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## Using Media to Teach Grammar in Context and UNESCO Values: A Case Study of Two English Teachers and Students from Saudi Arabia

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Using Media to Teach Grammar in Context and UNESCO Values:

A Case Study of Two English Teachers and Two Students from Saudi Arabia

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A Thesis

Presented to Eastern Washington University

Cheney, Washington

The United States of America

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree

Master of Arts: English

With an emphasis in

Teaching English as a Second Language

---

By

Sultan Saleh Albalawi

Summer 2014

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## Abstract

This thesis recommends ways of teaching both high school and college level learners from ages 16-90 in Saudi Arabia. The goal is to help teachers understand how they can teach grammar through the use of various media—both in the classroom and for homework. It justifies and models how media can help learners understand grammar rules while learning life lessons and clarifying values (Reeves, 2011) as stated by UNESCO. This is a qualitative case study of two English teachers—one Egyptian and one South African teaching in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)—and two students—one English major studying English in KSA and one biology major studying in the United States. Subjects were asked about the use of media to teach grammar and were given a media lesson to respond to in an interview or by email. Elements of critical ethnography and constructivist grounded theory are incorporated in a mixed methods approach. Sample lessons are included to demonstrate teaching grammar through media to provide a meaningful, whole language approach to engage language learners and increase motivation to learn English. Materials are offered to supplement the traditional teacher-centered, textbook-based approaches currently used in KSA. The researcher also reflects on his own language learning in KSA—middle school through university as an English major— and in the United States as a graduate student in English.

## Acknowledgments

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My sincerest thank you and appreciation also go to my brothers and sisters for their lovely wishes and motivating words.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. John, who inspired and supported me.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work...

To, my father, Saleh, & my mother, Salma

To my wife Maram

To my wonderful son, Qussai

To my brother, Abdullah, and my sister, Husah

## Preface

It is fitting for me to reflect on my language learning and teaching experiences as I complete this project and as I formulate my language teaching philosophy. The following is a summary of my experiences with the English language from middle school through the master's program.

### I. Pre-MATESL Program

#### Language Learning Experience

##### In KSA

I started studying English in middle school<sup>[1]</sup> in Madinah with a focus on all the skills together in one class. I had four classes a week with each 45 minutes long. In high school, I moved to the intermediate and advanced levels by taking three classes a week for 45 minutes each day. In all classes in the public schools, teachers taught from the text chosen for the national core curriculum with a focus on British English reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

##### University

##### § General English first year (basic skills)

At the university I majored in English, but all students—regardless of major—had to take two quarters of English alongside other classes such as Arabic, History of Education in KSA, Psychology, Computer Science, and other core requirements.



## § English major courses

In the second year, as an English major, I took introductory courses such as Introduction to Drama, Literature, Fiction, and Poetry. In the third and fourth years, I took courses such as grammar, syntax, advanced literature, phonetics, translation, novel, and drama. Again, the focus was on British literature and language. My professors were from the United States, Egypt, Jordan, and KSA. It was common for the professors just to have students read the literature aloud in class while professors sat and listened while correcting pronunciation and commenting. Other professors gave direct instruction in English while explaining aspects of the literary works, such as themes, deeper meanings, and the historical period of the work. Some Saudi professors spoke English in class most of the time, but others resorted to Arabic when students did not understand.

### Language Teaching Experience in KSA

As majors, we did not have to do presentations in English, but in one class I presented a chapter in a book about education in my History of Education class, but that was done in Arabic, not English. In my senior year, I did my student teaching in a middle school Saturday through Wednesday, and I taught two classes a day for a total of 1.5 hours a day with 32 students in each class. We used the national text for English and I taught lessons on grammar—verb tense, plural and singular nouns, and subject-verb agreement. I created worksheets for students and checked them.

### Cross-Cultural Experiences

#### In the KSA

As stated, I have had several Egyptian English professors as well as Jordanians, Algerians, and Sudanese professors at the university. I also had contact with different

Arab cultures while collecting data for this thesis at Open University. Further, I had a job at Arab Company for Pilgrims' Service, helping the pilgrims to Mecca, give them history of Madinah, but they were not all Arabic speakers. In K-12 public schools, I also had contact with children from Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, and some other Arabic-speaking countries, and some of them were my friends.

### During the MATESL Program

#### Language Learning Experience

#### English Language Institute

When I arrived in the United States, I enrolled in the English Language Institute at Eastern Washington University, and I was placed in Level 4 Reading and Writing and in Level 5 Speaking and Listening. After two quarters, I enrolled in English 112 and Grammar for Teachers while taking course in Graduate Preparation for two quarters. In the graduate program, I took the following courses:

Grammar for Teacher

Modern Language Methodology

Second Language Curriculum Design and Assessment

Second Language Acquisition

Research Design and Evaluation in Composition

Modern Grammar

Applied Linguistics

Technical Communication: Practice, theory and Pedagogy

Seminar in Professional Preparation

Composition Pedagogies

By comparison, when taking English 112 with Dr. Reeves, I realized that some American professors use media to create a learner-centered curriculum and ask students to be very active, writing and reading intensively every day in class. I was especially motivated to learn from the videos about the Great Depression, the Triangle Factory Fire of 1911 in which 146 immigrant women perished, and Katie Couric's documentary about children's grief with the loss of a parent.

#### Language Teaching Experience

##### AUAP (Asia University American Program)

I interned in this program with Japanese students for one year and learned a lot about teaching more basic English than students have in English 112. The master teachers I worked with were Diane Adler, Megan Mulvaney, and Mary Parker, who served on my thesis committee as the third member.

In the winter of 2014, I interned with Dr. Tracey McHenry in English 360, Language Structure and Use. I had the opportunity to teach the Arabic sound system and a little grammar—contrastive analysis of English and Arabic. Her students responded very well to my instruction, and some of them wanted to learn some Arabic from me since they had Arabic roommates.

In the ELI, English 112, and graduate seminars, I had the opportunity to teach my peers and professors.

English 581--created and taught parts of my own curriculum--on

Freedman's biography, *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery*

English 582--travelogue & research paper & taught Arabic language

English 564--taught *Eat Shoots and Leaves*—taught the hyphen chapter

English 511—presentation of a chapter, Patrick Hartwell’s “Grammar, grammars, and the teaching of grammar”

### Cross-Cultural Experiences

In the U.S., I interned and worked with Japanese students at the AUAP and learned about their culture, especially greetings, politeness, and education in Japan. In the master’s program, I worked with American graduate students, and two of them were bilingual in Spanish, one was from Hong Kong, and two were from Saudi Arabia.

### Language Teaching Philosophy

Throughout the master’s program, I have developed a philosophy of language teaching through experience as both a teacher and a learner. Perhaps the most important part of my philosophy is to focus on the values being conveyed in the messages of the readings and media. The following is a summary of my beliefs.

1. People learn to write by writing every day as we did in English 112 and other seminars.
2. Media encourages cooperation among students, and that cooperation fosters language acquisition.
3. Media introduces the living language to learners in context and teaches values to live by.
4. Working with native speakers increases confidence in speaking and understanding the target language.
5. Conference learning is valuable. I experienced one-on-one teaching and learning as I wrote this thesis. First, Dr. Reeves and I made a plan about what and how to write each chapter, and then I came to conference with her, where I read the draft aloud, and she

provided guidance and feedback for me. We worked on this thesis together as a team for more than one year, and I learned about writing and editing along the way.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Chapter 1 is the introduction of the history of education in Saudi Arabia, the use of media to teach grammar, UNESCO's statement of the problem to be addressed in this thesis with background information, the statement of the research questions, a summary of research methods, and an overview of the content of the thesis by chapter.

#### The *Kuttab* (622-1932)

Starting as early as 622 during the life of the Prophet Mohammed (570-632 A.D.), it appears that traditional tribal education began in the mosque schools which are called *Kuttab*, where the emphasis was the teaching of the Holy Quran, reading and writing in the Arabic language, and arithmetic. Both girls and boys were sent by most families to the *Kuttab* until 1932, when tribes were united under one king—Abdul Aziz, and public schools were established. It was then that public schools started teaching English as a Foreign Language in Saudi Arabia (Almutairi, 2008), primarily through the Grammar-Translation Method. It should be noted, however, that there is no separation of church and state in Saudi Arabia, so public schools took over religious education and have continued to teach the Holy Quran k-12 on a daily basis. For the most part, the *Kuttab* education was discontinued, though even today children and adults can go to take classes to study the Holy Quran in most mosques around the world, including Saudi Arabia.

The education system in Saudi Arabia can be divided into two eras: before the discovery of oil and after the discovery of oil. Oil fields were uncovered in the 1950s. Before then, the people of Saudi Arabia lived much the same as they had for centuries before. There

was no public education. As explained, education was limited to study of the holy book. They were dependent on rote learning and memorization (Almutariy, 2008; Rugh, 2002; Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington D.C., Higher Education, 2013). By attending *Kuttab*, people learned how to read and write.

1932 to present day

English is taught in Saudi Arabia as a foreign language and not for everyday use. The teaching of the English language in Saudi Arabia began in 1932. In both public and private schools, English starts in elementary school beginning in 4th grade and continues into intermediate and high school. Students study three hours a week in 45-minute classes-- Sunday through Thursday because Friday and Saturday are holidays. The Ministry of Education created the syllabus, and the teacher evaluations and contract renewals are dependent upon following that syllabus. Teachers depend on a textbook in the classroom, and they focus on reading and writing with little attention to listening or speaking.

The passing from one level to the next depends on a final written examination. English examinations focus on reading comprehension and writing. These examinations test students for all their work during the whole semester. This testing system has forced teachers and students to focus their efforts during lessons on preparation for the exams (Almutairi, 2008) and therefore appears to leave little room for the kind of creativity or individualized teaching that may be important for learning a second language well. In the Persian Gulf, students tend to memorize (Syed, 2003) large sections of the textbooks to write for the exams. In recent years, this way of teaching and learning English has begun to change as more Saudi English teachers are educated abroad in English-speaking countries.

For example, in her *TESOL Quarterly* article, “Narratives of Participation, Identity, and Positionality: Two Cases of Saudi Learners of English in the United States,” Shannon Giroir (2013) emphasizes the importance of the context for language learning:

The relationship between the language learner and the target language context is one that has been given increased attention in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), particularly in light of the ever-growing interest in second language (L2) identity research (Block, 2007; Norton & Toohey, 2011). This body of work has offered new perspectives on language learning, illustrating how learners' multiple identifications (based on categories of gender, race, and sexual orientation, among others) can impact their L2 learning processes as well as their access to L2 community resources.... (p. 34).

Giroir argues that such research is needed because of the “significant increase in Saudi Arabians living and studying abroad since the 2005 initiation of the Saudi Scholarship Program (from approximately 2,500 in 2005 to 50,000 in 2011 in the United States alone)” (p. 34). “In 2013, there were more than 80,000 Saudi students alone studying English in the United States” (M. Alshaalan, personal communication, as cited from Albalawi, 2013) because the Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission (SACM) has accepted more scholarship students for the United States. (In fact, one of the two students in the present study is a SACM scholar). While studying in the United States, Saudis need to acquire language that gives them access to the community and to good universities in those communities. Media is one of the bridges to understanding and functioning within these communities.

## Using Media to Teach Grammar in Context

The media includes newspapers, magazines, TV, and of course the Internet. It is considered another method to help enhance learning and teaching in the EFL classroom. Use of these media sources can help teachers apply many of their lessons in a variety of methods. With media, teachers can use all language skills: listening, speaking, reading, viewing, and writing. There are many research studies that support the use of media in English language classrooms around the world.

With media use being so widespread, language teachers often know the resources, but sometimes do not understand how to use media to create their own materials to fit with the media sources. Saudi students will be more interested in learning the English language when media is included in instructional materials. Despite the ministry's efforts, however; some rural schools do not have computers in the classroom for internet access, but in the near future, they will have access throughout the nation. For this reason, all EFL teachers in KSA can benefit from training in how to use media in teaching language and in particular in teaching grammar in a meaningful context so that both grammar and content are being taught.

## UNESCO's Media to Teach Values

The UNESCO website, for example, provides training in how to use media to teach universal values in their program, "Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future—A Multimedia Teacher Education Program"

([http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme\\_d/mod22.html](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_d/mod22.html)) as explained here:

The values and attitudes we live by affect how we relate to other people and to all our activities in the environment, and so are [major influences] on our prospects for achieving a sustainable future.

Although they cannot be separated from cognitive understanding, values and attitudes relate to the affective (or emotional) dimension of human behavior.

While values and attitudes are similar in this regard, they differ in several important ways. ( 2014 web)

In Saudi Arabia, Islamic values are taught in school K-12 because there is no separation of church and state, so Saudi children learn how to help the poor, respect their parents, care for neighbors, work for peace, and become well educated. UNICEF explains the differences between values and attitudes—both of which are included in the curriculum proposed here to teach grammar in the context of media lessons:

- Values are generally long-term standards or principles that are used to judge the worth of an idea or action. They provide the criteria by which we decide whether something is good or bad, right or wrong.
- Attitudes predispose us to respond in particular ways to people and events. They are not so deeply felt as values and quite often change as a result of experience. (web)

As recommended by UNICEF, in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis, there are two lessons offered for the purpose of “values clarification and values analysis” (UNICEF.Org,2014).

Statement of the Problem

Saudi EFL teachers now have many opportunities to use media for teaching grammar, but some teachers do not use media because they may not have learned how to teach grammar through viewing and, therefore, face difficulties in using media. Grammar is a complex branch of linguistics and requires different kinds of activities that facilitate understanding of the rules that language learners need to acquire the target language (TL). For example, teachers can create media lessons and show the students videos about interesting topics and print the transcript of the video, asking students to underline the subject and circle the verb. This is only one example, but there are many different kinds of activities that teachers can create to teach grammar in context in a content-based approach.

This thesis relates to the teaching of both high school and college level learners from ages 16-90. The goal is to help teachers of these learners understand how they can teach grammar through the use of various media—both in the classroom and with homework. It will also show how media will help learners understand grammar rules while learning life lessons and clarifying values. The thesis writer offers examples of how teachers will have another method of teaching grammar in addition to the traditional teacher-centered textbook methods. This will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.

## Background

### How and why we use media in teaching grammar in Saudi Arabia

Grammar rules are complex and need to be explained with in a variety of contexts and activities to help our students understand how the English language works. Through

using media, the teachers can consider multiple learning styles that students bring to the class. The Ministry of Education website identifies the aims of the educational system:

- 1) To provide opportunities for education to every citizen of learning age, according to his abilities and inclinations, and to facilitate these opportunities by providing the appropriate infrastructure and services.
- 2) To design and execute projects that cater to the requirements of the Ministry such as construction of educational buildings, and renovation of existing educational sites, by investing capital sums in the private sector for the implementation of such projects.
- 3) To improve the curriculum and constantly upgrade the general education system so that it is in accordance with contemporary societal and industry requirements. (2014, web).

