



# MONASH University

## **A cultural-historical study on English speech development of Saudi students through investigating EFL teaching strategies in primary schools**

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## Abstract

The English language has become a world language, as it is used as an official language in some countries and as a foreign language for communication in others (Crystal, 2003). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is one of the biggest countries that use English as the chief foreign language and Arabic as its official language. English as a foreign language (EFL) is used widely in Saudi Arabia in the economy, trade, contracts and affairs of international cooperation across the globe, and for communication with others worldwide (Liton, 2012). Thus, Saudi people need to learn English to help them deal and communicate with others internationally. Moreover, the KSA is the birthplace of Islam and home of the two holiest places for Muslims: al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah and al-Masjid al-Nabawi in Madinah (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). A huge number of Muslims from around the world come to Makkah every year to perform the fifth pillar of Islam, which is Al-Hajj. Saudis use English in addition to Arabic to communicate with pilgrims, as English is an international language.

Because of the importance of English, the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) outlined objectives for teaching EFL that aspire to enable the Saudi students to acquire basic language skills be able to communicate with English speakers (Elyas & Badawood, 2015). English has been taught as a main subject in Saudi schools at different grade levels (primary, intermediate, and secondary) and institutions (universities and colleges). The EFL learners in Saudi Arabia have realised that they need English as a language of communication (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Therefore, it is important to look at the development of Saudi students' English speech to see how Saudi students use the English language for communicative purposes. For Vygotsky (1988), speech, as higher mental function (HMF), is a means of communication. Examining English speech from a sociocultural perspective helps show how it moves to a higher level through social interactions and communication.

The sociocultural approach is originally grounded in the psychological theory of Vygotsky and his colleagues, which argues that the HMF of the individual develops through participation in social contexts (Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2014). According to Lantolf et al. (2014, p. 208), the developmental processes of human mental functions occur “through participation in cultural, linguistic, and historically formed settings such as family, life, peer group interaction, and institutional contexts like schooling, organized social activities, and workplaces”. As an HMF, speech is organised and improved through participation in social activities.

For Vygotsky (1998, pp. 272–273), “speech is a means of social intercourse. It arises from the need for means of communication ... [This] communication is brought into development by an act of

personal contact”. He claimed that “the initial and the primary function of speech is communicative. Speech is a means of social interaction, a means of expression and understanding” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 48). According to Vygotsky (1987), speech is a means of communication in the social environment, a means of conveying meanings. This point of view contributes to understanding the process of speech development of students through participation in various social situations. In particular, this research study focuses on English classes and explores how children interact with peers and teachers in the school context, as this is the main place children use English in their everyday life.

Research on second language acquisition (SLA) that has applied a sociocultural approach highlights the importance of social and collaborative interaction in learning a second language (Donato & McCormick, 1994; Kramsch, 1998, 2000, 2002; Ohta, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2005; Donato, 2000; Lantolf, 1994, 2000, 2005, 2006; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Thorne, 2000, 2003, 2009). Most of the SLA studies, which are based on a sociocultural perspective, focus on the process of acquiring a second language. Kao (2010, p. 115) announced that “adopting sociocultural theories offers researchers theoretical perspectives with which to examine language learning as a social practice, consider students as active participants in constructing learning processes, and investigate the interaction between different factors involved”. In other words, the sociocultural approach strongly argues that participating in social contexts that require communicative activities is an effective way to learn a second language. Social interaction is important for learning EFL and the teachers need to help the students to develop their ability to communicate efficiently in several social contexts (Finney, 2002).

Based on the work of Vygotsky (1987), learning and development are considered interrelated processes where learning is seen as a form of social interaction creating conditions for speech development. For Vygotsky (1988, p. 48), “speech is a means of social interaction, a means of expression and understanding”. Then, “if in the process of development, the child masters some language, it is interesting to see to what degree and how this recognizes the whole natural process of his thinking” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 238). Language learners should learn how to form grammatical full sentences to express their thoughts about the world and use the language in everyday life situations (Nunan, 1988). It is crucial to engage the students in several language communicative activities that enable them to later practice the language in several social contexts.

