchers in education in Saudi Arabia on social media to learn about their latest books and research. However, difficulty in keeping abreast of new research developments in Saudi Arabia was nevertheless a limitation on some aspects of the study.

Although case studies provide enriched data from the selected population, the findings cannot be generalized, and the sample size in the preliminary study is an obvious limitation. As the study depended on having access to international students specifically from EAP courses, it was difficult to recruit a large number of participants for the preliminary study. It had been planned to have participation of at least 50 international and 50 Saudi students so that other statistical tests could have been run to see the differences in both groups. However, using the mean scores made the results much simpler and easier to comprehend, particularly in relation to the restricted time the researcher had for data analysis.

The researcher faced some limitations caused by ethical considerations when collecting data. Some education centres were reluctant to allow the collection of data and publication of findings as part of their policy, even though the researcher clearly stated in the information sheet the agenda and the confidentiality in publishing the results of the study. I believe that misunderstanding of terms may have played a part in this. While the research agenda was simply to investigate students' perceptions of effective English teachers, centres may have assumed it involved an evaluation of their teachers' performance that could impact the reputation of the centre in some way. The distinction between 'perceptions' and 'evaluation' should have been explained and reiterated verbally and in written form so that the managers who might not be from English language teaching backgrounds could understand that the agenda was not to evaluate their teachers' performance and that the term 'teacher effectiveness' was in relation to students' previous and current learning preferences. This issue is the basis of point 9 in the recommendation section (7.5).

There were also other limitations related to difficulties in data collection. First, only a few Saudis were enrolled in EAP during the time of data collection due to some changes with the availability of scholarships, so few students were available to participate. Second, the original research plan was to conduct interviews with Saudi students before and after classroom observation, but EAP courses last only for 12-16 weeks and it was, therefore, difficult to access the same participants in this short period of time, especially because the month of Ramadan

and Eid coincided with the data collection phase. The third difficulty related to gender. Unfortunately, it was difficult to collect data from female Saudi students, despite the fact that the researcher was female. In Saudi culture, females are not encouraged to openly talk about negative issues, so participants were hesitant to be interviewed. In addition, Saudi females tend to be very reserved and have a lot of family commitments, which made it difficult to approach them for interview sessions. At the same time, Saudi male participants are generally hesitant to interact with females and being a female researcher, there was some hesitation in the beginning, although, as the interviews proceeded, the researcher found male participants to be both expressive and willing to share their thoughts. All these factors could have influenced the findings in some way. However, every effort was made to make the participants as comfortable as possible by being flexible with timing, locations, and ways of conducting interviews.

The findings of this study need to be viewed with caution. Teachers need to be mindful that students' perceptions can change over a period of time as a result of new teaching practices or situations. Another reason for perceptions to change is because culture, which incorporates values and beliefs, may change over time as 'culture is not static or fixed' (DeCapua, 2018, p.13). In addition, due to the small sample size in the preliminary study, firm conclusions cannot be made in relation to the differences found between the Saudi students and other international students. For these reasons, the results and findings of this study should be treated as tentative and not conclusive. The area of students' perceptions of effective teachers, therefore, should not be neglected and further studies are needed to address students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness so that EAP teachers can stay abreast of changes.

Although it is fair to say that students' perceptions of effective teachers cannot always determine how EAP educators should behave and work, this study has highlighted some genuine areas of interest that teachers struggle with and may not be aware of such as the cross-cultural use of humour and of appropriate grouping for collaborative work. However, student evaluations or perceptions should be carefully considered as they may negatively impact the hiring and firing policy and may encourage poor teaching rather than effective teaching. Therefore, it is important to separate the teaching factors (e.g. personality and teaching styles) from unrelated teaching factors (e.g. gender, physical attractiveness, leniency in grading and the like) that may lead to likeability of the educator of which the educators may have no control.

### *7.9 Conclusion*

From the findings of this study, it is clear that teachers cannot be effective if they are unfamiliar with the cultures of their students. There are attributes that are identified by the students in Western cultures that are highly admired by local university students; however, the EAP context is different. One cannot assume that perceptions of teachers will be aligned with students on the notion of teacher effectiveness in the EAP classroom where different cultures meet; therefore, good teaching will continuously involve a cyclical process of 'behave-reflect-decide' and will always be a matter of constant reflective inquiry (Prodromou, 2020). This study has highlighted those features that make EAP teachers self-aware and to better address Saudi students' needs. To conclude, for any classroom where there exist different cultures, teachers need to understand what Playsted (2019) asserted; that teachers are responsible for not just being cultural leaders but also cultural learners. Teachers who make an effort to learn their students' culture embrace openness and curiosity and continue to learn as they encounter different cultures.