This thesis is most concerned about number three objective because Saudi schools and universities may need to change both the curriculum and the methods of teaching to meet “contemporary societal” and industrial needs. Aramco, for example, needs thousands of highly competent English-speaking Saudi employees to do business throughout the Middle East, sometimes using English as a *lingua franca*. Even though teachers have many options for using modern methods and media in teaching grammar, they could benefit from training and more examples of how to find and use age-appropriate media. Videos can be selected based on students’ interests and needs. After viewing the video, students can discuss their interest in it and connect it to their own experiences as they write journals in class, for example. Students can also write

summaries of news clips and edit them as a method of applying grammar rules. Teachers could teach a particular structure such as the passive voice, and then students watch the video and read the transcript, identifying the passive constructions. Finally, they could be asked to write a summary of the video using three to five passive constructions not copied from the transcript. So using media helps teachers to create materials based on topics that are important to the students. For example, there are still many safety concerns in factories where children are working illegally, so the newscast, “Bangladesh's worst-ever factory blaze kills over 100,” is teaching what UNESCO asks for—to “provide the criteria by which we decide whether something is good or bad, right or wrong” (UNESCO, 2014, web). Saudi English teachers would do well to provide a real life example that is current and urgent while bringing human rights to the public attention through a grammar lesson: “Working conditions at Bangladeshi factories are notoriously poor, with little enforcement of safety laws, and overcrowding and locked fire doors are common. The cause of this fire was not immediately known” (Ahmed & Paul, 2012, web). Here, students would have seen the newscast and would be given the entire transcript, and they would be expected to identify the passive constructions, such as “was...known” in the above paragraph.

### Purpose

As master's degree candidate, my experience with studying grammar gave me the idea of researching the teaching of grammar in Saudi Arabia and trying to find more modern methods to develop English teaching there. Changing teaching methods would help not only modernize grammar instruction but also increase interest in



learning English in Saudi Arabia because of students' familiarity with and interest in media.

Before I discuss the importance of grammar, I will give a brief definition of grammar. "Grammar" refers to "the rules of the language as set down in a grammar book" (Lester, 2001, p.3). Denham and Lobeck (2010) define grammar as "a complex system of rules that govern how speakers organize sounds into words and words into sentences" (p.7). A knowledge of grammar rules allows speakers to construct sentences correctly. A knowledge of syntax is extremely important to understanding and using language and has generally been considered the first key to mastering language. Denham and Lobeck (2010) note, "Syntax is a system of rules and principles that describe how we organize words into phrases and larger units, the largest being the clause; also, the study of this system" (p. 212). As teachers of English, we should focus on teaching syntax as a way to make our students achieve a high level of mastery. In addition, syntax helps students to understand complex sentences and allows them to gather information quickly. It also helps students write correctly and become better understood by readers and listeners. I believe that knowledge of syntax demonstrates a person's education. Because Arabic learners who study English face difficulties understanding syntax, I will compare Arabic and English syntax in chapter 2 and offer some suggestions about how teachers can help Arabic students to understand the grammar.

Language Arts in the United States include reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and visually representing (Tompkins, 2014), and all of these skills are related to grammar. For example, when we use the listening skills, we sometimes hear passive voice sentences. Without knowing the passive voice, we couldn't understand the meaning

of the sentence. For example, Steve Hartman says in a newscast, “Shelby's mother Nancy was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis” (2012), but without knowledge of the passive voice, students will not understand that doctors told Nancy she had multiple sclerosis (MS). In this way, grammar truly affects learners’ ability to understand television, movies, the internet, and face-to-face conversations.

Likewise, when we look to the reading skills, we will notice that if we do not know grammar, we cannot understand the text at the sentence level, although we know all the vocabulary in each sentence. Professor David Mulroy (2003) believes that proper grammar helps writers’ expression (Mulroy in Reedy, p. 4). Mulroy (2003) argues that “a scholar or student who doesn’t know the part of speech is like a surgeon who doesn’t know the parts of the body” (Mulroy in Reedy, p.4). As teachers of English, we should focus on grammar and help students to understand it because most students do not know grammar rules or how to use them in skills like reading or writing. Students sometimes will find some complex sentences confusing, but knowledge of the parts of speech can help them to understand the sentence. The thing that most immediately shows the level of education is grammar (Mulroy in Reedy, p. 4). If the grammar level is high, students can master language, but without a good working knowledge of grammar, students will face many obstacles in communicating. While educators agree that a knowledge of grammar is a necessity, they do not all agree on how best to teach it.

The purpose of the present study, therefore, was to

- 1) provide an historical overview of the Saudi educational system from 622 to modern times;

- 2) examine two teachers' and two students' experiences with and beliefs about studying and/or teaching English;
- 3) offer sample lessons to demonstrate how to use media to teach grammar; and
- 4) reflect on the researcher's experience being taught grammar through media and writing in the United States.

### Research Focus and Questions

I focused this research on ways of teaching grammar in Saudi Arabia with the intent of learning which of these methods help to improve students' integrated language skills, what methods teachers use, how modern methods can be employed, and what challenges there are for teachers.

The research questions I attempted to answer in this thesis, therefore, were threefold:

- 1) What is the value of using media for EFL learners in Saudi Arabia at the university level?
- 2) How can teachers use media in English grammar class in Saudi Arabia at the university level and below?
- 3) How can English teachers overcome the obstacles that prevent them from using media in Saudi Arabia at the university level and below?

### Research Methods

#### Case study

This thesis writer used mixed methods to conduct this action research and included aspects of case study, critical ethnography, and grounded theory. "In TESOL, a case typically refers to a person, either a learner or a teacher, or an entity, such as a school, a

university, a classroom, or a program (see Faltis, 1997; Johnson, 1992; Nunan, 1992). . . . Case study research may feature single cases or multiple cases (e.g., often two to four)” (TESOL.org, 2014). In this case, there are two English teachers and two students of English who make up the case studies, and their interviews were collected and analyzed to help readers understand issues and challenges related to media use in KSA. ‘TESOL asks researchers to acknowledge “multiple realities in qualitative case studies, as is now commonly done, involves discerning the various perspectives of the researcher, the case/participant, and others, which may or may not converge (Yin, 1994)” (2014). It is further defined as “an interpretive, inductive form of research, case studies explore the details and meanings of experience and do not usually attempt to test a priori hypotheses. Instead, the researcher attempts to identify important patterns and themes in the data” (2014). Case studies most often examine the participants up close: “The richness of case studies is related to the amount of detail and contextualization that is possible when only one or a small number of focal cases and issues are analyzed” (2014). In the present study, the researcher and his advisor attempted “to provide a compelling and engaging profile of the case, with suitable examples and linkages to broader issues”—in this case, the researcher framed his own cases within the context of UNICEF guidelines for using technology & media to teach global values and concerns such as disease, war, environmental issues, and family.

### Critical ethnography

The project also includes elements of critical ethnography, as defined by TESOL: “developing a firsthand, contextualized, naturalistic, hypotheses-generating, emic

orientation to the study of TESOL through the study of culture. Ethnography represents diverse research approaches (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001), and the form and content of ethnographic reports thus vary considerably” (TESOL.org, 2014). As the researcher himself is Saudi and majored in English there, he has an emic view of the culture of English Studies both in Saudi Arabia and in the United States. The experience of studying abroad helped him gain an etic view of his culture, which he has offered in this thesis to suggest ways that more media might be incorporated in the teaching of English in his homeland. TESOL further asks that researchers embrace a complex theoretical orientation toward culture. Culture--in collectives of differing magnitude, whether educational institutions, student communities, classrooms, or activity groups--is treated as heterogeneous, conflictual, negotiated, and evolving, as distinct from unified, cohesive, fixed, and static (2014, web).

The thesis writer does present the current state of English Studies in KSA as “evolving” and “conflictual” because there are many obstacles teachers face there as they attempt to use modern media to situate lessons within a social context and bring the target language alive for the learners. Researchers are also asked to “Practice reflexivity, a process of self-examination and self-disclosure about aspects of [their] own background, identities or subjectivities, and assumptions that influence data collection and interpretation” (TESOL.org, 2014). While the writer’s reflections are included throughout the thesis, except in Chapter 2, a greater deal of reflection is included in Chapter 4: Discussion & Reflections. At the same time, there are elements of constructivist grounded theory that “is a widely used qualitative research methodology that seeks to inductively distil issues of importance for specific groups of people, creating

meaning about those issues through analysis and the modeling of theory” (Mills, Bonner, and Francis, 2006, p.8). In this case, in Chapter 2, the theory of whole language is explained and recommended for the teaching of grammar in context.

## Overview of Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 is a review of literature about (1) history of education in Saudi Arabia, (2) different perspectives on the teaching of grammar, (3) corrective feedback, and (4) using media to teach grammar. Chapter 3 is a description of research methods, procedure for data collection, presentation of four case studies with interviews & transcriptions, data analysis, and summary of findings. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the research questions, classroom applications with a sample lesson for using media to teach grammar, and reflections on the researcher’s experience studying English—both in Saudi Arabia and in the United States. He also reflects on what he learned from doing this project and how it might influence his teaching when he returns to Saudi Arabia to teach at the college level. Chapter 5 is the conclusion that includes (1) summary of the findings, (2) limitations of the present study, (3) recommendations for using media to teach grammar, and (4) suggestions for future research about using media for a variety of purposes globally.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Chapter 2 is a review of literature about (1) the history of education in Saudi Arabia, (2) different perspectives on the teaching of grammar, (3) corrective feedback, (4) differences between English and Arabic grammar; and (5) using media to teach grammar. Some of the studies cited here relate to the teaching of English as a first language, but also apply to similar issues being discussed globally by English language teachers.

#### Educational History of Saudi Arabia

In the 1950's after oil fields were discovered the Saudi Arabian educational system underwent drastic expansion. Prior to this the people lived much the same as they had for centuries before, with no formal education and no schools available for learning beyond the scripture of the Holy Quran. Teaching of the Quran with lessons covering other subjects such as arithmetic, reading, and writing, were first available at mosques in 1932 and taught by the Kuttab. These courses were dependent on rote learning and memorization and this approach did not improve students' thinking skills and did not increase language acquisition (Almutariy, 2008; Rugh, 2002; Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington D.C.; Education, 2013).

#### The Education Period after Oil

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia decided that it needed an educated society after

discovery of oil, so they began building schools and universities. They considered education one of most important aspects for developing the country. (Higher Education, 2013; Kampman, 2011; Almutariri,2008; Rugh,2002). In 1951, there were about 226 schools with 29,887 students. ( Almutairi, 2008). In addition, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia founded their first university, King Saud University in 1957. (King Saud University, 2013). The education system consists of six years of elementary schools, three years for intermediate and three years for secondary schools followed by a separate higher education level. The age of elementary school for both males and females is 6-12. The intermediate schools take students between 12- 15 years old and secondary school between 15 to 18 years. (Ministry of Education 2011; Almutairi,2008; Rugh,2002). In the elementary schools, students study religion, history, geography, sciences, math, and Arabic. Elementary is also when lessons in English begin. This set of courses carries over through intermediate school. Secondary school is completed in steps. The first year consists of classes such as biology, physics, earth science, chemistry, religion, history and geography. The second and third years are divided into two sections; the first is sciences, but this section also involves teaching some English and Arabic. The second section is the literary section, in which students attend religion, Arabic, rhetoric, history, and geography courses. Acceptance to institutions of higher education depends on high school grade point average (GPA) in the second and third years of secondary school (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission, 2010). Finally, it takes four to five years for most students to graduate from a university, and the number of required years of English varies from major to major. For example, engineering and computer science majors take up to



half of their classes in English, and they also take separate English language classes in the preparation year.

In 1997, international schools were founded that focused on international classes but also on subjects such as Arabic, religion and history. These schools were for international students and also Saudi students under the condition that the Saudi students came from other countries. These students study no more than three years and then complete their programs in the local schools. International schools consist of elementary, intermediate, and high schools (Ministry of Education, 2011). The curriculum in those schools focuses on multilingual students.

Before King Abdullah's reign in 2005, there were 11 universities in Saudi Arabia. In 2014 there are 25 government-funded universities and 8 private universities (Abalhassan, 2013, p. 34; Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington D.C., Higher Education, 2013). Most of these universities are co-educational except for the Islamic University in Maddinah and the University of Petroleum and Minerals which admits only males (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission, 2010; Almutairi, 2008; Rugh, 2002). There is also a university just for females, Princess Norah University.

#### History of the Ministry of Education

The first law of education in Saudi Arabia was 1925, established by the Directorate of Knowledge in 1943 to begin the education of men. The 1973 establishment of the Ministry of Education by King Saud bin Abdul-Aziz focused on the planning and advising of men's education centering around elementary, secondary, and high schools. King Fahad bin Abdul-Aziz was the first Minister of Education (Ministry of Education,

2011). Decree 1960 created the General Presidency for Girls' Education in the reign of King Faisal bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud with a budget of 4.400.000 Real (in Saudi currency) and included 15 schools and the Institute of parameters, headed by Sheikh Abdul-Aziz Nasser Al Rashid. Following on this the government combined the General Presidency for Girls' Education with the Ministry of Education in 2002. After one year, they changed the name of the Ministry of Knowledge to the Ministry of Education. In addition, the government of Saudi Arabia allowed international students to study there. (Ministry of Education, 2011). Also, the ministry of education doesn't charge for students to study there.

## Education in Saudi Arabia

Education in Saudi Arabia depends upon the Saudi government. Teachers mostly rely on the government syllabus even though teachers are sometimes allowed to create their own curriculum. “Government control, one major feature of Saudi education, started early and has continued to this day” (Rugh, 2002, p. 40). At the beginning of the Saudi formal education system, there were teachers from other countries. Saudi teachers were about three quarters of elementary teachers, and two-third of intermediate and secondary teachers and more than half of the vocational –school teachers (Rugh, 2002). Most of those teachers from Egypt, Sudan and Jordan.

### Goals of Education

In summary, education in Saudi Arabia focuses on such aspects as: to increase the spirit of loyalty to Islamic Sharia to achieve the guidelines of the Quran through dedication to the rules of manners, to reach for knowledge, to develop the people to be ready to develop the country, to increase the students’ knowledge, and to show students the obstacles that the world faces. In addition, the Ministry encourages the development of science research. The general goal is to improve reading skills and to develop language abilities that help the students better understand the meaning of the great Arabic language. Included in this is the educating, students in at least one foreign language (Ministry of Education, 2011). So the Ministry of Education tries to develop the process of teaching the English language through developing the curriculum and increasing the number of instructional minutes per week for teaching English.