It can be seen throughout the literature that most studies on second languages pay attention to English language acquisition. The studies rarely focus on speech development; specifically, how the English speech of primary school students develops through social interactions. Drawing upon cultural-historical theory, this study aims to investigate EFL teaching strategies and examine the conditions created in English classes to develop the English speech of Saudi students. The main objective of this

study is to find better ways to support the development of English speech. Vygotsky's theoretical concepts of zone of proximal development (ZPD) and interaction between ideal and present forms are used as analytical tools for investigating the research question.

In this research study, EFL teaching strategies that support English speech development of Saudi students were investigated in two primary schools in Makkah to find out conditions for English speech development. Girls' schools were chosen to conduct this research as it is prohibited to access male schools. This study considered a specific number of teachers and students in Al-Noor and Al-Salam primary schools. There were two female teachers (Afnan and Eman) participating in this study with college or bachelor's degree and above, as required by the MOE in Saudi Arabia. The two English teachers in these two schools were interviewed to answer the research questions. One class was Grade 4 (9–10 years old) from Al-Noor primary school with 36 students and the other was 31 students from Al-Salam primary school. The two classes were observed while they participated with their teachers and peers in English classes.

Data were gathered and generated over a period of three months through teachers' interviews, fieldnotes, photographs and some videoed class observations taken by the researcher. Orientations of the project were initiated inside the classrooms to introduce the research topic and the objectives of doing this research. This first meeting to orient my study was helpful to build a friendly environment to start my research with the participants. The students were ready to be observed in English classes and the teachers were enthusiastic to be interviewed and participate in the study. Next, the initial interviews with the two teachers were started to present a general idea of the research and to organise a plan of the upcoming class observations during several visits. Four class observations were conducted through four visits using field notes, photographing and some video recording for the English activities. All interviews and observations were recorded, as it is helpful for analysing and understanding how students develop their English speech through social interactions with their peers and teacher.

The EFL teaching strategies implemented by Saudi teachers in English classes were analysed extensively to find out better ways to support the development of students' English speech. The analysis of the data was approached with three levels of interpretation, from common-sense interpretation and situated practice interpretation to thematic interpretation (Hedegaard, 2008b). The concepts of interaction between the ideal and present forms and ZPD were used as analytical tools as they allowed investigation of the process of English speech development. The interaction between ideal and present forms within the student's ZPD helps reveal the conditions for English speech development that are created in English classes.

The research investigations and analysis showed that there are strategies for supporting English language learning/acquisition, but there are no clear strategies for supporting English speech development in the participating classroom. Notably, English language learning/acquisition and English speech development are different processes, but they are interrelated as the students need to learn and acquire the English language to be able to construct correct English words and sentences for use in meaningful communication.

In this study, the research findings offer new insight into teaching EFL from cultural-historical viewpoint. The EFL teaching strategies used by the English teachers in primary schools are better oriented when based on cultural-historical theory to support students' English speech development. This new vision of EFL teaching strategies might draw the Saudi MOE's attention to having a new English curriculum and syllabus that support the development of the English speech of the students as well as English language learning/acquisition. In EFL classes, it is better to draw upon cultural-historical theory (CHT) concepts, such as the interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD, and engage the students in communicative activities. The students need to use the learned English language, including vocabulary, grammar, intonation and pronunciation, in everyday life situations, which enables them to communicate with the teacher and peers inside the classroom and show their English speech development. Once they communicate in English inside the class, they can communicate with others worldwide. Through using English for communication, the English language learning/acquisition and the development of English speech of the Saudi students move further, which achieves the MOE objectives. It is recommended that the Saudi MOE update the English curricula to align with the goals of teaching EFL in the country and the general objectives of developing the education system that have been introduced to achieve "Vision 2030". The Saudi MOE seeks to have students who can communicate internationally. To achieve a higher level of development of English speech, the teachers need to have more time to practice the English language with the students, through several activities of everyday life situations.