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# Appendices

## *Appendix A: Independent Sample t-test Results of Significance of Difference of Individual Response in 47 Different Student Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness Components on Nationality*

| Dependent Variable | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower | Upper |
| Personality - 1. develop good relationships with students | Equal variances assumed | 0.20 | 0.66 | 1.79 | 46 | 0.08 | 0.35 | 0.20 | -0.04 | 0.74 |
| Personality - 2. care about students | Equal variances assumed | 1.48 | 0.23 | 3.20 | 46 | 0.00* | 0.59 | 0.18 | 0.22 | 0.95 |
| Personality - 3. are patient | Equal variances assumed | 0.03 | 0.88 | 1.56 | 46 | 0.13 | 0.29 | 0.18 | -0.08 | 0.65 |
| Personality - 4. listen to students | Equal variances assumed | 0.03 | 0.86 | 0.84 | 46 | 0.41 | 0.17 | 0.20 | -0.23 | 0.57 |
| Personality - 5. have a positive attitude in general | Equal variances not assumed | 6.60 | 0.01 | 1.31 | 12.55 | 0.21 | 0.34 | 0.26 | -0.22 | 0.90 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personality - 6. understand the student's English education background | Equal variances not assumed | 5.90 | 0.02 | 2.83 | 19.48 | 0.01* | 0.55 | 0.20 | 0.14 | 0.96 |
| Personality - 7. understand the different student levels | Equal variances assumed | 1.04 | 0.31 | -0.32 | 46 | 0.75 | -0.07 | 0.21 | -0.50 | 0.36 |
| Personality - 8. have a sense of humor | Equal variances assumed | 0.08 | 0.78 | 1.76 | 46 | 0.08 | 0.47 | 0.27 | -0.07 | 1.01 |
| Personality - 9. are polite | Equal variances assumed | 0.85 | 0.36 | -0.34 | 46 | 0.73 | -0.07 | 0.20 | -0.47 | 0.33 |
| Method of teaching - 10. teach from a textbook | Equal variances assumed | 0.21 | 0.65 | 0.59 | 46 | 0.56 | 0.22 | 0.38 | -0.54 | 0.99 |
| Method of teaching - 11. give useful feedback on written work in appropriate ways | Equal variances assumed | 0.40 | 0.53 | 0.53 | 46 | 0.60 | 0.11 | 0.21 | -0.32 | 0.54 |
| Method of teaching - 12. give clear explanations | Equal variances not assumed | 11.82 | 0.00 | 1.07 | 11.85 | 0.31 | 0.28 | 0.26 | -0.29 | 0.84 |
| Method of teaching - 13. use examples | Equal variances assumed | 2.32 | 0.13 | 1.13 | 46 | 0.26 | 0.22 | 0.20 | -0.17 | 0.61 |
| Method of teaching - 14. use a variety of teaching methods | Equal variances not assumed | 5.34 | 0.03 | 0.85 | 10.97 | 0.42 | 0.40 | 0.47 | -0.63 | 1.42 |
| Method of teaching - 15. correct writing errors | Equal variances assumed | 3.39 | 0.07 | 2.65 | 46 | 0.01* | 0.56 | 0.21 | 0.13 | 0.98 |
| Method of teaching - 16. correct speaking errors | Equal variances assumed | 0.15 | 0.70 | 0.15 | 46 | 0.88 | 0.04 | 0.28 | -0.51 | 0.60 |
| Method of teaching - 17. teach grammar | Equal variances assumed | 1.92 | 0.17 | 2.33 | 46 | 0.02* | 0.57 | 0.24 | 0.08 | 1.06 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Method of teaching - 18. encourage students to work in groups | Equal variances assumed | 0.00 | 0.97 | 1.67 | 46 | 0.10 | 0.44 | 0.27 | -0.09 | 0.98 |
| Method of teaching - 19. make appropriate use of technologies in class | Equal variances assumed | 0.04 | 0.85 | -0.22 | 46 | 0.83 | -0.06 | 0.26 | -0.58 | 0.47 |
| Method of teaching - 20. adjust English language to match student's proficiency level | Equal variances assumed | 0.57 | 0.45 | 2.10 | 46 | 0.04* | 0.50 | 0.24 | 0.02 | 0.97 |
| Method of teaching - 21. teach vocabulary | Equal variances assumed | 0.08 | 0.78 | 0.73 | 46 | 0.47 | 0.20 | 0.27 | -0.35 | 0.74 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 22. encourage student participation in class | Equal variances assumed | 0.53 | 0.47 | 0.66 | 46 | 0.51 | 0.14 | 0.21 | -0.29 | 0.57 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 23. encourage students with low confidence to participate in class activities | Equal variances assumed | 2.39 | 0.13 | 1.15 | 46 | 0.26 | 0.35 | 0.31 | -0.26 | 0.97 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 24. talk slowly in English | Equal variances assumed | 2.44 | 0.13 | -0.77 | 46 | 0.44 | -0.25 | 0.33 | -0.91 | 0.41 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 25. use easy words | Equal variances assumed | 1.66 | 0.20 | -0.07 | 46 | 0.95 | -0.03 | 0.37 | -0.77 | 0.72 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 26. ask questions frequently | Equal variances assumed | 0.85 | 0.36 | 1.37 | 46 | 0.18 | 0.39 | 0.28 | -0.18 | 0.96 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 27. ask questions then wait for students to answer | Equal variances assumed | 0.16 | 0.69 | 1.36 | 46 | 0.18 | 0.33 | 0.25 | -0.16 | 0.83 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 28. ask individual students to answer questions | Equal variances assumed | 1.00 | 0.32 | 1.72 | 46 | 0.09 | 0.50 | 0.29 | -0.09 | 1.08 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 29. give students plenty of time to answer questions | Equal variances assumed | 1.63 | 0.21 | 1.82 | 46 | 0.08 | 0.52 | 0.29 | -0.06 | 1.09 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 30. use body language to communicate with students | Equal variances assumed | 0.48 | 0.49 | 0.22 | 46 | 0.83 | 0.05 | 0.24 | -0.43 | 0.53 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 42. are familiar with the cultural background of the learners | Equal variances assumed | 1.89 | 0.18 | 0.85 | 46 | 0.40 | 0.27 | 0.32 | -0.37 | 0.92 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 32. know the student's personality | Equal variances assumed | 1.71 | 0.20 | 2.17 | 46 | 0.04* | 0.75 | 0.35 | 0.05 | 1.45 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 33. make students feel comfortable in the class | Equal variances assumed | 1.80 | 0.19 | -0.55 | 46 | 0.58 | -0.10 | 0.17 | -0.45 | 0.25 |
| Communication style and Cultural understanding - 34. respect learner's culture | Equal variances assumed | 0.31 | 0.58 | 0.12 | 46 | 0.91 | 0.03 | 0.27 | -0.51 | 0.57 |
| Fairness - 35. treat all students fairly | Equal variances assumed | 1.15 | 0.29 | 0.81 | 46 | 0.42 | 0.46 | 0.57 | -0.69 | 1.62 |
| Fairness - 36. prepare students well for exams | Equal variances assumed | 0.16 | 0.69 | 3.13 | 46 | 0.00* | 1.63 | 0.52 | 0.58 | 2.67 |
| Fairness - 37. give students clear grading guidelines | Equal variances assumed | 4.13 | 0.05 | 1.94 | 46 | 0.06 | 1.04 | 0.54 | -0.04 | 2.13 |
| Subject Knowledge and Credibility - 38. are well qualified for English language teaching | Equal variances assumed | 0.00 | 0.95 | -0.03 | 46 | 0.98 | -0.02 | 0.52 | -1.07 | 1.04 |
| Subject Knowledge and Credibility - 39. have a good knowledge of grammar | Equal variances not assumed | 10.08 | 0.00 | 0.60 | 13.55 | 0.56 | 0.40 | 0.67 | -1.04 | 1.84 |
| Subject Knowledge and Credibility - 40. have a good knowledge of vocabulary | Equal variances assumed | 0.70 | 0.41 | 0.54 | 46 | 0.59 | 0.31 | 0.57 | -0.83 | 1.44 |
| Subject Knowledge and Credibility - 41. are native speakers of English | Equal variances not assumed | 50.02 | 0.00 | 5.13 | 44.28 | 0.00* | 1.91 | 0.37 | 1.16 | 2.66 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subject Knowledge and Credibility - 42. can speak a language other than English | Equal variances not assumed | 12.86 | 0.00 | 3.24 | 21.86 | 0.00* | 1.67 | 0.51 | 0.60 | 2.73 |
| Organization and Preparation - 43. are well prepared for every lesson | Equal variances not assumed | 6.55 | 0.01 | -1.40 | 18.59 | 0.18 | -0.70 | 0.50 | -1.74 | 0.35 |
| Organization and Preparation - 44. provide an outline detailing weekly course content | Equal variances assumed | 0.88 | 0.35 | -0.46 | 46 | 0.65 | -0.27 | 0.57 | -1.42 | 0.89 |
| Organization and Preparation - 45. explain the instructional methods to the class | Equal variances assumed | 0.53 | 0.47 | 0.35 | 46 | 0.73 | 0.20 | 0.57 | -0.95 | 1.34 |
| Organization and Preparation - 46. tell students the lesson objectives each lesson | Equal variances assumed | 0.29 | 0.60 | 0.32 | 46 | 0.75 | 0.17 | 0.55 | -0.92 | 1.27 |
| Organization and Preparation - 47. use extra materials related to the topic | Equal variances assumed | 3.64 | 0.06 | -0.21 | 46 | 0.84 | -0.13 | 0.60 | -1.33 | 1.08 |