## Saudi Educational Methods

The Saudi education system depends on a teacher-centered method of teaching. Most teachers apply this method and create their curriculum according to it (AlMunajjed, 1997). In Saudi schools, they focus on memorization and teacher lectures, putting students in the role of passive receivers of information. That method impacted students and led them to improve their behavior and thinking (Rugh, 2002). But there are some sophisticated schools that try to use modern methods of teaching such as a student-centered method

## The Importance of the Arabic Language

The Arabic language is considered the oldest language that still has its original structure, literature and fiction. Arabic is a Semitic language that is rich in its morphology and syntax. It is considered the mother of a wide range of languages known as *Eraibyat* languages which originated on the Arabian Peninsula (Alsaly, 2006, web). The Quran is the first book that was written in Arabic. “The advent of Islam and the revelation of the Qur'an have had far-reaching effects on the status, the content, and the structure of the Arabic language” (Elsayed, 1988, p. 1). Islam helped the Arabic language become a universal language, and it spread quickly in the Islamic countries. In addition, Arabic is connected with Islam which helped it to become the formal language in most Islamic countries (Elsayed, 1988). Arabic has both a formal and an informal way of speaking and writing. The formal language is the written academic form and is used in formal situations such as in media, at work, and in published books. Most Arabic speakers and non-Arabic speaking Muslims understand it because the Quran is written in Arabic. The informal language is more commonly spoken and has a range of dialects that differ from one region to another (Almuntairi, 2008, web). For example, the Saudi people use a dialect of Arabic that is different from the Egyptian people's dialect.

## The Importance of the English Language

English is the first language of the world, shared by more speakers, either native or second language, than any other tongue. There are about one million non-native students learning English in the world, an indication of the importance of teaching English as a second language. (Al-Jarf, in Al-Khair, 2013). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considers English language instruction to be so important that they have created a

fully funded scholarship program to send their citizens abroad to learn English from native speakers. There are many advantages to having a knowledge of English. Al-Jarf, wrote in 2008 that most research is written in English, providing an advantage for the English speakers over those without access to those sources of knowledge (as cited in Al-Khairy, 2013). In addition, knowing and understanding different kinds of writing skills in English, like how to summarize, write an essay, edit and review, help students be more successful (Al-Khairy, 2013). Part of the reason so many Saudis go overseas to learn English is the shortcoming of English instruction in Saudi Arabia. For ESL students, a knowledge of English grammar is key to their mastery of the language. “Grammar as an aspect of English language is perhaps the most important target to be achieved” (Khan, 2011, p.108). Yet many of these 80,000 students arrive in the United States without adequate grammar knowledge to perform well in a university setting.

## Teaching English at the Universities

### Preparatory Year

The preparatory year consists of two terms and an additional term for defaulting students. The preparatory year is the first year of the plan for all colleges that participate in the program. In Table 1 we see the plan for classes that students study in semester 1 and 2 in Umm Al- Qura University (Umm Al-Qura University, 2013).

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Table I

### Curriculum for the scientific

Semester I		Semester II	
credit	Name of class	credit	Name of class
4	(1) Introduction of Math	4	(2) Introduction of Math
4	General Physics(1)	3	Learning skills
2	computer skills	3	computer programming skills
6	English Language	4	English language

Table II

### Curriculum for the medical

Semester I		Semester II	
credit	Name of class	Credit	Name of class
2	Fundamentals of Biochemistry (2)	2	Fundamentals of (1) Biochemistry
2	Basics of Human Genetics	3	cell physiology
3	Learning skills	4	Introduction to the Medical Physics
2	computer skills	3	computer programming skills
6	English language	4	Medical English

### Curriculum of administrative path

Table III

Semester I		Semester II	
Credit	Name of class	Credit	Name of class
4	Introduction to mathematics (1)	3	Business Administration
3	Learning skills	3	principles census
2	computer skills	3	computer programming skills
6	English language	4	English administrative

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As adapted from Umm Al-Qura University, 2013.

<https://uqu.edu.sa/english>.

In the preparatory year, students study English classes and other classes such as math and computer science taught in English. In addition, as we notice in the schedule above, the English class has more credits than other classes.

#### Formal Instruction of Grammar

Formal instruction of grammar is the strategy most people remember from school. The teaching of formal grammar is done in isolation and focuses on memorizing rules and terminology. For example, parts of speech, clauses, phrases, verb subject agreement are taught systematically and daily. In the past, most teachers used formal methods; they



taught explanation of the rules in the class and then had the students apply the rules by answering some questions. Teachers also use different exercises to help the students understand the rules. For example, teachers can use games to explain the parts of speech. The teacher uses these games by writing present progressive on the right side of the board and the present simple on the left of the board. So, the students will match the words with the correct tense.

There are two basic methods used in formal teaching, deductive and inductive. The first, deductive, is teacher-centered and relies on the instructor giving the students a set of rules that they are to follow in order to get the answers. Deductive reasoning “is a movement from a generalization to specific instances: specific subsumed facts are inferred or deduced from a general principle” (Brown, p. 104). Inductive teaching, on the other hand, is more student-centered. With inductive teaching the instructor gives the students specific examples from which they are expected to produce a general rule. Deductive teaching may be more appropriate for students whose experience is limited to this type. Visual and auditory students also respond well to learning the rules first before applying them. Motivated students can learn well using deductive teaching. Inductive teaching is often successful with kinesthetic learners by allowing them to move and discover a concept on their own. By giving examples, teachers can allow students to concentrate on meaning in language rather than terms. Either method or both can be used for any lesson (Brown, 1980).

According to Constance Weaver (1996) “Some people think that the teachers should teach the grammar by using the formal strategy” (p.15). They prefer that the teacher explain the rules and then answer the questions related to the rules. In addition,

Weaver thinks that some parents and students do not want to relate grammar to writing and those teachers are only doing their duty when they teach grammar as a complete subject (Weaver, 1996). Mulroy (2003) thinks that the trend toward teaching grammar through writing has left American students without any real knowledge of correct grammar (Mulroy in Reedy, p.15). He believes that to function in modern society students must have an understanding of grammatical rules and structures, and without them they are “functionally illiterate” (Mulroy in Reedy, p.18).

### Teaching Grammar through Writing

#### Arabic speakers learning English grammar and writing

Javid, Farooq and Gulzar, (2012) noticed that Arab learners face difficulties in achieving a high level of English proficiency for academic purposes. In Saudi Arabia, the educational methods depend on memorization. According to Syed (2003), instruction in the Gulf region relies on rote learning and memorization. Almutari, (2008) states that teachers focused the text books rather than interactive teaching or writing. Memorization is all that is required for promotion.

Most teachers in Saudi Arabia follow the Ministry of Education guidelines and use traditional methods for teaching grammar although the Ministry of Education encourages the use of media and tries to make the technology available in classrooms, but as explained by Abalhassan, purchase decisions do not include input from teachers or administrators:

Government-funded universities mostly are pre-equipped with hardware

including classroom technologies and multimedia. Basic software is usually provided

with the hardware. The administrations of Saudi universities usually handle the purchasing of all educational needs. However, none of these purchases involve academics or representatives from academic departments. (Abalhassan, 2013, p. 34).

Teachers rely primarily on teacher-centered approaches like lectures that required very little students' participation or opportunity for constructive feedback. However, Saudi learners face difficulties in understanding grammar rules under this mode of teaching. "Saudi learners face problems in the learning of almost all the aspect of the target language grammar" (Khan, 2011, p.108). They spend little time actually practicing the use of grammar in practical ways. "Grammar is not integrated with writing. In most of the second/foreign language situations, grammar of English is taught traditionally" (Khan, 2009). Saudi teachers primarily on lecture style explanations of grammar rules; students then apply the rules by answering textbook questions.

In their English grammar curriculum, some Saudi teachers still tend to focus on teaching memorization of the rules and rarely, if ever, include writing in the teaching of grammar. This practice has impacted students and has not led them to improve their knowledge of the English language (Rugh, 2002). Although an understanding of grammar rules is important and useful, especially for the non-native learners, and for those students who will become English teachers, knowing how those rules are used in writing can be argued to be of even greater importance. Al-Khairy (2013) believes that

writing has been recognized as an extremely important skill, especially in the context of learning English for academic purposes. So when we teach grammar through writing, we help students develop their grammar and writing at the same time.

There are more modern methods that could be adopted for the English curriculum in Saudi Arabia. Much of the modern research supports using a variety of methods and intertwining grammar instruction with other aspects of language learning. One of these methods is to teach grammar through writing.

Teaching grammar through writing is a much utilized and studied method and is widely recognized in research studies in the United States as a useful addition to the rote memorization of rules and usage. Knowing, or rather memorizing grammar rules and applying them in writing are two very different things. Learning to use grammar correctly in the context of its usage can help the students to write well. While non-native speakers may need to first understand grammar rules, their successful application can only be learned through writing.

Mulroy (2003) says the competence in grammar is essential to understanding the language at every level. (Mulroy in Reedy p. 18). But, as Hartwell, (1985) has argued, teachers who prefer teaching grammar through writing, believe that with practice writing both the students' grammar and writing skills will improve. Chin (2000) argues that learning grammar is important in language acquisition but that the best way is to teach it through writing. Hartwell (1985), whose concern is more with writing than grammar, goes even further and states that formal grammar instruction does not help students to develop their writing. Andrews (2004, 2005) agrees that "there is still a dearth of evidence for the effective use of grammar teaching of any kind in the development of

writing" (p.74). This would suggest that grammar instruction might be abandoned entirely in favor of more intensive writing.

Myhill, Jones, Lines, and Watson (2012), in an even more recent study, found that the effect of explicit grammar instruction in the development of writing skills indicates at least a little improvement in writing ability for most students. Even this connection between explicit grammar instruction and writing linked improvement to the teacher's linguistic subject knowledge (LSK). Where the teachers did not possess an effective grasp of the English grammar as a subject area, their students were less likely to benefit from their grammar instruction. And Myhill (2012) referred to "explicit" grammar instruction, not directly to the Saudi practice of rote rule memorization. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) argue that we should teach in a context that leads to incorporating the culture of students, for example culturally responsive schooling. She thinks that teaching grammar in context help the students by giving them easily remembered strategy rather than isolated rules. Using context in teaching grammar facilitates a better understanding of the rules. Andrew, Torgerson, Beverton, Locke, Low, Robinson and Zhu (2004) conducted "an extensive review of the most relevant literature on the importance of teaching formal grammar and teaching sentence combining" (web). They found that sentence combining was an effective technique for learning syntax while teaching formal grammar was not.

Although these studies disagree to some extent over the effectiveness of traditional memorization methods for teaching grammar like those Saudi schools rely on, they all agree that writing is more effective method of teaching grammar for academic purposes.

### Corrective feedback in teaching grammar through writing

Corrective feedback is another method with which to provide a more interactive style to grammar instruction used in concert with writing. Corrective feedback can be teacher-to-student or peer-to-peer, either written or oral, and used as a first step in a revision process. In one study of corrective feedback the students participating acknowledged that various functions of the feedback process helped them in their critical thinking and improved their academic writing skills (Ghazal1, Dr. Gull1, Hanzala, Jessop & Tharani, 2014 ; Beuningin , 2010). In Arab countries, students are taught to imitate model texts rather than produce their own original written material. Also, students are rarely required to write and revise more than one draft of their writing. Because of large class sizes, the level of the students' proficiency often suffers as the time for constructive feedback is limited. This lack of practice in turn impacts student ability to respond to the feedback that the teachers do provide (Al-Hazmi &Scholifield, 2007).

Acknowledging this shortage of time, teachers can often use corrective feedback between peers as an alternative. Peer-to-peer feedback can help students understand grammatical rules and prevent future mistakes in their writing in the same way that teacher to students feedback does. Also peer feedback is good alternative especially if the class has a large number of students. This feedback is most useful when applied with revision strategies. Revision has been shown to be the most important method for improving writing (Al-Hazmi & Scholifield, 2007). The revision process is especially important for developing long term knowledge and the application of learning to future writing.

Truscott (1996) warns against excessive corrective feedback, but more recent studies have shown that writing corrective feedback helps to increase the skills of explicit knowledge of the language, not the implicit knowledge that is the focus of how you can speak or write well. Both explicit and implicit knowledge are important to the written and oral use of language (Polio, 2012). So as English teachers, we need to know about the relative theories of both explicit and implicit knowledge and also how they interact.

In addition, Bates and Polio (2003) argues that we do not have a full understanding of which types of explicit knowledge students tend to apply most effectively, so it is difficult to determine which work best for learning grammar. Polio concludes that feedback should match the students, and teachers must use both written and oral feedback in order to reap the fullest benefits of corrective feedback methods. Employing a variety of feedback methods is a more effective use of the process.

Corrective feedback can be employed as either teacher-to-student or peer-to-peer, both in written and oral forms. As an interactive learning method, it plays an important part of grammar instruction through writing. For Saudi learners familiar with more traditional and far less interactive methods, particularly rote memorization of grammatical rules and copying of model texts, corrective feedback is a new manner of learning. The inadequacy of the rote learning can be greatly improved by the addition of a corrective feedback method as part of a revision process used to teach grammar through writing. In addition, this process provides learners with the opportunity to use all their English skills at the same time. Writing essays, followed by corrective feedback from peers and/or teachers, and then would prove to be a far more profitable model for Saudi English language instruction. Students and teachers will notice far greater and longer

lasting improvement in the use of correct grammar than is possible now with traditional rote learning from grammar textbooks.

### Differences between English and Arabic

There are some major differences between Arabic and English syntax. The rules of syntax differ between Arabic and English and can cause common usage mistakes. In English, for example, simple sentences consist of SVO (Subject, Verb, and Object). For example, John ate the apple. So, when we see the sentence, we see “John” as a subject, “eat” as the verb, “the” as the determiner and “apple” as object of the transitive verb). If we want to write the same sentence in Arabic, we should begin the sentence with VSO: *Akla John Altfaha* . This means, ate John the apple. But also in Arabic SVO occurs but less often than VSO. In Arabic the verb agrees with the subject in gender in sentences that consist of VSO (there is no gender in English verbs) and also the verb agrees with subject in number in sentences that consists of SVO: *Akl Alwlaad altfahas*. Ate the boys the apples (direct translation).