This study has an influence on English education in the Saudi context as it introduces a new insight for implementing EFL teaching strategies that are based on CHT and its concepts. This study is unique in the field of English education research in Saudi Arabia as it examines the English speech development of primary school students through investigating EFL teaching strategies from a CHT perspective, which has not been considered before. Additionally, the study will contribute significantly to the field of teaching a foreign or second language; specifically, teaching EFL/ESL from cultural-historical view. The use of theoretical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD that provides the conditions for English speech development, contributes to the cultural-historical research, which can benefit other researchers interested in this study area. This is

unique to this study in the field of EFL/ESL and CHT research as it examines the development of English speech of students as a HMF through investigating and analysing EFL teaching strategies using cultural-historical theoretical concepts.

## Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:

A black rectangular box redacting the signature.

Print Name: Walaa Esmail Mandili

Date: 09/05/2019

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

## The significance of the English language

“One of the facets of language and language learning is the need to communicate”  
(Gaukrodger & Atkins, 2013, p. 304).

### 1.1 Introduction

This research seeks to study the development of students' English speech in Saudi primary schools by investigating the English teaching strategies implemented by the teachers. First, a research introduction explains the rationale of this study. The chapter presents my motivation for doing this research on this particular aspect of English education. This is followed by an introduction of the cultural-historical framework that was applied for investigating the research problem, with some explanations of several terms used throughout the thesis. Finally, the research questions of this study are presented.

This chapter also introduces several issues regarding the prominence of the English language across the world. First, it discusses the importance of English as an international language or the lingua franca of the world, as it is considered the main foreign or second language (L2) to be taught in several countries. This issue will be discussed extensively in Chapter 3 to show how this research fills in the gap of second or foreign language education literature about strategies that support English speech development in teaching and learning English. Different terms for teaching/learning English are used in the literature, such as English as a second language (ESL), English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as an additional language (EAL). Throughout this thesis, the term EFL is used because English is presented as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. The term EFL is also used in Ministry of Education (MOE) policy documents (Elyas & Badawood, 2015).

This chapter describes the significance of English in Saudi Arabia and some factors behind introducing EFL. In addition, it highlights both the education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the status of its English education. Further, this chapter presents the main goals of teaching EFL in Saudi schools. It also reviews some Saudi scholars' views concerning the status of English

education in the KSA. The chapter ends with an outline of the thesis structure and a brief summary of what has been discussed in this chapter.

## 1.2 Research background

### 1.2.1 English language significance

During the past century, English has become the most important language in the world because of its global significance in many different countries (Vettorel, 2014). In term of its spread, it is clear that English is a language of communication that is used as an official language in some countries and as a foreign language for communication in others (Crystal, 2003). It is considered the second language in non-English-speaking countries such as India, Singapore and Korea (Sharifian, 2009). Dewey (2007, p. 333) stated that “English is like no other language in its current role internationally, indeed like no other at any moment in history”. This is probably because the developing technology mostly uses English for different purposes; for example, to explore the Internet, communicate with others worldwide and interact through different kinds of media, making it the language of communication or the lingua franca of the globe (Vettorel, 2014). Also, most of the content on the Internet and technology-based software and applications are recorded in English (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). English has played an important role in different fields, such as business, technology, medicine, academia, diplomacy and science (Pennycook, 1994). Likewise, Javid, Farooq and Gulzar (2012) indicated that English proved its prominence in the fields of tourism, education, politics, communication and commerce:

All types of interaction, more particularly between nations, are through English, for a reason no other than the fact that it is the only language in which non-native users can possibly communicate. It is the language of science, technology and business apart from being significant in political or diplomatic dialogues (Al-Nasser, 2015, p. 1612).

As a result, for the majority of people who do not use English as their first language, it is used as a second language to achieve the enormous benefits of being a global language (Crystal, 2003). One excellent example is mentioned by Crystal (2003), who learned English in the Middle East from online courses offered by an Australian university where English is the official language.