*Significant difference at level of significance of 0.05

## *Appendix B: Survey*

### Section 1: Background and general information

**Age**

- 18-22
- 22-26
- 26-36
- 37 or above

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other

**Marital Status**

- Married
- Single
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married
- Other

**Nationality**

**In which country/countries have you spent most time learning English?**

**How many years have you been studying English?**

- 0-1
- 2-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- more than 20

**When did you start learning English in the education system?**

- Kindergarten
- Primary

- Intermediate
- Secondary
- University

**In your home country, did you attend any English language course before coming to Australia?**

- Yes
- No

**How long have you been studying English for Academic Purposes in Australia?**

- 1-6 months
- 6-12 months
- more than a year

## What do you believe are the qualities of effective English teachers?

### Effective English teachers

**Personality**

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Slightly agree | Slightly disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. develop good relationships with students | | | | | | |
| 2. care about students | | | | | | |
| 3. are patient | | | | | | |
| 4. listen to students | | | | | | |
| 5. have a positive attitude in general | | | | | | |
| 6. understand the student's English education background | | | | | | |
| 7. understand the different student levels | | | | | | |
| 8. have a sense of humor | | | | | | |
| 9. are polite | | | | | | |

### Effective English teachers

**Method of teaching**

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Slightly agree | Slightly disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. teach from a textbook | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 11. give useful feedback on written work in appropriate ways | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 12. give clear explanations | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 13. use examples | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 14. use a variety of teaching methods | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 15. correct writing errors | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 16. correct speaking errors | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 17. teach grammar | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 18. encourage students to work in groups | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 19. make appropriate use of technologies in class | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 20. adjust English language to match student's proficiency level | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 21. teach vocabulary | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Effective English teachers

### Communication style and Cultural understanding

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Slightly agree | Slightly disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 22. encourage student participation in class | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 23. encourage students with low confidence to participate in class activities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 24. talk slowly in English | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 25. use easy words | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 26. ask questions frequently | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Slightly agree | Slightly disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27. ask questions then wait for students to answer | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 28. ask individual students to answer questions | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 29. give students plenty of time to answer questions | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 30. use body language to communicate with students | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 31. are familiar with the cultural background of the learners | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 32. know the student's personality | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 33. make students feel comfortable in the class | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 34. respect learner's culture | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ◉ |

## Effective English teachers

### Fairness

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Slightly agree | Slightly disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 35. treat all students fairly | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 36. prepare students well for exams | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 37. give students clear grading guidelines | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Effective English teachers

### Subject Knowledge and Credibility

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Slightly agree | Slightly disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 38. are well qualified for English language teaching | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 39. have a good knowledge of grammar | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Slightly agree | Slightly disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 40. have a good knowledge of vocabulary | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 41. are native speakers of English | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 42. can speak a language other than English | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Effective English teachers

### Organization and Preparation

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Slightly agree | Slightly disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 43. are well prepared for every lesson | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 44. provide an outline detailing weekly course content | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 45. explain the instructional methods to the class | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 46. tell students the lesson objectives each lesson | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| 47. use extra materials related to the topic | | | | | | |

## *Appendix C: Interview Protocols*

**Interview Questions أسئلة المقابلة**

1. **Warm up questions e.g. asking about family, etc.**

**أسئلة مبدئية (عن العائلة إلخ…)**

2. **What were your fears and expectations before coming to Australia? of coming to Australia? on arrival in Australia?**

**ماهي مخاوفك وتوقعاتك من فكرة القدوم لأستراليا و قبل قدومك لأستراليا وعند قدومك لها؟**

3. **When did you start learning English in the education system? Was your learning disrupted at any stage in your education?**

**منذ متى بدأت تتعلم الانجليزي في التعليم النظامي وهل توقف أو تعثر تعليمك في أي مرحلة من المراحل؟**

4. **In Saudi Arabia, did you attend any English language preparatory course before coming to Australia?**