### Noun phrases in English and Arabic

The noun phrase structure in Arabic also differs from English. As we know in English, the adjective comes before the noun that is modified, but in Arabic the adjective follows the noun that is modified. For example, *Almdresah kberah* (the school big) the big school in English. Also, the possessive in English differs from Arabic, as in *syart altaleb*, car the student’s. Also, there is *Idafa* that means add *AL* to the last noun in noun phrase. For example, *syart altaleb almjthed*. The car of the great student ( Beller, 2007; Denham & Lobeck, 2010). Arabic and English have different grammar rules.



Distinguishing between the two is one of the problems that face Arabic speakers when they study English language.

### Verbs in English and Arabic

Verbs in English are formed according to number and tense while in Arabic verbs are determined according to tense, number and gender. For example, *Thahb altaleb ella almdresh* (the student(boy) went to school) is gendered male. *Thahbt althalebh ella almdresah* (the student (girl) went to school) is gendered female. So we notice that the verb is *thahb* when we use it in the masculine, and we add (t) to the verb when we use the feminine form. (Denham & Lobeck, 2010 ; Lester 2001; Beller, 2007). These are just a few of the differences and difficulties Arabic learners face when they study the English language. So, as English teachers, we should understand these differences and focus on helpful ways to teach English syntax, perhaps through contrastive analysis.

### Using Media to Teach Grammar

In Saudi Arabia, teachers of English grammar depend on a traditional teacher-centered method. They teach memorization of grammar rules in isolation from writing, and develop their curriculum (AlMunajjed, 1997). Saudi English teachers also tend to focus on textbooks because they depend so heavily on rote memorization the grammar rules and fill-in-the-blank questions to evaluate the students' understanding. Syed (2003) argues that this type of instruction extends to the Gulf whole region. Saudi English teachers are required to teach from the government selected text and use other resources (Almutari, 2008). This reliance on what are essentially 19<sup>th</sup> century methods has slowed Saudi education and prevented the adoption of other modern methods of teaching

grammar, such as a focus on writing or using media in context. These traditional methods of teaching grammar inhibit students' growth and leads to difficulties in understanding all aspects of English grammar (Khan, 2011). The application of more modern methods of teaching grammar, would improve the study of English, a skill the Saudi government has repeatedly emphasized as important to the kingdom's overall modernization effort.

The use of modern media technology and sources is one route to improving the teaching of English skills. As a more innovative and potentially interactive method, media technology can help students to understand grammar rules in their context and combine practice in other language skills like reading, speaking, listening, and viewing with grammar (Tompkins, 2012). Use of media increases the interaction between teachers and students and leads to an increase in student self-confidence in their English language abilities (Clément, Noels, & Deneault, 2001). With positive and pleasant interaction this experience can help the students more frequently use English both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers can create activities using media that can help their students engage in collaboration and interaction.

Carol Bertram, Peter Ranby, Mike Adendorff, Yvonne Reed, Nicky Roberts (2010) stated: "We need to develop learners who can use the knowledge they have learnt in order to do things in society, rather than just remember the content they have learnt." (p. 3). Using media helps us in achieving this goal, for example, through asking our students to watch videos that support them to help their community or family. Tileston describes media as being "brain friendly" (2003, p. 9). She states, "Most learners are

either visual or kinesthetic thus a brain-friendly environment will learn heavily on teaching methods that include visuals, models, or hands-on activities” (Tileston, 2003, p. 9). Multimedia technology helps English learners “to explore real world examples of concepts to be learned” (p. 9). This method makes the learners more active in the classroom and asks them to share life experiences, and it also motivates them to learn more.

Bates and Poole (2003) are aware of the need to expose teachers to other issues and theories related to technology and teaching. "It is better to start to use technology for teaching than to wait until everything that is known about how to teach well with technology has been learned" (Bates and Poole, p. 22). They show that there is evident support for the use of technologies in teaching language skills. Further, Egbert (2005) explains that online communication provides the learners with opportunities to orally communicate with a large number of people in an environment conducive to learning. Online communication may enhance reading and writing skills (Al-Abbadi, 2007). These studies show the value of using media in teaching and how it helps learners to overcome the difficulties that they face.

### Whole Language Approaches and Theory

In 1991, TESOL adopted a philosophy that language should be kept whole when taught to learners—both to English as a first (L1) and English as a Second Language (L2) learners. A brief history that appeared in *TESOL Quarterly* provides the background and the basic beliefs about how L1 and L2 readers and writers gain literacy:

The term whole language comes not from linguists but from educators—people like Harste and Burke (1977), Ken and Yetta Goodman (1981), and Watson (1989)—who began using it in reference to how English-speaking children become readers. (See "Whole language," 1989, for more detailed descriptions of whole language philosophy and history; see also Y. Goodman, 1989, 1991.) They asserted that language is a whole (hence the name), that any attempt to fragment it into parts—whether these be grammatical patterns, vocabulary lists, or phonics "families"—destroys it. If language isn't kept whole, it isn't language anymore. (Rigg, 1991, p. 522).

Even though whole pieces of literature may appear in texts in high school in Saudi Arabia, students are simply memorizing the text and writing it on the exam. They are not asked to write a journal about the poem or connect it to their lives or to make meaning of the poem.

This thesis is based on a belief that whole language approaches and activities are good ways to teach grammar. Edelsky, Altwerger, and Flores (1991) define.....Whole language is “situated in the learners’ world” and activities are based on “whole pieces of language found in stories, poems, songs, articles, and videos” (Reeves, 2014). The teacher becomes a “resource” and creates materials that are appropriate for the age and level of the language learners. At the same time, the goal in a whole language lesson always involves the “learners’ making of meaning” by interacting with the text or video” (Reeves, 2014). Whole language requires writing of the learners about the reading and the viewing, so “there are no workbook pages with fragments sentences written without a context” and lessons often connect to other disciplines such as “history, science,

sociology, art, music, and other subjects” (Reeves, 2014). It is an integrated skills approach, including inter-related skills including the six language arts:

Reading

Writing

Speaking

Listening

Visually representing

Viewing

For this thesis, whole language is defined in the following way by Ruddell (1992)

- 1) "Whole language" is a philosophy that places meaning making at the center of learning and instruction for the student.
- 2) Literature and a literature-based program play a critical role in the classroom in the context of meaning making, and particularly in developing internal student motivation.
- 3) The teacher is the critical facilitator for meaning making in the context of an interactive whole language environment. (p. 612)

Conclusion

This literature review discussed Saudi educational goals and compared the English and Arabic languages. In addition, it focused on the methods of teaching English and the

best techniques of teaching grammar in Saudi Arabia.

As previously mentioned, grammar is considered the cornerstone of any language, so as teachers we should focus on creating materials that help students improve their grammar skills. I believe by these strategies, we can improve student language skills and help them become better readers, writers, listeners, and speakers. I believe that both methods outlined in this work can help students to improve, and suggest that grammar teachers follow both the ways to achieve their goals.

## Chapter 3

### Research Methods, Data Collection, and Findings

Chapter 3 is a description of research methods, procedure for data collection, presentation of four case studies with interviews & transcriptions, data analysis, and summary of findings.

#### Research Methods

The following qualitative research methods were used in this thesis—(1) case studies of two teachers and two students as well as (2) two kinds of interview—face-to-face and email. “Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting”(Creswell, 2009, p. 3). TESOL defines case study in this way:

In TESOL, a case typically refers to a person, either a learner or a teacher, or an entity, such as a school, a university, a classroom, or a program (see Faltis, 1997; Johnson, 1992; Nunan, 1992).... they may be conducted independently, either longitudinally or in a more limited temporal period. Unlike ethnographic research, case studies do not necessarily focus on cultural aspects of a group or its members. Case study research may feature single cases or multiple cases (e.g., often two to four). (TESOL. Org accessed 2 July 2014)

For the present study, the researcher returned to Saudi Arabia in the summer of

2013 and in April and May of 2014 to conduct the four interviews—two teachers and two students—the female teacher was South African, and the male teacher was Egyptian.

The two students were Saudi males. So these interviews were done in a “limited temporal way” over about a one-year period. They represent a convenience sample. One teacher was a colleague of the researcher’s wife in a university setting, and the other teacher is the researcher’s colleague in a different university where they are both teaching now. The two students were friends of the researcher, and they were asked to participate and agreed to do so (Consent Form, Appendix A). TESOL asks researchers to consider their own perspectives and biases prior to conducting cases studies:

Acknowledging multiple realities in qualitative case studies, as is now commonly done, involves discerning the various perspectives of the researcher, the case/participant, and others, which may or may not converge (Yin, 1994). As an interpretive, inductive form of research, case studies explore the details and meanings of experience and do not usually attempt to test a priori hypotheses. (TESOL.org, accessed 2 July 2014)

The researcher also followed TESOL’s guidelines “to identify important patterns and themes in the data. The richness of case studies is related to the amount of detail and contextualization that is possible when only one or a small number of focal cases and issues are analyzed” (TESOL.org, accessed 2 July 2014). TESOL also asks researchers doing case studies “to provide a compelling and engaging profile of the case, with suitable examples and linkages to broader issues” (TESOL.org, accessed 2 July 2014).

The researcher followed the elements TESOL requires for cases studies:



## The Case Study Report

*TESOL Quarterly* asks researchers to include the following elements, and these guidelines were followed for this thesis:

- 1) a statement of the study's purpose and the theoretical context
- 2) the problem or issue being addressed
- 3) central research questions
- 4) a detailed description of the case(s) and explanation of decisions related to sampling and selection
- 5) context of the study and case history, where relevant
- 6) issues of access to the site/participants and the relationship between you and the research participant (case)
- 7) the duration of the study
- 8) evidence that you obtained informed consent, that the participants' identities and privacy are protected, and, ideally, that participants benefited in some way from taking part in the study
- 9) methods of data collection and analysis, either manual or computer-based data management and analysis (see Weitzman & Miles, 1995), or other equipment and procedures used
- 10) findings, which may take the form of major emergent themes, developmental stages, or an in-depth discussion of each case in relation to the research questions; and illustrative quotations or excerpts and sufficient amounts of other data to establish the validity and credibility of the analysis and interpretations
- 11) a discussion of factors that might have influenced the interpretation of data in

undesired, unanticipated, or conflicting ways a consideration of the connection between the case study and larger theoretical and practical issues in the field (TESOL.org, accessed 2 July 2014)

Qualitative research is best accomplished by working with real people and interviewing them face-to-face (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). “Interviews are a classic way in research to conduct a conversation that explores your focus area” (Burns, 2010, p.74). According to Burns, interviews come in three types: (1) structured interviews, (2) guided, or semi-structured interviews, and (3) open-ended, conversational-type interviews (Burns, 2010, p.75).

In this research, I employed two kinds of structured interviews: face-to-face and e-mailing interviews. By interviewing, I could gather real, first hand communication data and get a better understanding of what participants were feeling in response to the media lesson. In addition, I hoped to find information that would help me to find results that support my research and shed light on the research questions:

- 1) What is important about using media for EFL learners?
- 2) How can teachers use media in English grammar class?
- 3) How can English teachers overcome the obstacles that prevent them from using media?

Data collecting procedures

As stated, I divided my interviewing into two types: face-to-face interviews with teachers and students in Saudi Arabia and the United States, and email interview. I asked the participants “some prior questions that the inquirer wants to know” (Creswell, 2009, p.181), as well as opinion questions, multi-faceted questions and a Validation Question.

### Participants

I chose to interview two teachers and two students as case studies. The teachers had taught at least 5 years—both abroad and in Saudi Arabia. They were at two different universities in Saudi Arabia, and both were teaching English in the first-year university preparatory program which is required of all students. In these first-year courses, students take four hours of English a day. The student participants were studying in two different universities—one was a sophomore biology major in the United States and the other was a senior English major in Saudi Arabia. Both were traditional students and started university studies right out of high school.

### Data recording procedures

After obtaining permission, I explained that I would be asking all four participants about their English studies from ages 11 through 18 as well as university courses they had taken. All interviews were conducted in English, and I read the questions in English, and subjects answered in English. I decided to conduct all four interviews in English to control for the variable of difference in L1—the South African teacher spoke English as the L1, but she did not speak Arabic. Another reason was that all activities, including the video, were written in English and/or produced in English. Further, all participants had

adequate English to understand and respond to the questions as well as the video. I recorded all the interviews on an iPad and took notes by hand as well. From one to two days later, I listened to the recordings and transcribed them into English, making a few minor corrections in grammar to insure that readers would understand the meaning. In addition, I was free to ask follow-up questions for clarification. I then sent the typed transcripts to the participants to review and asked them for any additional questions they had for details or for clarification of what I did not understand. I also told them they could add to or modify their answers, as indicated in the IRB application. Finally, I emailed all four at least once after the interviews, asking them to provide more information and to give examples for specific questions that seemed lacking in specificity.

#### Data analysis procedures

I used triangulation to approach the question from multiple angles. So, I read about teaching grammar in Saudi Arabia such as history and methods to get more information, which is covered in Chapter 2 of this thesis. In addition, I transcribed the interviews word for word and read them two to three times and then compared the answers by highlighting similarities and participants' experiences studying English. Finally, I reread the transcriptions to find patterns and themes. In addition, I asked the four participants to reflect on their language learning and teaching experience in the case of the two teachers. Asking teachers with different educational and teaching background facilitates the process of getting authentic data.

## Interview Procedures

Three of four interviews were conducted following these steps:

- 1) The researcher invited them to participate in the interview/s, and they all agreed.
- 2) The researcher made an appointment with three of the four participants to meet face-to face to be interviewed and to watch and respond to the interview.

## Alternate Procedure for One Teacher (Sarah)

I emailed Sarah to schedule an interview with her, and when accepted, I sent the questions to her by email. She took one week to answer the questions. After that, I sent the video activity and the link to her, which she watched and gave her opinion about the effectiveness of the activity for English learners.

## Data collection

I interviewed the first student in his apartment in the United States, and the second student in a coffee shop in Saudi Arabia. I interviewed the first teacher in his office while the last participant was contacted by email.

We spent one hour and 20 minutes talking. We were alone and in a quiet place that helped them to answers in detail. I told them that I would write what they said and how I would use their answers.

I wrote as they talked. I asked them to elaborate when I needed more details. I asked them to give me details and examples that addressed the obstacles that they faced and how they could overcome them. I started the interview by explaining to them the

purpose of the interview and about my topic. I then explained to them about grammar and how I needed to collect data for my research.

I did a warm up activity with the students. We watched a video about Sunday Morning Egg Money: “On the road: A young girl hatches rescue plan to save her family.” After watching the video, they read the transcript. Then the participants wrote a summary of the video and practice identifying the main subject and past tense verbs in the transcript. Then, they wrote a journal about the challenges he faced and how they benefitted from focusing verbs in the transcript while learning about American families and cultures.