According to Alasmi (2016), English is the language of communication in airports, restaurants and banks when people travel around the world. Therefore, it is necessary to learn English to communicate

with English native speakers as well as other nationalities at an international level. She has assumed that English is widely known as the lingua franca for communicating between people who speak other languages. She mentioned Saudi Arabia as one of the countries where English is used as a second language for communication with foreigners.

In other words, English is essential for Saudi people for international communication. As a result, English is now taught as a foreign language in the country. This point will be discussed in the following sections to show the importance of English and its presence in Saudi Arabia. Some important facts about the education system in the country, including English education, will be reviewed in the following sections of the chapter. This will help clarify the current situation of English education in the country, which will be useful when examining EFL teaching strategies to find the best way to support the students' English speech development in Saudi primary schools.

### 1.2.2 The importance of English language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The KSA, where the official language is Arabic, is one of the largest countries that use English as the chief foreign language. The country was established as a kingdom in 1932 by King Abdul Aziz bin Saud. Since then, an extraordinary growth in the fields of economics, science and technology has occurred (Rahman, 2011). Located in the Middle East, the KSA is a rich country with an economy that widely depends on oil, which was discovered in the late 1930s (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Mahboob and Elyas (2014, p. 130) declared that "English has become intrinsically linked with the discourse of petroleum". Faruk (2013, p. 75) added that "the United States became involved in Saudi Arabia through its commercial interest in oil and through commercial actors that are directly and indirectly linked with the U.S. government, initially Aramco (Arabian American Company) and later many other companies". When Aramco was founded in 1933, the company was operated mostly by American citizens, but it is now owned by the Saudi government. Mahboob and Elyas (2015, p. 130) declared that "since this company dominates the economy, the need for its foreign workers and managers to communicate with Saudi locals is a priority". The KSA's economic position influenced the need for EFL to be introduced in this country. EFL is used widely in Saudi Arabia in international trade, economy and contracts, affairs of international cooperation across the globe, and for communication with people in other countries (Liton, 2012). It is important for Saudi people to learn English to help them deal and communicate with others internationally. This will certainly lead to an expansion in the business sector and economy of the country (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). One of the main features for learning a language is to communicate with others who speak that language (Gaukrodger & Atkins, 2013).

Another major reason to use English in the KSA is that it is the birthplace of Islam and the home of the two holiest places for Muslims: al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah and al-Masjid al-Nabawi in Madinah (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Annually, many Muslims from around the world come to perform the fifth pillar of Islam, which is Al-Hajj. Therefore, the common language that Saudis use in addition to Arabic to communicate with pilgrims is English, as it is recognised worldwide as an international language. It is well known that Islam dominates the Saudis' culture, beliefs and customs, as well as the educational system (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). This point will be shown throughout several sections of the thesis.

Generally speaking, English serves different yet important purposes in Saudi Arabia. Al-Seghayer (2014) highlighted the significance of English in various sectors within the KSA. Similarly, Faruk (2013) affirmed that English is used widely in the Saudi context for increasing knowledge in different fields, such as science and arts, and for exchanging this knowledge with other nations. English is considered an important subject in the education system due to its substantial position in technology, business and science (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). It was claimed that:

The effective learning of English in Saudi Arabia is important because it is associated with factors that affect both the country and the world in general. The English language has become the lingua franca of the globe, dominating essential fields such as education, economy, and diplomacy, so it is crucial for students to learn English effectively. (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015, p. 41)

Because of the English language's prominent position in the world, it is being taught in Saudi schools at different grade levels. In one way or another, the previously mentioned issues were taken into consideration when determining the value of English education in the Saudi context. Liton (2012, p. 145) concluded that "the Saudi EFL program has a glowing future prospect in the present global context". The education system in Saudi Arabia, in particular, English education, has changed because the world is developing. This will be discussed later and the Saudi government's demands of presenting English will be highlighted in the next sections of the chapter.

### 1.2.3 General view of the education system in Saudi Arabia

The education in Saudi Arabia is the necessary base which will help realize the aspirations of our people towards progress and advancement in science and knowledge (MOE, 2017).