**في السعودية هل حضرت أي دورة تحضيرية لتعلم الانجليزي؟**

5. **Why did you choose to study in Australia?**

**لماذا اخترت الدراسة في أستراليا؟**

6. **How long have you been studying English for Academic purposes in Australia?**

**كم المدة التي قضيتها في تعلم الانجليزي للأغراض الأكاديمية في استراليا؟**

7. **What degree do you plan to study at a university in Australia?**

**ماهي الدرجة التي تنوي دراستها في الجامعة في استراليا؟**

8. **Do you intend to return to your home country or find work in a country other than Australia after graduating your studies?**

**هل تنوي الرجوع لبلدك بعد الدراسة أو تنوي البحث عن عمل في أي دولة أخرى غير استراليا؟**

| No | Questions (main & probing) | In Arabic |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tell me three things that you liked the most about your English language classes in your home country? (Why?) | أخبرني عن أكثر ثلاثة أشياء تحبها في فصول اللغة الانجليزية في بلدك. لماذا؟ |
| 2 | Tell me three things that you liked the least about your English language classes in your home country? (Why?) | أخبرني عن أقل ثلاثة أشياء تحبها في فصول اللغة الانجليزية في بلدك. لماذا؟ |
| 3 | How did you feel about the way English was taught in your home country? (Why?) | ماهو انطباعك حول تدريس اللغة الانجليزية في بلدك؟ لماذا؟ |
| 4 | Have you ever disagreed with one of your English teachers? What did you do? | هل مرة اختلفت مع مدرس اللغة الانجليزية في بلدك؟ ماذا فعلت؟ |
| 5 | Who do you think was an effective English teacher in your country (you don't have to give a name)? What do you think made this teacher effective? | من الذي تعتقد أنه كان مدرسا قديرا وفعالا للغة الانجليزية في بلدك (لايتوجب ذكر اسم معين)؟ مالذي جعل ذاك المدرس قديرا؟ |
| 6 | What do you remember the most from your best English language teacher from Saudi Arabia? | ماهي أكثر الأشياء التي تذكرها عن أفضل مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية الذي درسوك في السعودية؟ |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 7 | Who do you think was an ineffective English teacher in your country (you don't have to give a name)? What do you think made this teacher ineffective? | من الذي تعتقد أنه كان مدرسا غير فعال للغة الانجليزية في بلدك (لايتوجب ذكر اسم معين)؟ مالذي جعل ذاك المدرس غير فعال؟ |
| 8 | What are the things that you like the most about your English teachers in Australia? (Why?) | ماهي أكثر الأشياء التي تحبها عن مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية الذي درسوك في استراليا؟ لماذا؟ |
| 9 | What are the things that you like the least about your English teachers in the Australia? (Why?) | ماهي أقل الأشياء التي تحبها عن مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية الذي درسوك في استراليا؟ لماذا؟ |
| | If you could have changed anything about your English Language classes or teachers in your home country, what would it have been? | لو كنت ستغير شيئا ما في فصول اللغة الانجليزية في السعودية فماذا عسى أن يكون ذلك الشيء؟ |
| 10 | What are the similarities and differences you see in your experiences learning English in your home country and in Australia? | ماهي التشابهات والفروقات التي رأيتها في تجربتك في دراسة الانجليزية في السعودية واستراليا؟ |
| 11 | What do you do when you disagree with your English teachers? (Why?) | ماذا تصنع إذا اختلفت مع مدرس الانجليزية؟ لماذا؟ |
| 12 | How would you describe an effective English teacher? Tell me three things that every English teacher should do. | ماهو وصفك الشخصي لمدرس الانجليزي القدير والفعال؟ أخبرني عن ثلاثة أشياء يتوجب على مدرسي الانجليزي فعلها |