The students were interested in my questions and understood all the questions. I asked them different kinds of questions such as open-ended and discussion questions. They answered most of the questions with more detail because they liked to talk about their experience and had faced a lot of obstacles while watching movies, TV, and videos, and they wanted to overcome them.

In Figure 1, we will see the teachers’ interview questions.

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- 1) How many years have you taught English grammar?
- 2) Which methods do you use and how you use them?
- 3) Do you think these methods help your students to understand the rules of grammar? Give an example.
- 4) What is your opinion about using writing for teaching grammar?
- 5) How can you evaluate your students’ English grammar knowledge?
- 6) What are your challenges in teaching English grammar?

- 7) Do you think English grammar curriculum helps you to use different kinds of methods?
  - 8) Do you think the class period is long enough to apply teaching English grammar through writing?
  - 9) Do you think the students' background can help you to teach English grammar through writing?
  - 10) What are your goals in teaching English grammar?
- 

Figure 1. Teacher Interview Questions

#### The Interviews: Four Case Studies

##### Teacher Case Study 1: Sarah

Sarah is a South African who speaks English as a first language and who holds a Bachelor in English from South Africa. She taught English in a public high school in South Africa for over 10 years before coming to Saudi Arabia to teach Freshman English at Tobuk University for the past two years. Specializing in the teaching of integrated English skills, Sarah works with the researcher's wife, and she participated in only the email interview and a follow-up email to clarify her background. Sarah's answers are found on the following seven pages.

- 1) How many years have you taught English grammar?

I have taught English grammar for the past five years.

- 2) Which methods do you use and how do you use them?

Teach-test-teach. After introducing the grammar point, students get to apply this new knowledge either in a game or exercises or teaching their peers. Once students are comfortable with the grammar point then I provide a short revision to ensure they will retain the knowledge which has been shared. I also use the communicative competence model; being mindful of “rule-based” grammar teaching, and allowing students to absorb grammar rules as they hear, read, and use English in communication activities. In essence I use overt grammar instruction incorporating grammar teaching and learning techniques – students are taught the grammar they need to know to accomplish specific communication tasks.

Students need to learn grammar to carry out their communication purposes. This has 3 (three) implications:

- Students need overt instruction that connects grammar points with larger communication contexts.
- Students do not need to master every aspect of each grammar point, only those that are relevant to the immediate communication task.
- Error correction is not always the instructor's first responsibility.

#### Overt Grammar Instruction

I find adult students appreciate and benefit from direct instruction that allows them to apply critical thinking skills to language learning. I take advantage of this by providing



explanations that give students a descriptive understanding (declarative knowledge) of each point of grammar.

- Teach the grammar point in the target language or the students' first language or both. The goal is to facilitate understanding.
- Limit the time you devote to grammar explanations to 10 minutes, especially for lower level students whose ability to sustain attention can be limited.
- Present grammar points in written and oral ways to address the needs of students with different learning styles.

An important part of grammar instruction is providing examples. I plan examples carefully around two basic principles:

- Examples must be accurate and appropriate. They must present the language appropriately, be culturally appropriate for the setting in which they are used, and be to the point of the lesson.
- Examples must be teaching tools. I focus examples on a particular theme or topic so that students have more contact with specific information and vocabulary.

### Relevance of Grammar Instruction

In the communicative competence model, the purpose of learning grammar is to learn the language of which the grammar is a part. I therefore teach grammar forms and structures in relation to meaning and use for the specific communication tasks that students need to complete.

Compare the traditional model and the communicative competence model for teaching the English past tense:

For example, when teaching past tense, I [do the following]:

- Distribute two short narratives about recent experiences or events, each one to half of the class
- Teach the regular *-ed* form, using verbs that occur in the texts as examples. Teach the pronunciation and doubling rules if those forms occur in the texts.
- Teach the irregular verbs that occur in the texts.
- Students read the narratives, ask questions about points they don't understand.
- Students work in pairs in which one member has read Story A and the other Story B. Students interview one another; using the information from the interview, they then write up or orally repeat the story they have not read.

#### Error Correction

At all proficiency levels, learners produce language that is not exactly the language used by native speakers. Some of the differences are grammatical, while others involve vocabulary selection and mistakes in the selection of language appropriate for different contexts.

In responding to student communication, I am careful not to focus on error correction to the detriment of communication and confidence building. I try to let students know when they are making errors so that they can work on improving. This

builds students' confidence in their ability to use the language by focusing on the content of their communication rather than the grammatical form.

I use error correction to support language acquisition, and avoid using it in ways that undermine students' desire to communicate in the language, by taking cues from context.

- When students are doing structured output activities that focus on development of new language skills, use error correction to guide them.

Example:

Student (*in class*): I buy a new jersey yesterday.

Teacher: You *bought* a new jersey yesterday. Remember, the past tense of buy is bought.

- When students are engaged in communicative activities, I correct errors only if they interfere with comprehensibility. I respond using correct forms, but without stressing them.

Example:

Student (*greeting teacher*): I buy a new jersey yesterday!

Teacher: You bought a new jersey? That's great! What color?

- 3) Do you think these methods help your students to understand the rules of grammar? Give an example.

Rules of grammar in English represent one way of conveying how to speak the language. This usually works well as a start, because most second language learners have learnt the language starting with grammar. However, once students

are more comfortable in the classroom using the communicative competence model is a much better way of explaining how the language works. Students get the structure and actually form sentences without even referring to the grammar points.

As per my two examples above, past tense is taught naturally without inhibiting the student or breaking down self-confidence.

4) What is your opinion about using writing for teaching grammar?

Students of English are able to focus more clearly on sentence construction when the written form is visible. Therefore using writing to teach grammar is helpful. Part of the communicative competence model includes writing, however not excessive.

Practically, I use a balance between written and conversation when teaching grammar. I find students are a lot more susceptible to learning the rules of grammar with oral communicative techniques and activities. However, this must be complemented with written communicative techniques and activities to enhance the learning process.

5) How can you evaluate your students' English grammar knowledge?

By playing games and doing exercises. The latter would be the more conventional method.

Feedback tests and doing communicative activities are very beneficial, e.g., after doing the activity related to past tense in 3. above, I would engage the student in, say, what he/she bought while shopping at a new mall over the weekend.

6) What are your challenges in teaching English grammar?

Each mother tongue language has an absence or difference in terms of tenses. So this would depend on the students' first language.

Fresh and new activities have to constantly be designed and sought, and I need to keep up to date with new techniques and methods.

- 7) Do you think English grammar curriculum helps you to use different kinds of methods?

This would depend on the specific English grammar curriculum referred to. There are so many and certainly some would be useful but not all. One needs to be discerning and assess the helpfulness in finding new and different methods.

- 8) Do you think the class period is long enough to apply teaching English grammar through writing?

An hour lesson does not suffice. However should the class be for a three hour period and not have two or more grammar points which need to be taught then the time is sufficient to allow teachers to assist with writing skills.

- 9) Do you think the students' background can help you to teach English grammar through writing?

According to the different backgrounds, which includes gender, age, socio-economic standing etc. different topics can be used to assist the student to better understand English grammar. One of the methods to convey this would be through writing.

- 10) What are your goals in teaching English grammar?

As non-native speakers the students need grammar to assist them to form grammatically correct sentences during conversations of all kinds. Written English

requires the most focus on grammar and should students be learning the language for business or further study purposes, grammar would require a greater focus. Throughout teaching one of the objectives remains.

#### Summary of Teacher Case Study 1: Sarah

Sarah depends on a teach-test-teach method for teaching grammar. She applies the rules through games or exercises. She also uses the communicative competence model. As I mentioned in the literature review, the whole language approach includes media to teach grammar. Students apply what they have learned from videos or magazines. Sarah noted that students need to connect the grammar rule with the communication context but don't need to master every grammar rule. The students sometimes correct their own papers. She thinks that the best way to teach grammar is through the communicative approach, especially when the students are comfortable in the classroom. In this case, she believes that the students can infer the grammar rules without the teacher giving direct instruction to teach the rule. Sarah also believes that teaching grammar through writing is helpful because the students understand more when the sentences are visible, helping writers actually see the errors and the context in which they appear. She also uses student-generated, authentic dialogues in teaching grammar, and these helps the students to demonstrate their understanding of the grammar point.

Sarah uses games and exercises to evaluate her students' grammar knowledge. She also uses feedback tests and communicative activities. She thinks that the challenges of understanding grammar depend on the students' first language. Teachers should understand modern methods of teaching grammar. Sarah believes that the class period is not long enough to teach grammar through writing. The grammar/writing class should be

three hours a day five days a week for the first two semesters of college preparatory work, and in this period teachers should focus on just for one or two grammar points each day. Sarah thinks that the different backgrounds of the students lead the teacher to use different topics in teaching grammar through writing. Finally, Sarah thinks that knowing grammar rules helps students to write well and the students should understand the language for many purposes, like business and culture.

#### Teacher Case Study 2: Saleh

Saleh is from Jordan. He has taught English for 20 years. He teaches English at Arab Open University. He has a Bachelor of Arts in English from Jordan. He always teaches English grammar by using communicative approaches. The following is a transcription of a face-to-face interview with the primary investigator in April 2014 in Saleh's office in Riyadh. This is an unedited transcription, so there may be some errors in the text. Words appearing in square brackets were added by the primary investigator or the thesis adviser.

1) How many years have you taught English grammar?

Teaching isn't an easy task. It needs preparation and a lot of efforts. I have been teaching grammar for over 20 years.

2) Which methods do you use and how do you use them?

I have used different methods in teaching grammar to make students feel and understand easily. Some of the methods I use are

- (a) Audio-lingual Method. Language is taught by repetition and variety of drills.

- (b) Total Physical Response: Learning needs to be enjoyable and less stress. The teacher directs the students [to do certain physical movements to demonstrate that they understand the meaning of the teacher's statement].
- (c) The Silent Way: It makes students become highly independent and experimental. I try just to facilitate.

3) Do you think these methods help your students to understand the rules of grammar?  
Give an example.

The Communicative Language Teaching Approach: The Communicative approach does a lot to expand on the goal of creating communicative competence compared to earlier methods that professed the same objective. Teaching students how to *use* the language is considered to be at least as important as learning the language itself. The majority of students understand because using different methods help all levels.

Each method has different way of teaching that matches the mentality of levels.

4) What is your opinion about using writing for teaching grammar?

Understanding grammar helps students write correct sentences, so after they learn the grammar and spelling rules, they can practice writing to check their understanding.

5) How can you evaluate your students' English grammar knowledge?

When students use accurate language and write correct sentences, this way we evaluate them.

6) What are your challenges in teaching English grammar?



My challenge is my students speak the language fluently and [but don't] write accurately with very few mistakes

7 ) Do you think English grammar curriculum helps you to use different kinds of methods?

Some grammar isn't easy to understand, so using different methods can really help

8) Do you think the class period is long enough to apply teaching English grammar through writing?

For certain grammar rules yes and students apply what they learn through writing. It isn't necessary to give much writing only focus on the target; negative, questions, passive.....

9)Do you think the students' background can help you to teach English grammar through writing?

If students' background is perfect, it helps a lot by reducing the time explaining. All what I do is drill, ask and do exercises which gives students chance to practice.

10) What are your goals in teaching English grammar?

Teaching grammar leads students to master the language, speak it confidently. Language has two main parts—vocabulary and grammar that connect the words.

Summary of Teacher Case Study 2: Saleh

Saleh uses many methods in teaching grammar such as audio-lingual and the silent way.

He thinks that using different kinds of methods helps the students to understand the

grammar rules because the students have different kinds of skills and each student has specific preferences. Saleh and Sarah highlight the idea referred to in the lit-review that the teachers should use whole language approach to help the students to understand grammar rules, especially in using videos then ask them to summarize it and then share with peers.

In addition, Sarah supports the idea mentioned in lit-review about students preferring and understanding more the grammar rules when the rules are visible. Saleh supports writing because with writing activity we can evaluate our students. He thinks that the lack of the students writing skills prevents him from using too much writing some grammar isn't easy to understand, so using different methods can really help. Knowing the grammar rules leads the students to understand the language in speaking, reading and writing.

#### The Similarities and Differences between the Teachers

The Similarities are: Sarah and Saleh are 1) Applying communicative activities. 2) Prefer to use media. 3) Use students' background. 4) Know students' L1 issues. 5) Some writing is needed.

The differences are:

Sarah is focus on 1) Student-generated dialogues to teach specific grammatical points. 2) No direct teaching of rules. 3) Students intuit the rules by hearing the rules by language spoken and writing the language themselves. 4) Teach-to-test method. 5) She is teaching only that which she has taught. 5) Alternative evaluation of grammar learning-students

apply their knowledge of a grammar point to create skits or role plays. 6) Writing is important and must be done to apply grammar knowledge.

Saleh: 1) ALM. 2) Drills students to see if they have learned the grammatical point. 3) Uses worksheets and exercises for student practice. 4) Reduce time explaining grammar if students have better background knowledge of grammar. 5) Grammar is the foundation for mastery of speaking the language. 6) Language has two main points: vocabulary& grammar. 7) it isn't necessary to give much writing only focus on the target; negative, questions, passive...

#### Student Cases Studies

Figure 2 is a list of the interview questions the primary investigator asked the two students. Their backgrounds will be discussed; their answers will be summarized and compared after the transcriptions.

- 
- 1) How many years have you studied English grammar?
  - 2) How did you learn English grammar? (What methods were used?)
  - 3) Did/do you like the teacher's methods of teaching grammar? Why/why not?
  - 4) What are the strengths and weakness of methods of teaching grammar which your teachers used?
  - 5) Do you think grammar teachers should change their methods of teaching grammar? Why/ why? If yes, in what ways?
  - 6) If you had a choice between taking a class that was only about grammar and a class that was mostly about writing but including grammar, which one would you take?

- 7) How would you prefer to learn grammar; through student-teacher interaction or students- student interaction?
- 8) Would you prefer to learn grammar through using writing? Why?
- 9) What changes to the rules of education could help improve grammar teaching methods?
- 10) Do you prefer Saudi grammar teaching methods or the methods that you have learned in USA?
- 11) If you were a grammar teacher, which methods would you use? Why? Give an example?
- 12) Do you think your knowledge or level of grammar helps you when you write?
- 13) Do you use all the grammar rules that you learned?
- 14) What is your advice to English grammar teachers?

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Figure 2. Student Interview Questions

### Student Case Study 1

#### Background

Nawaf is a Saudi student who majored in English at Taibah University. He graduated in 2014. He is 25 years old. He studied English for ten years. He wants to be an English teacher and hopes to complete his study in the United States in an MATESOL Program.

#### Student 1 Interview

1) How many years have you studied English grammar?

About 10 years

2) How did you learn English grammar? (What methods were used?)