The education in Saudi Arabia is important, as declared by the recent king of the country—the custodian of the two holy mosques—King Salman Bin Abdulaziz. This section deliberates several facts about the history of education in the KSA. In 1925, the Directorate of Knowledge was launched by King Abdulaziz. Before the foundation of the Directorate of Knowledge, mosques and Qur’anic schools taught Saudi children how to write and read in Arabic (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). In 1951, the Directorate of Knowledge was renamed the Ministry of Knowledge (MOE, 2017), followed by the establishment of the General Presidency of Female’s Education in 1960. In 2002, the General Presidency merged with the Ministry of Knowledge to become the MOE (MOE, 2017). The MOE’s principal role is to provide public education for boys and girls and oversee the Curriculum Department, which is responsible for creating a unified education system and preparing textbooks based on specific requirements (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The Saudi education system is segregated based on the gender of the teachers and the students. There are no co-educational institutions, as this country strictly adheres to Islamic beliefs and cultural values. However, both males and females receive the same quality of education and curriculum, unless some subjects differ to meet the demands of each gender (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

There are four main levels in the public education system: pre-school, primary school, intermediate school and secondary school. Students in Saudi Arabia start their primary education at the age of seven (Grades 1–6), then they enrol into intermediate school at the age of 12 (Grades 7–9). After that, they finally graduate from secondary school at the age of 18, which is the pre-university stage of public education. At intermediate and secondary levels, the students have seven classes in a week and learn an advanced level of the subjects they were taught at the primary level. They must pass final examinations to move through different levels, starting from Grade 7 through to Grade 12. They take mid-year and final examinations for most subjects, including English. At least 40% of the total mark in the mid-term assessment must be achieved and 50% in the final examinations to pass the whole unit (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

Unlike the intermediate and secondary levels, the students in Grades 1–3 in primary schools are taught different subjects, such as the Arabic language, mathematics, Islamic studies and science. They do not have to sit a final examination because the teachers evaluate them using continuous assessments during two terms in each year. Thereafter, from Grades 4–6, they start to learn other new subjects such as English, social studies and computing (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).



The education system in Saudi Arabia has changed during the last 10 years and the next section will explain how the English language as a school subject was introduced at different levels of education in the country.

#### 1.2.4 The status of English education in Saudi Arabia

Alshahrani (2016) and Al-Seghayer (2011) reported that the exact date of introducing EFL in Saudi Arabia is still unidentified. According to Al-Seghyer (2014), English was initially introduced as EFL in 1928, after the establishment of the Directorate of Education. Al-Johani (2009) outlined that English was introduced in Saudi Arabia after the discovery of oil in the early 1930s to be used in business, and then introduced into the syllabus to be taught in schools in the 1950s. Javid et al. (2012, p. 57) stated that “it was during 1960s that English language teaching has been assigned a much more formal and established role in secondary level curriculum in the KSA”. According to Al-Abdulkader (1979), English and French were presented as foreign languages in 1958 to be taught at the intermediate level. He stated that French was eliminated at this level by the MOE in 1969 but continued to be taught at the secondary level.

Mahboob and Elyas (2014) mentioned the impact of establishing the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) on the economy of the KSA, which also contributed to EFL instruction in this country. According to Alasmi (2016), the English education system developed quickly in the 20th century. She stated that the Scholarship Preparation School was initiated to prepare the Saudi people for travel and studying English abroad. During that time, there was no particular curriculum used for teaching English. Collections of stories were used to teach the students to read in English (Al-Seghayer, 2011). Since 1980, Saudi universities and colleges (mainly the English departments) offered training programs for Saudi English teachers with other courses, such as literature, linguistics and translation (Javid et al., 2012). Later on, the Saudi MOE introduced the English syllabus, which considers the values, traditions and customs of Saudi Arabia as an Islamic and Arabian country (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Elyas and Badawood (2015, p. 29) provided a translation of the policy of teaching English in the 21st century for all school levels:

To prepare our children to use English, which has become one of the most widely used languages in the world, for the resumption of the Muslims’ role in human civilization through gaining knowledge in Arts and Science written in this language. This can be done without promoting morals and customs which are contradictory to our religious beliefs and customs.