| 13 | What are the problems you face in English language classroom in Australia? | ماهي أبرز المشاكل التي تواجهها في فصول اللغة الانجليزية في استراليا؟ |
| 14 | What do you expect from your English language teachers? (in terms of preparation, teaching methods, feedback, communication skills, use of technologies and so on) | ماذا تتوقع من مدرسك اللغة الانجليزية (بخصوص التحضير وطرق التدريس، التصحيح مهارات الاتصال واستخدام التقنية إلخ) |
| 15 | Have you found it difficult to approach teachers in Australia? (Was oral communication a problem?)<br>Do you have difficulty speaking English to express your needs?<br>Is it easy to communicate with other international students? | هل وجدت صعوبة أنك تتواصل مع مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية في استراليا (هل كان التواصل الشفهي معهم مشكلة قائمة معك)؟<br>هل تجد صعوبة في التعبير عن حاجاتك؟<br>هل هو صعب أم سهل تواصلك مع الطلاب الأجانب الآخرين؟ |
| 17 | Do you think the use of technology is important in the class? | هل تظن أن استخدام التقنية مهم جدا في الفصل؟ |
| 18 | Is group work in English class important? Why? | هل العمل ضمن قروبات مهم جدا في فصول اللغة الانجليزية؟ لماذا؟ |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 19 | Have you experienced a teacher who has had a particularly good sense of humour? How was this expressed? Do you think it's important for a teacher to have good sense of humour? | هل واجهت معلما من قبل لديه حس الفكاهة؟ كيف كان يبدي حسه الفكاهي لكم؟ هل تظن أنه من المطلوب أن يتحلى المدرس بحس الفكاهة؟ |
| 20 | Have you experienced a teacher whose personality you liked? What was good about it? Do you think it's important for a teacher to understand students' personality? | هل واجهت معلما من قبل أحببت شخصيته؟ ماهي أفضل جوانب شخصيته تلك؟ هل تظن أنه من المهم للمعلم أن يفهم شخصيات الطلاب؟ |
| 21 | Have you experienced a teacher who treated students unfairly? How did they demonstrate unfairness? Do you think it's important for a teacher to be 'fair' with students? | هل واجهت معلما من قبل عامل الطلاب بظلم؟ كيف كان يبدي ظلمه ذاك للطلاب؟ وهل تعتقد أنه من المهم أن يعامل الطلاب بالعدل؟ |
| 22 | Have you experienced a teacher who had good understanding of your culture? How did they demonstrate understanding of your culture? Do you think it's important for a teacher to understand the culture of students? | هل واجهت معلما من قبل لديه إلمام جيد بثقافتك السعودية؟ كيف كان يبدي فهمه لثقافتك؟ وهل تعتقد أنه من المهم أن يتفهم المعلم ثقافات الطلاب؟ |
| 23 | Which one you consider is to be the most important about good English teacher? Why?<br>• The Personality of the teacher<br>• Being Organized and prepared<br>• Good at Communication skills<br>• Understands students culture<br>• Being fair<br>• Being Knowledgeable and Credibility | ماهي أهم نقطة من الآتي تعتقد أنها أهم شئ يتحلى به معلم اللغة الانجليزية: ولماذا؟<br>• شخصية المعلم<br>• يكون منظم ومحضر<br>• ممتاز في مهارات التواصل<br>• متفهما لثقافات الطلاب<br>• عادل<br>• ذو علم ومصداقية |
| 24 | If you could have changed anything about your English Language classes or teachers in Australia, what would it have been? | لو كنت ستغير شيئا ما في فصول اللغة الانجليزية في استراليا فماذا عسى أن يكون ذلك الشيء؟ |
| 25 | Five years from now, what do you think you will remember the most from your best English Language teacher from Australia? | بعد خمس سنوات من الآن، ماذا تظن أجمل الأشياء التي ستحملها في ذهنك عن معلمي اللغة الانجليزية في استراليا. |