Through education system books

3) Did/do you like the teacher's methods of teaching grammar? Why/why not?

Yes, I do. Because they help me to understand English grammar.

4) What are the strengths and weakness of methods of teaching grammar which your teachers used?

I think the strengths in using Grammar-Translation Method. And the weakness [would be that] some teachers don't use enough examples in their teaching.

5) Do you think grammar teachers should change their methods of teaching grammar? Why/ why not? If yes, in what ways?

Yes, I think so by (1) using media and (2) making their students to practice English grammar through writing or speaking.

6) If you had a choice between taking a class that was only about grammar and a class that was mostly about writing but including grammar, which one would you take?

I would choose the second one—writing including grammar [because I am now graduating soon, but I still cannot write English compositions well. [This is most likely because the teachers do not give examples of how to use the rules and they do not ask students to write even a paragraph in English].

7) How would you prefer to learn grammar? Through student-teacher interaction or student- student interaction?

I prefer to learn grammar through student-teacher interaction [because I feel more comfortable when I work with my teacher since I may not know the classmate and might

feel embarrassed when asked to speak English with him. This is because I fear making mistakes with peers.]

8) Would you prefer to learn grammar through using writing? Why?

Yes I would prefer to learn grammar through using writing, because I want to improve my writing skill. And I thin[k] you can't improve your writing skill unless you know well grammar.

9) What changes to the rules of education could help improve grammar teaching methods?

Using media [like videos of TV and/or radio broadcasts].

10) If you were a grammar teacher, which methods would you use? Why? Give an example?

I used grammar-translation method because it helps foreign learner to understand English grammar.

11) Do you think your knowledge or level of grammar helps you when you write?

Yes I do. It gives me more confident to write essay or letter.

12) Do you use all the grammar rules that you learned?

Yes I do.

13) What is your advice to English grammar teachers?

I advise English grammar teacher to do their best to help students to know English grammar. And urge student to write memo or everything to improve their English skills.

### Summary of Student Case Study 1: Nawaf

Nawaf said that the English teachers focus on the book and apply the activities given. He thinks that this way helps him to understand the grammar rules. Further, he states that grammar translation methods help him to understand the grammar rules. But the teachers need to use more examples to help the students to understand. Nawaf believes that using media and writing to teach grammar is helpful and leads the students to practice the grammar rules. Finally, he thinks that knowing the grammar rules and applying them with writing helps him to improve his writing skills and completely understand the grammar rules.

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### Student Case Study 2: Ahmad

#### Background

Ahmad is a Saudi student studying biology at Eastern Washington University. He is 22 years old. He studied English in Saudi Arabia, England, and the USA. He studied in Saudi Arabia in a college for one year and then traveled to England to study English for 8 months and then came to the United States to study for a Bachelor of Science in Biology. He has studied in the United States since 2011. This is an unedited transcription, so there may be some errors in the text. Words appearing in square brackets were added by the primary investigator or the thesis adviser.

### Student Case Study 2: Interview

1) How many years have you studied English grammar?

Ahmad: I am studying English for 10 years. I started learning English when I was in the middle school and completed learn English in the high school and then I traveled to Ireland to study English. I spent 8 months there..... After that I came back to Saudi Arabia [to study pre-med at *Albetrgi* College]. I spent one year and then decided to stop study there because I hoped to travel to USA to get the Bachelor degree in Pre-med major.

2) How did you learn English grammar? (What methods were used?)

Ahmad: as I mention that I started learning English in the middle school. When I started learn English, I was hating English language. So, I didn't like the English class because I was facing difficulties and thought learning English is not important and I was asking myself what are the benefits to learn this language.

3) Did/do you like the teacher's methods of teaching grammar? Why/why not?

Ahmad: In the middle school, the teachers were using traditional methods.....

the teacher didn't use games, groups.....They explain the grammar rules and then answers the exercises together. Also, I didn't understand with my teacher. He didn't ask me if I understand or not. So, I didn't like their methods and that impact me to understand the grammar. But when I was studying in the high school, I like my teacher's ways. I liked English class because he encouraged me and if I don't understand the rules, he used other methods to teach me and also he gave us time to meet with him in his office to help us to understand and answers the grammar exercises.



4) What are the strengths and weakness of methods of teaching grammar which your teachers used?

Ahmad: one of my teacher was using PowerPoint and games. First, he explained the rules and if we don't know the meaning of the words he explain to us that. That helped us to understand the rules. In addition, he asked each student and work in the class to write our own sentences through apply the rules that he taught us in the same day. In addition, the homework..... was good because we try to write our own sentences and then he gave us chance to edit our mistakes through working with peers to help ourselves.

with Focus on each student, teach the students the benefits of learning English and using PowerPoint and games, will help students to like the English class and understand but using traditional methods ....and the teacher just explain the rules and then ask some students without focus on each student, impact to learn the rules of grammar.

5) Do you think grammar teachers should change their methods of teaching grammar? Why/ why not? If yes, in what ways?

Ahmad : Yes, because students need to practice grammar and with writing they will see if they understand the grammar rules or not. And also use conversation skills to show if they students understand or not.

6) If you had a choice between taking a class that was only about grammar and a class that was mostly about writing but including grammar, which one would you take?

Ahmad : I will choice the class that include grammar with writing

7) How would you prefer to learn grammar; through student-teacher interaction or student- student interaction?

I prefer the student-student interaction because I feel more comfortable when I work with my classmates.

8) Would you prefer to learn grammar through using writing? Why?

Ahmad: Yes, because I have experience for learn grammar with writing. I studied English 112 and through edit my grammar mistakes with my helper. I learned a lot and overcame my grammar mistakes.

9) What changes to the rules of education could help improve grammar teaching methods?

Using modern methods like what I learned in USA such as using media, give the students space to share and work.

10) If you were a grammar teacher, which methods would you use? Why? Give an example?

Ahmad : Encourage the students in the first class [hour in every class] and show them how grammar is important to understand the language. Using media in teach grammar. Give the students more space to work and share during the class.

11) Do you think your knowledge or level of grammar helps you when you write?

Ahmad : Grammar is so important, because if you know a lot of grammar rules you can understand the reading and conversation comprehension. Also, you will write correctly

and that help you in the university because the teacher will focus on your grammar and might you will lost points if you did a lot of grammar mistakes because the teacher will not understand your sentences. For the methods that I will use, I will focus on modern methods such as watch videos, games and using writing when I teach grammar and help each student as individual help.

My level of grammar helps me in both writing and speaking. In addition, it gives me confidence when I write and speak. I always before I want to meet anybody , I practice what \*\*I will say and try to speak correctly because I don't like to show other people I am not speak fluently, so I focus on grammar and pronunciation. Also, my level of grammar helped me in writing. Most of teacher likes my writing because I have a little grammar mistake although I am not native speaker.

12) Do you use all the grammar rules that you learned?

Ahmad: of course, and I always focus to say correct sentences.

13) What is your advice to English grammar teachers?

Ahmad: Encourage your students and teach them the benefits that they will receive if they learn English and grammar of English. In addition, use media when you teach such as \*\*PowerPoint, watch video and groups. I also, mention that use grammar with writing and that help students to understand and apply most grammar rules and when you use editing from the students writing,( first draft) you can know which the students need to focus on.

## Summary of Student Case Study 2

I asked the participant 14 questions, most of which were open-ended questions that give the participant space to talk and feel free to answer without interruption. He mentioned that he, “Don’t know the benefits of learning English as a second language that prevents me to try to focus on English.” He remembers that when he studied English in middle school, his teachers didn’t tell them about why they must learn English. He said, “I was focused more on other classes such as MATH, biology and sciences more than English.” He also thinks that the other obstacles are teachers who were not focused on each student. For example, the teachers ask questions and accepted any student answers without knowing if other students understood or not. In addition, when they explained the grammar rules, they didn’t ask the students why you use these rules and so on. “That affect to me to like English because I wanted to develop but I didn’t find the teachers who knows about my problems”. “....Don’t understand English vocabularies, made me to hate English class”. In high school, he liked English and could understand more because his teacher was focused on all the students and spoke English most of the time. The teacher asked each student and gave them enough time to help them understand. \*\*\*Not understanding the rules and meaning of the words affects the understanding of grammar rules. He said, “I tried to understand the rules but didn’t know the meaning of some words impact me to understand the rules... Don’t find anybody to help me...One of the ideas that helped me to understand grammar rules is when my teacher focuses on modern methodologies such as using PowerPoint and games to explain the grammar rules when he teaches grammar”. He mentioned that “through using PowerPoint and explain the difficult words then asked the students to work with group

and then try to ask each students and after that gave homework to use these rules by following the rules through write it in my own sentences, helped me to understand better.”

Like Nawaf, Ahmad agrees that English teachers should use media in teaching grammar. They think using media facilitates the understanding of grammar rules. He added, “Using media help me in understand the grammar rules.” In addition, they prefer to apply the grammar rules that they learned in their writing. They both like classes that include grammar with writing. “I choose the second one: writing including grammar,” explained Nawaf.

#### Similarities and differences between the students

The similarities between Ahmad and Nawaf are: 1) prefer interaction in the class. 2) Using media in study English grammar. 3) Both of them like to apply the grammar rules through writing. 4) They liked the activity that I applied with them. 5) They believe that knowing grammar rules helps them to understand and write well in English language.

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#### The differences between the students

##### Ahmad

Ahmad indicated that he has certain preferences:

1) Prefer the student- student interaction. 2) Use PowerPoint and games. 3) He thinks English teacher should focus on each student and tell the students the benefits of learning English. 4) He didn't like his English teacher method in the middle school; however, he liked his English teacher method in high school.

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Nawaf prefer student-teacher interaction 2) likes Grammar-Translation Method.

3) He liked his English teacher method.

In Figure 3, we will see the transcript and sample of advanced lesson to combine media and grammar in a meaningful activity. As presented by the primary investigator at Mukogawa Women's University for the Inland ESL Conference in February 2014, this activity was chosen for the following reasons (Alabalawi, 2014): The value of this activity is that it is

- 1) a lesson in compassion
- 2) a lesson in how one person can make a difference
- 3) a model of the energy and creativity of children.
- 4) a lesson in starting a business.
- 5) a lesson in cooperation.
- 6) a lesson in resilience—the mother recovered and returned home.

Asking students to infer the value or judge the value of the lessons in the video and write about what they learned and what it meant to them is a whole language approach, incorporating reader response, as explained by Rigg (1991):

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Rosenblatt...helped explain how individual interpretation of text (private meaning) related to a commonly accepted interpretation (public meaning), and she distinguished between "aesthetic" and "efferent" reading (p. 22)—reading for the experience and reading to find out. For most whole language educators, whose interest had been primarily the reading process, this focus on literature and its interpretation was a significant step. (p. 522)

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Normally, in a university ESL class in the United States, we would ask students to watch the broadcast, read the transcript and find the verbs in pairs, discuss the basic story, and then write a journal on what was the most important lesson they learned from Shelby's story in 100 words in five or ten minutes, depending on the students' levels. The following is the written text that goes with the video, and it is an example of combining media with the teaching of grammar (Figure 4).

2013 CBS Sunday Morning Egg Money

On the Road: Young girl hatches rescue plan to save family

[http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563\\_162-57565944/colo-girl-hatches-plan-to-boost-familys-finances/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563_162-57565944/colo-girl-hatches-plan-to-boost-familys-finances/) January 25, 2013 4:22 PM By Steve Hartman Label each underlined verb. VT VI LV HV PV=phrasal M

(CBS News) DENVER - On a clear Colorado morning, the sun shines kindly on 13-year-old Shelby Grebenc. It admires her red hair and warms her way to school -- a professional courtesy, perhaps, for this fellow ray of light who's seen her share of dark times.

1) ["It was sad. Really sad."]

2) [Around 2009], Shelby's mother Nancy was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

MS isn't a death sentence, but in Nancy's case, for a while, it might as well have been.

3) "She couldn't walk. She couldn't feed herself," Shelby said. "She was pretty much dead on the couch."

4) "I couldn't get out of bed," Nancy said.

- 5) "And she ended up in a nursing home, and, man, it was tough," Shelby's dad, Jonmichael, added.
- 6) Jonmichael works in a water treatment plant outside Denver. Shelby's mom was a pharmacist. They made pretty good money, but the nursing-home bills alone were bankrupting the couple. Shelby, of course, was told none of this, but knew all of it.
- 7) "Because I could see how sad he was, and I decided to help him," she said.
- 8) "And I said, 'Well, OK, see what you can do,'" said Jon Michael. "I just never thought she would take it to this level."
- 9) What Shelby did was basically start farming -- at the age of 9. She got a loan from her grandma and bought chickens -- lots of chickens.
- 10) "I have 135, about," she said.
- 11) Never mind she didn't come from a farming family. Never mind the 50-pound feed bags. Shelby was determined to tackle this. She'd run the numbers and figured there was money in eggs, if you did it right, which she did.
- 12) Shelby became the youngest farmer in America to win the Animal Welfare Seal of Approval, which basically means her chickens have the life.
- 13) "I have to make sure the chickens get out, they get to eat bugs, they get to be chickens," Shelby said.
- 14) Pair that comparison with home delivery and you've got yourself a winning business model. Her company makes about \$15,000 a year.



15)Asked where the family would have been without Shelby's business, Jonmichael said, "I think we would have been homeless. We would have just -- we would have lost it. She kept the wolf away from the door."

16)Today, Nancy is a little better -- as are the family finances. Shelby can now put all the profits into a college fund, although should the need arise again, she said family remains her first priority.

17)And that's why, whether she stays in farming or not, Shelby Grebenc will always be one good egg.

In 100 words, write your opinion about this activity and how that helps you to understand the grammar rules.

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Figure3. Transcript & Sample of How to Use Media to Teach Grammar

Lesson prepared by Dr. LaVona Reeves. 2013 Complete CBSNews.com coverage. Adopted by Sultan Albalawi for this thesis, 2014.

Shelby's story embraces the UNESCO guidelines on the teaching of universal values as explained in "Teaching and learning for a sustainable future

The values and attitudes we live by affect how we relate to other people and to all our activities in the environment, and so are a major influence on our prospects for achieving a sustainable future.

Although they cannot be separated from cognitive understanding, values and

attitudes relate to the affective (or emotional) dimension of human behaviour. While values and attitudes are similar in this regard, they differ in several important ways.

- Values are generally long-term standards or principles that are used to judge the worth of an idea or action. They provide the criteria by which we decide whether something is good or bad, right or wrong.
- Attitudes predispose us to respond in particular ways to people and events. They are not so deeply felt as values and quite often change as a result of experience.