Al-Asmari and Khan (2014) mentioned that English is taught as a main foreign language in schools, universities and colleges in the Middle East, specifically in Saudi Arabia. Since the 1970s, English has been taught as a main subject in public and private schools for intermediate and secondary levels. English is taught in four classes per week (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). It is also taught in universities and different government and industrial institutions (Al-Seghayer, 2014). In the Saudi higher education system, English is the language of instruction in the scientific domains such as medicine, engineering and pharmacology, while other courses such as humanities, which use Arabic language for communication, require students to complete English as a compulsory unit for academic purposes. This is due to an understanding that the students have to improve their competence in using English as a tool for improving their knowledge in other subjects, without ignoring Arabic as their first language (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

The Saudi government has recently changed its policy in education and is gradually implementing teaching English in primary schools to help students communicate with others internationally (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). As a result, English is now taught in the three higher levels in primary schools (Grade 4–6) at the ages of 9–11 years old. Saudi students are taught English in two periods (90 minutes in total) per week (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). According to Almalihi (2015), English was initially introduced at the highest level of primary school (Grade 6). Two years later, it was implemented in the fifth grade, then it was introduced as a main subject in the fourth grade. The Saudi MOE introduced English in the earlier year levels as it recognised the importance of English in the world. Liton (2012) illustrated this importance when he investigated the development of teaching and learning EFL in Saudi colleges. He declared that “the responses of the teachers reflect that introducing EFL teaching-learning in the Saudi primary schools can inevitably improve the standard of English learning in the Kingdom” (Liton, 2012, p. 141).

According to Al-Nasser (2015, p. 1615), “English language would be increasingly used as the medium to accomplish economic, social and humanitarian goals”. From this viewpoint, the ultimate objectives of teaching EFL were included in the MOE curriculum document published in 2001 (as cited in Elyas & Badawood, 2015, p. 31). It aims to enable the students to:

1. develop their intellectual, personal and professional abilities
2. acquire basic language skills in order to communicate with the speakers of the English language
3. acquire the linguistic competence necessarily required in various life situations

4. acquire the linguistic competence required in different professions
5. develop their awareness of the importance of English as a means of international communication
6. develop positive attitudes towards learning English
7. develop the linguistic competence that enables them to be aware of the cultural, economic and social issues of their society in order to contribute to giving solutions
8. develop the linguistic competence that enables them, in the future, to present and explain the Islamic concepts and issues and participate in spreading Islam
9. develop the linguistic competence that enables them, in the future, to present the culture and civilisation of their nation
10. benefit from English-speaking nations, in order to enhance the concepts of international cooperation that develop understanding and respect of cultural differences among nations
11. acquire the linguistic bases that enable them to participate in transferring the scientific and technological advances of other nations to their nation
12. develop the linguistic basis that enables them to present and explain the Islamic concepts and issues and participate in the dissemination of them.

These objectives were heavily emphasised by many Saudi scholars who have contributed effectively to studying the situation of teaching/learning EFL in their country. For instance, Liton (2012) declared that one of the most significant objectives of teaching EFL is making the students aware of the importance of English as a language of communication with others internationally. Once this goal is achieved, Saudi students can learn from other cultures and introduce their own culture to other nations. Moreover, Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) considered some of these objectives when they investigated the prospects and challenges in teaching English in Saudi Arabia. They also highlighted the importance of English as a language of communication. They mentioned that the Saudi MOE desires to achieve more fruitful results in English education. Al-Seghayer (2014, p. 18) likewise outlined that the policy makers of English education system emphasised “the notion of enabling Saudi EFL learners to communicate using English to function in social or other situations, as well as in educational pursuit”.