If there is anything further you would like to add to your comments on who is an effective language teacher, please write them below (in English or Arabic):
لو كان عندك شئ آخر تود ذكره وإضافته حول مدرس اللغة الانجليزية الفعال والقدير أرجو كتابة ذلك أدناه باللغة الانجليزية أو حتى العربية

### *Appendix D: The cover letter for participants*

The project is concerned with determining opinions of an effective teacher from the perspective of international and Saudi students. The research is being conducted as a part of a doctoral degree and will involve asking students to participate in an online questionnaire. The students can provide their email at the end of the survey if they wish to be contacted for an interview session.

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate students' perceptions of an effective English teacher in order to understand their needs and to improve teachers' effectiveness in EAP (English for Academic purposes) classrooms in Australia. The voice of students will help to inform the educators about how students learn effectively and to prepare them for university education. The study will provide insights into students' views about effective EAP classroom practices which should be particularly informative for teachers working in Australian Language centres and colleges. The outcomes of this research will provide the EAP teachers with greater understanding of students' needs and their cultural differences. In addition, the findings will provide suggestions about different ways by which teacher can facilitate language learning. The text of the participant information sheet will appear before the online questionnaire.

The survey will take approximately 10-12 minutes to complete. Once you click on the link to begin the survey, the first page you will see is a Consent Agreement that describes the study and its ethical safeguards. By clicking the Start button, the online survey will begin. If you do not wish to participate, click No and the survey will automatically end, and you will be excluded from the data without any consequences. The researcher will not be able to exclude your responses once you have completed the online survey because the online survey is completely anonymous.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. The data will be excluded from the study if you wish to withdraw at any stage of the data collection. It is not anticipated that there are any risks to participation in this study beyond those encountered during everyday life. Data generated will be securely kept on University of South Australia at School of Education, Magill Campus G1-34 for a period of five years with access granted only to those involved with the project to maintain the confidentiality of all participants, unless otherwise required by law. All records containing personal information will remain confidential and no information which could lead to identification of any individual will be released, unless required by law. The researcher will provide a summary of findings upon completion of the research. For further information regarding the research project, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher Memona Dos at Tel: [redacted]; E-mail: dosmy005@mymail.unisa.edu.au

Participants or third parties who wish to lodge a complaint about either the study or the way it is being conducted should contact the Executive Officer of UniSA HREC in the first instance, email: humanethics@unisa.edu.au or tel: 8302 3118.

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the research supervisors: Dr Greg Restall
Tel: (08) 8302 4211; Greg.Restall@unisa.edu.au

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the project or questions about your rights as a participant, please contact Vicki Allen, the Human Ethics Compliance Officer of this Committee:
Tel: (08) 8302 3118; E-mail: Vicki.Allen@unisa.edu.au

If you feel that you would like to participate in the research, please sign the attached consent form.

Declaration: In clicking yes, I confirm that:
Participation is entirely voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. If there are any questions that I do not wish to answer, I have the right to not answer them.

· I understand that all records containing personal information will remain confidential and no information which could lead to the identification of any individual will be released unless required by law

· I understand that the researcher will take every care to remove responses from any identifying material as early as possible. Likewise, individuals' responses will be kept confidential by the researcher and not be identified in the reporting of the research. However, the researcher cannot guarantee the confidentiality or anonymity of material transferred by email or the internet

· I understand that by signing this form I am consenting to participate in the online survey.

<u>If you do not wish to participate, you can end the survey by clicking 'No'. You will be excluded from the data.</u>

## *Appendix E: Interview Consent Form*

University of South Australia
Education, Arts and Social Sciences

**Interview Consent Form**

The project is concerned with determining opinions of an effective language teacher from your perspectives.
This 40 minutes interview is being conducted as part of a PhD research at University of South Australia. I'd also like to inform you that anything discussed between us today, and any additional information you provide us with will be kept fully confidential and any details used in the report will not be identifiable as coming from you. Feel free to ask any questions during the interview and if you feel any discomfort you do not have to carry on. You can also take a break at any point within the duration of the interview.

**Declaration:**

In signing this form, I confirm that:

- Participation is entirely voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.
- If there are any questions that I do not wish to answer, I have the right to not answer them.
- My responses will be treated with full confidentiality. No individuals will be identifiable from the report of the research, or any publications arising from it.
- I understand that I will be audio-recorded with a wireless microphone during scheduled interviews should I participate.
- I understand that recordings will be securely held on University of South Australia grounds for a period of five years with access granted only to those involved with the project in order to maintain confidentiality of all participants.

A copy of the information provided above is available for you to take away.

……
**Consent Form**

If you agree to participate having read the information given above, please sign or initial below. This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

_____ Date _____
(Signature of participant)

### *Appendix F: Questionnaire Consent Form*

University of South Australia
Education, Arts and Social Sciences

**Questionnaire Consent Form**

The questionnaire is developed as part of my PhD research and is concerned with determining opinions of an effective language teacher from students' perspectives.

The completion of this questionnaire should only take about five minutes. Any information you provide with will be kept fully confidential and any details used in the report will not be identifiable as coming from you.

**Declaration:**

In signing this form, I confirm that:

- Participation is entirely voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.
- If there are any questions that I do not wish to answer, I have the right to not answer them.
- My responses will be treated with full confidentiality. No individuals will be identifiable from the report of the research, or any publications arising from it.

If you need to contact the researcher after participating, please send an email to dosmy005@mymail.unisa.edu.au

A copy of the information provided above is available for you to take away.