This module provides an opportunity to consider the importance of human values and attitudes in shaping the future. It also provides ideas and examples for two categories of strategies for exploring values in the classroom – values clarification and values analysis.

## OBJECTIVES

- To develop an understanding of values education strategies;
- To consider the relation between values and personal behaviour affecting the achievement of sustainable futures;
- To reflect on your futures awareness, commitment and actions; and  
To develop skills for using values clarification and values analysis in teaching.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the qualitative methods used for this study. I have defined this method, giving values for the research and then detailed the data collection procedures. I also discussed why these particular participants were chosen as the case study for the research. I then described how the interviews were done and mentioned the

teachers' and students' interview questions. After that I discussed the transcript of the interviews and compared the differences and similarities between the both teachers together and the students and then the similarities and differences between the teachers and the students. Finally, I mentioned the transcript and sample of advanced lesson to combine media and grammar in a meaningful activity.

## Chapter 4

### Discussion and Reflection

Chapter 4 is a discussion of and reflection on what the researcher learned from doing this project—from the literature, the students, and the teachers. Chapter 4 also includes a discussion of the research questions, classroom applications with two sample lessons for using media to teach grammar, and reflections on the researcher's experience studying English—both in Saudi Arabia and in the United States. I summarize what I learned from doing this project and how it might influence his teaching when he returns to Saudi Arabia to teach at the college level.

Because I am interested in researching the methodologies of teaching grammar in Saudi Arabia, I need to know which methods students prefer and how the methods that I will use would help students to reach a high level of English grammar proficiency especially grammar and American culture. So I chose a Saudi student, Ahamad, who had studied English in three countries: Saudi Arabia, Ireland and the USA. Because he had had different experiences studying English with seven years in Saudi Arabia, eight months in Ireland, and two and a half years so far in the United States, his answers were of particular interest to me as a teacher and researcher. I will discuss several of his answers below. Then I will explore what I learned from Nawaf, who was a senior English major in Saudi Arabia at the time I interviewed him. Finally, I will select some of the teachers' perceptions and discuss those most relevant to me as a novice English teacher.

## What I learned as a researcher/teacher

### Explicitly teach the benefits of language learning

Interviewing language learners helped me to understand students' obstacles and teachers' options to help them get past those difficulties, and I also learned new methods for teaching grammar. I was surprised at how seldom students are taught the benefits of learning a language. Ahmad, for example, stated, "I thought learning English is not important and I was asking myself what are the benefits to learn this language." That helped me realize that students must be shown the benefits of learning foreign languages and how those languages can help them in their lives, such as being able to communicate with other people and in understanding different cultures. I was never told the benefits of studying a foreign language, even as an English major, so I can understand why we do need to tell our students the benefits or, better yet, ask them to reflect on their own personal reasons and keep those in sight. ACTFL, the professional organization for foreign language teachers in the United States, insists students' personal needs and interests are addressed well through language study: "Ultimately, the goal for all language learners is to develop a functional use of another language for one's personal contexts and purposes" (ACTFL.org, 2014, [http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Can-Do\\_Statements.pdf](http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Can-Do_Statements.pdf)).

The position statement explains

These modes of communication are defined in the National Standards for 21st Century Language Learning and organized on the checklist into the following

## Categories

- Interpersonal (Person-to-Person) Communication
- Presentational Speaking (Spoken Production)
- Presentational Writing (Written Production)
- Interpretive Listening
- Interpretive Reading (ACTFL.org, 2014)

In the media lessons included in this thesis and created by the thesis adviser, students are asked to do this kind of interpretive listening. For example, Shelby decided to start raising chickens to be able to sell eggs to help her family financially. We might ask our students to interpret the facts and tell us what they think Shelby learned from her egg business. We are asking them to infer the meaning of the egg business in this young teen's life. Though there is no one right answer, possible interpretations might be one or more of the following:

- 1) She learned how to save her money to achieve a goal—first to help her father support the family when her mother could no longer work and then to save for college.
- 2) She learned how to become less dependent on her parents when life brought them a serious problem—the mother suddenly got multiple sclerosis and had to be hospitalized for an extended period.
- 3) She learned how to start a business and keep it going.
- 4) She learned how to overcome difficulties that life presented and not become a victim.

Through media lessons such as Shelby's story, language learners can gain more experience practicing critical thinking and claim classroom space to feel comfortable stating their opinions and be creative in their thinking.

#### How and why we use media in teaching grammar

Grammar rules are complex and need to be explained with a variety of activities to help our students understand. Through using media the teacher can include multiple learning styles that students bring to the class. I believe Saudi schools and universities need to change their methods to help their students' acquisition of English skills in grammar classes. Teachers have many options for using modern methods and media in teaching grammar. Videos can be selected based on students' interests and needs. After viewing the video, students can discuss their interest in it and connect it to their own experiences as they write journals in class. Students can also write summaries and edit them as a method of focusing on grammar rules. So using media helps teachers to explore topics that are important to the students.

#### Media increases motivation

In addition, I learned how using media can help students to learn languages because language classes are difficult and "sometimes boring" according to Ahmad, so the students need different kinds of activities such as games, videos, and group work. Even though I prefer to teach grammar through these activities, I honestly do not know if the teachers should switch completely or use these activities to change the mood of the class. In fact, in Saudi Arabian high schools and universities, the teachers do not have control of the curriculum, but they may be able to create short media lessons to motivate

learners to do interpretive viewing and use the language actively while learning about American culture. In high school, for example, English classes meet for 45 minutes a day for four days a week, so it may be possible to add one or two media lessons per week, but for only about 10 minutes each—a short video with a grammar lesson like the “Thoreau” activity provided in Chapter 3. As students become more accustomed to watching videos and listening to music to learn grammar, they may become more interested in learning English as a result.

#### Focus on individual learners

“Focus on each student and help each students to understand, helped me to like English class and I become better” (Ahamad, 2014). I appreciated this quote because I like to put the students in groups and do not focus on them as individuals. So I have changed my focus. For example, even though I ask students to work as groups, I should evaluate each student to know if he or she understands the lesson because some are shy and the active students talk more and in that case if I just ask the groups to answer without evaluating each student, I would be helping all the students.

#### Student-centered approach and the teacher- centered approach

While interviewing two Saudi students, I noted that, they prefer both the student-centered approach and the teacher -centered approach. So as English teachers, we have to use both of them to help the students to understand English grammar. In addition, it behooves us to create our curriculum that leads us to use these methods. In addition, all of them like the activity that I applied with them which is using media in teaching grammar. Through applying it with the students, they understand the rules immediately and like the activity. So we have to use media in teaching grammar to help them to understand and



like the grammar class. So I found that they prefer to be active in the class and share with their teachers. We have to focus on how we create our curriculum that fits these modern methods. Sometimes the teachers may face some problems in using media, but there are some options that help us to overcome these difficulties.

#### The Ministry of Education guidelines for media use

In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education encourages the use of media and tries to make the technology available in classrooms. With media use being so widespread, language teachers should know the resources and understand how to use the technology and create their own materials to fit with the media sources. Teachers should be familiar with the different kinds of media to enhance their teaching, so Saudi students will be more interested in learning the English language. Despite the Ministry's efforts, however, some rural schools do not have computers in the classroom for internet access, but in the near future, they will have access throughout the nation. For this reason, all EFL teachers in KSA can benefit from training in how to use media in teaching language and in particular in teaching grammar in context.

It is encouraging that some English teachers in Saudi Arabia have recently started to use media to teach grammar and English in general. They are using media in their classes, and the universities offer all the technology that they need. For example, the first teacher whom I interviewed focuses on using media in her grammar class, using the whole language approach and media to teach grammar. "Students apply what they have learned from videos or magazines" to show that they are able to use the grammar points in their own writing (Sarah, 2014).

### Saudi students and media

In Figure 4, we see a Saudi English teacher who is showing his students how to use the class website to submit their assignments.



Figure4. Media Use in the English Class in Saudi Arabia

Saudi students often prefer teachers who use media in the classroom because the students are more engaged in the learning process. Nawaf believes that “using media and writing to teach grammar is helpful that leads the students to practice the grammar rules” ( Nawaf, 2014). It seems that they prefer media use over the traditional methods when they just listen to the teachers. With media, the teacher can ask students to practice the grammar lesson at home. For example, write some exercises on some website like Blackboard or Canvas (two online programs for class assignments), and then ask the students to practice at home (watch the video again). In other words, they watch a video one in class and write a journal on the topic, and then they go home with the transcript and complete a grammar lesson, filling in modal auxiliaries or identifying subject and

verb (Figure 4) while watching the video again. Also, the students can share their answers with the class and get feedback from the teacher or peers. In addition, asking the students to join a group on Blackboard or Canvas can provide a way to share together what they learned in class through the discussion format.

Media can also provide teachers different ways to use a whole language approach. Students have different kinds of skills. Video, for example, can help students use all their skills such as oral, aural, and movement. And the English teachers should focus on all the language skills and create their curriculum that leads to using these skills to help their students to understand the lesson. Using media in the classroom helps students to be active and interactive learners. Saudi students are used to a classroom where the teacher talks most of the time, and they just listen and take notes with little interaction. But with the use of media the students use or are exposed to different kinds of learning environments and the living language. Today, the learning style can change with the use of media to engage the students in the learning process.

#### The obstacles that English teachers face in using media in Saudi Arabia

Those English teachers who prefer to use media during their classes may face some difficulties in Saudi Arabia. One common problem is that some schools do not offer the technology or technology support in the classroom. These schools follow the traditional methods of teaching grammar and all subjects. Some students do not have computers, and also some schools have no computer labs except for use by computer classes. Those cases both the teachers and the students face problems in doing exercises that require computer use.

Without access to computers, much media content is out of reach of teachers in Saudi Arabia. For those who have computers and internet connections, there are many websites that focus on teaching grammar which teachers can share with their students. For example, there are some Saudis who present English lessons on YouTube, so the teachers can share these with the students, especially with low level students because these lessons present the lessons in English and Arabic. For example, there is a Saudi program *Flmha* that focuses on improving English vocabulary, pronunciation and use the new words. The program uses both English and Arabic to explain these words. The presenter shows the learner part of movie and then chooses five words or sentences and then explains it in Arabic how to use them. Also he acts as a movie actor and practices the words. The program is very useful and had about 25,918 participants in 2012 (<http://akhbaar24.argaam.com/article/detail/99714>). This number is just for the participants and does not include those who watched without participating. This is an example of how media encourages learners and can lead them to learn language in ways beyond the traditional methods.

#### How teachers can overcome problems when using media

Although English teachers face difficulties using media in Saudi Arabia, these problems can be overcome. The teachers can bring their laptops to class because schools generally have projectors.

Teachers can also create a specific website and record grammar exercises that can be accessed at any time by students. This can be a way to enhance limited classroom time. Another example of computer media use is having the teacher divide the class into

groups and asking them to have a conversation about a specific topic like Saudi food, Saudi education, and Islamic history. The teacher can listen to the students' conversations and write the students' sentences on a notepad. After that, the teacher prints the students' sentences without correction, but with the speaker's name next to each error, and then record the corrected sentences that reflect all errors on the students' handout they take home with them. Listening to the recordings the teacher has made for the class, each student hears the correction and makes the correction on the handout, so this becomes a listening and grammar activity. Each student is responsible for correcting only the errors he or she made in this session. With the recordings accessible online, students can practice their sentences many times. This activity leads the students to practice and then to recognize their mistakes from listening. In addition they use all English language skills: they listen, write, read, and speak. Further, this activity helps the students who feel shy or unconfident during the class to practice English at home alone by using their computer.

Saudi English teachers may encounter difficulties in using the media, but they can overcome these obstacles. One of the problems is the time period of the class. In Saudi Arabia, the typical duration of English courses is just three months, and the teachers must finish the textbook in that time. So they tend to focus on the textbook rather than using other resources. There are ways teachers can apply this method to the text lessons. For example, each unit of the textbook focuses on one English skill. The first lesson may focus on reading, while the second lesson focuses on grammar, and the third on writing. Teachers can use media sources to cover an entire lesson in all three areas in one day. Then they can review the lesson the next day.

Another problem is the lack of computers in the classroom. Teachers can bring their own computers, if they own one, and also use the computer lab, which most K-12 schools in Saudi Arabia have. This can lead to further problems of resource allocation. Each high school has around 500 students in about 18 classrooms. Computer labs can easily become overcrowded and free time scarce.

Another possible benefit of using media is that teachers can construct distance learning programs that can take advantage of native or non-native speakers in different countries. With this activity, students can practice English and improve their skills through interaction and collaboration. The students' practice of grammar rules in conversation is especially useful when chatting with native speakers.

The teacher can chat with students and provide feedback on their writing online. This also has the benefit of allowing students to practice writing and grammar at home on their own computers where they don't have to compete for time as in the school computer lab.

From this research, English teachers and I will learn (1) how to help students, through media, to understand English grammar; (2) how and when we can use these methods and materials to supplement a primary text; and (3) in which subject disciplines we can incorporate them to provide background knowledge and cultural values needed as an historical foundation. We have looked at the students' benefits from using media rather than just traditional materials. At the same time, we offered a sample media lessons used to supplement the text. In addition, we have discussed ways the teacher can overcome the problems while working in schools without adequate technology.

### My experience in studying English grammar

As stated, I have studied English for 13 years, starting in intermediate school. There was one class for English that included reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar. There was no specific grammar class. The teachers focused on grammar in isolation. They explained the rules and then we tried to answer questions. In college in Saudi Arabia, I took two grammar classes, but the teachers applied the same traditional methods. They explained the grammar rules and then we answered questions. I faced the same problem when I studied at the ELI at EWU. Even though grammar and writing were taught in the same class and the teachers focused on writing more. I did not like the method because the teachers still focused on the textbook. Although there grammar and writing were in the same class, the teachers did not hold conferences to help us to understand our mistakes and correct them. The teachers just gave a grade for each essay. I think as international students we learn to understand our errors. On the contrary In English 112 Composition for Multilingual students and Grammar for Teaching Dr. Reeves used a great whole language method to combine writing and grammar. She used various media to explain grammar rules. For example, she asked us to watch a video and then write a journal about it. Then she gave us the transcript of the video to find subjects, verbs, direct and in direct objects. I worked with a group and discussed the answers. This method helped me in many ways. I liked the class because I like to work with groups and watch videos to understand the context rather than just read the sentences in isolation in a grammar book. In addition, this method helped me to understand new words and how to pronounce them. So with this method I used all my English skills reading, writing listening, speaking, viewing, and visually. I believe that applying this method would help

students improve all their English skills in one class and also understand the grammar rules. .

### Conclusion of discussion

For the thesis I have completed, I have discovered that using media for grammar instruction has many benefits and helps students to understand grammar as used in context and increase overall English skills.