……

**Consent Form**

If you agree to participate having read the information given above, please sign or initial below. This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

_____ Date _____

(Signature of participant)

## *Appendix G: Classroom Observation Sheet*

| **Time:** **Day:** **Date:** / / |
|---|
| **Course:** |
| **No of students:** |

**Classroom behaviour**

| | |
|---|---|
| Seating arrangements | |
| Language used by students | |
| Discussion (student to student) | |
| Students questioning students | |
| Small group discussion | |
| Small group work | |
| Students interacting with who | |

1. **Technology**

| **Overhead projector** | **TV** | **Laptop** | **Computer** | **Whiteboard/Smart screen** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

2. **Student activity**

| | |
|---|---|
| Taking notes | |
| Asking questions | |
| Interaction pattern | |
| Asking for clarification | |
| Giving comments | |
| Books | |
| Handouts | |
| Other | |

**3. Teacher**

| | |
|---|---|
| Response to students' questions | |
| Proficiency level of the students (Taken into consideration) | |
| Repetition | |
| Clarification | |
| Use of L1 (if applicable) | |
| Body language | |
| Use of humour | |
| Flexibility | |
| Time allocated to groupwork | |
| Group dynamics | |

**4. Other**

## *Appendix I: Attributes of effective lecturers and teachers identified by Barn and Lock (2010) p. 140-141.*

| Category | Attribute: Effective teachers … |
|---|---|
| **Rapport** (sociability, empathy, personality, receptiveness) | • develop interpersonal relationships (Chen, 2005; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Xiao, 2006)<br>• are congenial (Chen, 2005; Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• share personal and professional life experiences (Chen, 2005; Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• listen to students (Desai et al., 2001; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Park & Lee, 2006; Rammal, 2006)<br>• care (Desai et al., 2001; Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• make themselves accessible for consultation (Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• have a sense of humour (Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• are patient (Desai et al., 2001; Kutnick & Jules, 1993; Payne, 1978; Rammal, 2006)<br>• have a positive attitude towards students (Desai et al., 2001; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Park & Lee, 2006; Rammal, 2006) |
| **Delivery** (personal style, communication, methodology. content) | • are enthusiastic (Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Kelley et al., 1991; Palmer, 2000)<br>• give clear explanations (Griemel-Fuhrmann, 2003; Kember & Wong, 2000; Kutnick & Jules, 1993)<br>• use good examples (Griemel-Fuhrmann, 2003; Palmer, 2000)<br>• use the students' native language selectively (ELT) (Auerbach,& Burgess 1985; Chen, 2005)<br>• vary their delivery methods (Chen, 2005; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Gorham, 1987)<br>• encourage group work and participation (Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Kelley et al., 1991; Reid, 1987)<br>• provide interesting and meaningful activities (ELT) (Park & Lee, 2006)<br>• emphasise error correction (ELT) (Nunan, 1989; Rammal, 2006; Yorio, 1989)<br>• provide pronunciation practice (ELT) (Nunan, 1989; Rammal, 2006)<br>• teach grammar rules (ELT) (Horwitz, 1987; Yorio, 1989)<br>• emphasise vocabulary (ELT) (Horwitz, 1987; Nunan, 1989; Yorio, 1989)<br>• prepare students for examinations (ELT) (Rammal, 2006; Xiao, 2006)<br>• tailor content to the students' English levels (ELT) (Park & Lee, 2006) |
| **Fairness** (impartiality, examination preparation, grading, transparency, workload) | • treat all students impartially (Desai et al., 2001; Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• produce examinations which closely relate to work covered in class (Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• make examinations which allow students to express their knowledge freely (Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• give prompt assignment feedback (Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• provide pre and post examination reviews (Kelley et al. 1991)<br>• provide clear grading guidelines (Desai et al., 2001)<br>• articulate policies regarding attendance and late assignment submissions (Desai et al., 2001)<br>• are flexible with grading (Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• impose a balanced workload (Faranda & Clarke, 2004) |
| **Knowledge and Credibility** | • have sound content knowledge of their discipline (Chen, 2005; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Kutnick & Jules, 1993; Xiao, 2006)<br>• go beyond the textbook (Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• are able to answer complex questions (Faranda & Clarke, 2004)<br>• use relevant real world examples in lessons (Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Kelley et al., 1991)<br>• are proficient in English (ELT) (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Park & Lee, 2006; Rammal, 2006)<br>• have a sound knowledge of grammar (ELT) (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Park & Lee, 2006)<br>• are able to teach study techniques (Chen, 2005; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005) |
| **Organisation and Preparation** | • provide a comprehensive syllabus with content and methodology (Kelley et al., 1991; Xiao, 2006)<br>• communicate clear course objectives (Kember & Wong, 2000; Kelley et al., 1991)<br>• stick to the syllabus (Kember & Wong, 2000; Rammal, 2006)<br>• lay out all the materials needed for assignments (Kember et al., 2004)<br>• provide original supplemental material (Kember et al., 2004; Yorio, 1989)<br>• provide prompt feedback on assessment (Desai et al., 2001)<br>• prepare each lesson well (Park & Lee, 2006) |

**Table 1: Attributes of effective lecturers and teachers identified in the literature**