### Applications

Figure 5 is an example of how to teach grammar in the context of a journey through Henry David Thoreau's Maine woods. The thesis adviser and researcher chose this newscast as the basis for a grammar lesson to review four parts of speech. First, students watch the video two times and then write a journal about what have learned from the video. For homework, they will be given the cloze activity and will be asked to fill in the nouns, pronouns, verbs, and the prepositional phrases. Because this is a whole language activity, it begins with viewing and writing and ends with viewing while filling in nouns, pronouns, verbs, and proposition phrases for review. It is assumed that the teacher has already taught each one before the viewing activity. The value of this activity is that it is

- 1) a lesson in appreciation of nature,
  - 2) a lesson in saving nature for future generations, and
  - 3) a model of how to practice good environmental preservation to save the planet.
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“A journey through Henry David Thoreau’s Maine woods”

Grammar Focus:

Noun, pronoun, verb, propositional phrase recognition

Directions

1) Whole language aesthetic viewing—watch the video

- a. Don’t take notes.
- b. Focus on all the beauty of nature in the film.
  - i. Beautiful things you see
  - ii. Animals you see
  - iii. Sounds you hear
  - iv. Changes in the sky
  - v. Land formations
  - vi. Watch
  - vii. Rocks

viii. Mountains

ix. Anything new you see

x. Changes in the weather

xi. Humans and what they are doing

2) Write a journal of 100 words in ten minutes. Don't stop writing. Describe what you saw in the video. Be specific about the list above. Ask if you don't know the word in English. For example, the big animal with horns was a moose. The birds at the end were loons.

3) Switch journals with a partner. Read your partner's journal. Write back as a short letter in two or three sentences. Sign your name. Return the journal. Submit for a grade today.

4) Grammar Lesson—listening and viewing

a. Form 4 groups of four or five.

i. Group 1 finds and underlines the nouns.

ii. Group 2 finds and underlines the pronouns.

iii. Group 3 finds and underlines the verbs.

iv. Group 4 finds and underlines the prepositional phrases.

b. Each group comes to the front of the room and writes the words on the board while the other members read the list, taking turns. Peers write down all the words for each part of speech. Take a sheet of paper and fold it into four parts. Put one part of speech in each part. If possible, put each into categories. Submit the paper for a grade.

<u>Nouns</u>  People: Henry David Thoreau, Slater, Penobscot Nation, Katahdin, friends  Places: Moosehead Lake, Allagash Wilderness  Living things: spruce, tops, canoes, firs,  Animals: moose, loons	<u>Pronouns</u>  Personal (subject) we, it, I, you,  Object him, them,  Possessive its, his  Relative—who, that  Demonstrative pronoun—this
<u>Verbs</u>  Catch up (phrasal verb) set out, wrote  Replied, journeyed, soaked, began, was	<u>Prepositional phrases</u>  In the 1800s, with Thoreau, in the Penobscots, in our culture, of the Penobscot Nation, of the wild fir...

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## Newscast Transcript

- *Into the woods is where we're headed now . . . with Don Dahler following the trail  
blazed a long time ago by one of our greatest naturalists and writers:*

The Maine woods, with its vast forests, its rivers, and its lakes is not so very different today than it was when Henry David Thoreau journeyed here in the 1800s, to canoe its waterways, climb its mountains, and learn from his Indian guides.

"I began to be exhilarated by the sight of the wild fir and spruce tops," he wrote. "It was like the sight and odor of cake to a schoolboy."

This spring, 150 years after the publication of Thoreau's essays on the Main woods, a hardy band of modern-day explorers set out to retrace his third (and most ambitious) journey, from Moosehead Lake to the Allagash Wilderness, and back again -- 325 miles in all.

We caught up with them, soaked but undaunted, after four days of hard paddling in the wind and rain, making camp on the shores of Chesuncook Lake.

Maine guide Kevin Slater led the expedition. Dahler asked him, "Why are you out here?"

"'Cause I love it!" Slater replied. "Even when it's like this," indicating the dampness.

He makes his bed of balsam branches, just as Thoreau did: "There, it's starting to look like a nice bed!"

James Francis is tribal historian of the Penobscot Nation. "The eagle in our culture represents the messenger," he said, taking an eagle feather off the canoe: "It's a sign of goodwill for the trip."

For him, this is a journey of reconnection -- with Thoreau, and with his Penobscot ancestor Joe Polis, who guided Thoreau on his journey.

"There's something for me knowing that those birds that woke me this morning were the same birds that woke Polis 100 and some-odd years ago," Francis said.

For Thoreau scholar Stan Tag (left, with Don Dahler), the landscape, including the majestic Mount Katahdin, brings new meaning to Thoreau's words. "One of the important things for me has been to put the landscape itself in my body," he said.

"I've climbed Katahdin many times. I've never taken this canoe trip, so to do this, it feels like -- I can read Thoreau's words but it's when I've actually been in the landscape myself, had my own experience there, it's an entirely different experience. And I go back and I read the same words I've been reading over and over again and I see them entirely differently."

"Do you think he saw himself as an explorer or an observer?" asked Dahler.

"Well, Thoreau's always an explorer, but his explorations aren't just physical," Tag said.

"They're like spiritual explorations, too. His interest in the Penobscots was not just a kind of a quaint interest, but very much a deep interest in other people and their ways of being in a certain kind of landscape."



CBS NEWS

Thoreau wrote: "I have much to learn of the Indian -- nothing of the missionary."

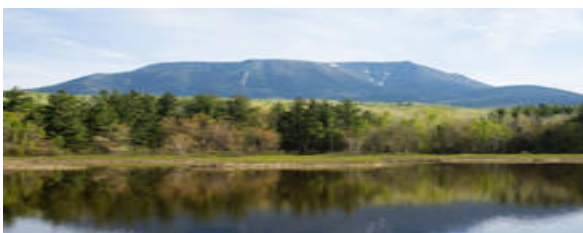
He made a list of Indian words he had learned.

Thoreau said the Indian words his guides gave him "gave me a new way of seeing things," said Francis. "Gave me words for things I had only had scientific ones before.

And because of this, he saw them in a new light."

On the morning of Day Five, the rain stopped; the skies began to clear, and the little band set out again, heartened by the promise of sun.

Mount Katahdin, in Thoreau's words "a cloud factory," was ahead of them still, shrouded in mist.



CBS NEWS

"Katahdin," said Francis, "means greatest mountain. And everybody says, 'Oh well, yeah, it's the tallest in Maine.' But that's so irrelevant, because my ancestors wouldn't have known that it was the tallest. So there's something else inherent -- some inherent greatness to Katahdin that's beyond that it's the tallest. That really intrigues me."

This is a place where it is possible to reconnect, as Thoreau set out to do, with the spirits of nature and the whispers of the past.

(<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/retracing-thoreaus-journey-through-the-wilds-of-maine/>)

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Figure 5 is an example of how to teach grammar in the context of a journey through Henry David Thoreau's Maine woods.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion:

#### Summary of Findings, Limitations of the Study,

#### Recommendations for Teaching Media, Need for Future Research and Final Reflections

Chapter 5 is the conclusion that includes (1) summary of the findings, (2) limitations of the present study, (3) recommendations for using media to teach grammar, (4) suggestions for future research about using media for a variety of purposes globally, and (5) final reflections.

#### Summary of Findings

##### The teachers' views

This thesis has focused on using media in teaching English grammar in context in Saudi Arabia, especially on the methods and benefits of using media during grammar class. Teachers have many options for employing media, video being only one type, and two viewing activities were included here for the teachers to respond to in their interview with the researcher in person or by internet. This thesis writer has suggested how teachers can overcome issues related to scarcity of technology for employing media and the using media for grammar instruction can lead to improvement in both grammar and other English language skills. For example, the two teachers reported that they liked the activities introduced by the researcher and both intend to use more media in their English



lessons for college level learners. One expressed concern that he was unable to use media in teaching grammar because the period of the grammar class. he just have three months period with huge unites or lessons, so he needs to focus and finish the text book exercises before the final exam because the final exam depends on these exercises.

In addition, the students' level of English affect on use writing method in teaching grammar because they have lack of writing skills although they have speak good. The students make a lot of mistakes and that need more time and effort in apply this method.

#### Students' Views

The students prefer that their English teachers use media and writing to teach grammar. They believe that these methods help them to understand the grammar points more effectively. They prefer to be active in the class and these methods create more activity than the traditional methods. Both of the students liked the media activities that I employed with them and were interested in practicing the grammar point. They also preferred to practice the grammar points in written essays or journals to help them to understand the rules and improve their writing skills. They also agreed about the important of the grammar points and how they give them confidence to speak and write correctly.

#### Limitations of the Study

In this thesis, I interviewed two teachers and two students. More participants may have provided a broader range of results about teaching and studying grammar. I also interviewed a native speaker of English teacher from South Africa and an Egyptian

teacher. Interviewing Saudi teachers may help to discover different aspects of the results. For this thesis, I interviewed two Saudi students, one of them was an English major in Saudi Arabia while the second student is a biology major in the United States. I tried to find Saudi students who are English majors in the United States to control for majors and gain perspectives of both students, but unfortunately I couldn't find an undergraduate English major studying the United States. Finally, the limited number of recent research studies on using media in Saudi Arabia prevented me from offering a broader view of how Saudi teachers use media and the difficulties that they face applying this method.

The research questions I attempted to answer in this thesis are threefold:

- 1) What is the value of using media for EFL learners in Saudi Arabia at the university level?
  - a. Media provides a context for learning the language, and students need this kind of scaffolding to process the language in their environments—both inside and outside the classroom.
  - b. Media provides whole pieces of authentic language—unlike textbook exercises written in isolation.
  - c. Media motivates learners to try to process language in newscasts, movies, songs, games, and social media.

- d. Media provides learners opportunities to make meaning while viewing such broadcasts as Shelby's story about raising chickens and selling eggs to help her family.
- e. Media can be used to teach values, as offered by UNESCO's teacher training website, explaining the need to sustain the planet for future generations. For example, media provides information about how to appreciate and save natural resources such as the one taught in the lesson about Thoreau, the tribal guide, and the environment and found in Chapter 4 of this thesis.
- f. Media can be used for homework and self-study so that students can work independently at home to increase their listening skills and improve their writing and reading.
- g. Media can be more interesting to the students when grammar lessons become part of the viewing, reinforcing cultural information and integrating a grammar focus within the written transcript of the newscast or film.
- h. Media provides visual support for the message, increasing comprehension of the spoken or written word.

2) How can teachers use media in English grammar classes in Saudi Arabia at the university level and below?

As I have stated the Ministry of Education encourages English teachers to use modern methods such as media and it offers all the technology for teachers to use media in the classroom. “Government-funded universities mostly are pre-equipped with hardware including classroom technologies and multimedia” (Abalhassan, 2013, p. 34). So the English language teachers have opportunities to use videos, broadcasts, and games. English language teachers are encouraged to know the resources and how to choose the media that fit the students’ levels. Focus on the students’ interests helps the students like English class and also motivates the students to study and practice grammar lessons. Teachers can also create a specific website and record grammar exercises that can be accessed at any time by students. This can be a way to enhance limited classroom time. Teachers can construct distance learning programs that can take advantage of native or non-native speakers in different countries. That means the students can have conversations with many people from different countries.

#### Challenges & Recommendations for Media Use

3)How can English teachers overcome the obstacles that prevent them from using media in Saudi Arabia at the university level and below?

Saudi English teachers may encounter difficulties in using the media, but they can overcome these complications. One of the problems is the time period of the class. In Saudi Arabia, the typical duration of English courses is just three months and the teachers must finish the textbook in that time. So they tend to focus on the textbook rather than using other resources. There are ways teachers can apply this method to the text lessons. For example, each unit of the textbook focuses on one English skill. The first lesson may

focus on reading while the second lesson focuses on grammar and the third on writing. Teachers can use media sources to cover an entire lesson in all three areas in one day. Then they can review the lesson the next day.

Another problem is the lack of computers in the classroom. Teachers can bring their own computers, if they own one, and also use the computer lab, which most K-12 schools in Saudi Arabia have. This can lead to further problems of resource allocation. Each high school has around 500 students in about 18 classrooms. Computer labs can easily become overcrowded and free time scarce.

Another possible benefit of using media is that teachers can construct distance learning programs that can take advantage of native or non-native speakers in different countries. With this activity students can practice English and improve their skills through interaction and collaboration. The students' practice of grammar rules in conversation is especially useful when chatting with native speakers.

The teacher can chat with students and provide feedback on their writing online. This also has the benefit of allowing students to practice writing and grammar at home on their own computers rather where they don't have to compete for time as in the school computer lab.

Suggestions for future research about using media for a variety of purposes globally

I suggest doing more intensive and longitudinal research about how English teachers in Saudi Arabia use media in the classroom, so we can learn more about their ways of using media in teaching grammar and the difficulties that they face while using

media. This research should include teachers' voices through daily diaries where they record their experiences creating and teaching original materials with a media focus. In addition, they might be asked to include obstacles that prevent them from using media for teaching English on certain days when they have planned media-based lessons they have been unable to teach due technology problems. It would also be insightful to conduct case studies K-12 where teachers are trying to incorporate media to understand students' opinion about media use. Researchers might interview students from different majors at different levels and/or students who study English for different purpose such as English business.

### Final Reflections

By interviewing two teachers and two students of English, I discovered their experiences with English in Saudi Arabia while remembering some of my own experiences there in those classrooms. In constructivist grounded theory, together we have created a new story—a narrative of new ways to think and see and learn about cultures and values as explained here:

Engaging in constructivist enquiry requires a transformation of the participant/researcher relationship, and for the researcher to prioritize and analyse the interaction that occurs between the two. Epistemologically, constructivists believe that it is: . . . impossible to separate the inquirer from the inquired into. It is precisely their interaction that creates the data that will emerge from the inquiry (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p).

At the same time, Shelby and Thoreau, whose stories we can hear through media, helped us write a new story—to construct new ways of teaching grammar and the value of close

families and the appreciation of the natural environment to sustain the planet for future generations.

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### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/ PUBLICATION

Spokane Regional Conference      Mukogawa Fort Wright Institute      *Spokane, WA*  
2014      “Using Media in Teaching Grammar”

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Diversity Week      Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA      *May*  
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## CURRICULUM DESIGN

Designed 10-week curriculum based on Russell Freedman's *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery*. Included all language arts: listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and visually representing. Incorporated media for journals and essays. Evaluation included.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant for a linguistics course, undergraduate level: Language Structure and Use. Taught basics of Arabic language: grammar & syntax. Eastern Washington University, Department of English Jan 2014-March 2014

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