A further essential issue that has significantly impacted the English education system in Saudi Arabia is the project of *Tatweer*, which means “to develop”. Alasmi (2016) states that the *Tatweer* project focuses on developing public education as well as English teaching/learning in the KSA. The following are the objectives of the program (as cited in Alasmi, 2016, p. 5):

1. the development of a high-quality curriculum to keep pace with the modern English national curriculum standards
2. continuous professional development for teachers, support in accommodating methods of teaching the English language, and the use of teaching strategies that promote the skills needed in the 20th century
3. the building of teams of professional learning to strengthen English language teachers through the exchange of experiences and the continuous improvement of their practices
4. capacity building for teachers to integrate information and communication technologies in the process of English language teaching and learning
5. the development of teachers’ skills in creating opportunities to facilitate student access to native English speakers
6. designing and building additional educational materials to serve as sources for teaching and learning, including digital resources to support English language teaching and learning.

Notably, the *Tatweer* program aims to improve English teaching/learning through developing the English curriculum and providing the English teachers in Saudi Arabia with sufficient English resources.

Consequently, English teaching in the Saudi context must change, as it is considered a life skill (Al-Nasser, 2015). However, there are some significant obstacles in teaching/learning EFL in Saudi Arabia. First, the English teachers in Saudi Arabia are expected to follow the MOE syllabus, including guidelines about how to teach in their classes and deadlines to finish the curriculum. They are not permitted to select their own methods of teaching as they are teaching within these boundaries (Shah, Hussain, & Nasseef, 2013). This results in some teachers perceiving it as an arduous task that is beyond their capability (Al-Seghayer, 2014). The Saudi teachers try to “constantly switch between pedagogically and socially oriented behaviours and try to meet the learning and social needs of the learners” (Shah et al., 2013, p. 107).

Moreover, Saudi learners' show no interest in English classes, have a lack of motivation to learn the language and lack exposure to it (Shah et al., 2013). Many researchers (such as Al-Johani, 2009; Fareh, 2010; Khan, 2011) concluded that most of the EFL learners in Saudi schools graduated from intermediate and secondary schools with a low level of proficiency in English (as cited in Asiri, 2017, p. 25). Thus, Liton (2012, p. 142) assumed that "evaluating EFL curriculum syllabus and teaching-learning methodologies can be effective in accelerating qualitative English education and developing learners' motivational level". Therefore, this recent program of *Tatweer* might positively develop the English education, as it provides high-quality materials for EFL teaching/learning and prepares the teachers to teach the English curriculum using digital resources (Alasmi, 2016). Currently, the Saudi government is collaborating with educational institutions to develop appropriate English curricula for all levels of education (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013).

However, recently the status of English education has changed and the students have recognised the importance of English as a language for communication, not only to pass examinations (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) recommended that Saudi English teachers consider new methodologies for teaching English that would enable the students to interact and enjoy their English classes. Consequently, this doctoral study has been conducted to investigate EFL teaching strategies that support the development of the English speech of primary school students. Development of Saudi students' English speech enables them to use the English language as a tool for international communication, which is the most important objective for teaching English in this country, as outlined by the Saudi MOE.

### 1.3 The rationale of the study

This study aims to investigate EFL teaching strategies and examine the best conditions for developing the English speech of Saudi students in primary schools. The main objective of this study is to find better ways to support the development of English speech. This study draws upon the cultural-historical perspective in second language learning and speech development.

According to Vygotsky (1987), learning and development are interrelated processes where learning is seen as a form of social interaction creating conditions for speech development. For Vygotsky (1988, p. 48), "speech is a means of social interaction, a means of expression and understanding". Then, "if in the process of development, the child masters some language, it is interesting to see to what degree and how this recognizes the whole natural process of his thinking" (Vygotsky, 1997, p.

238). Thus, Vygotsky (1997, p. 238) emphasised that “speech leads to the end of the formation of thinking, transfers it to a new track, converts direct, natural thinking into cultural thinking, verbal thinking, and in this way makes it more abstract”. The cultural-historical understanding of the unity of thinking and speech in the process of development is discussed in Chapter 3.

According to Vygotsky (1998), each age period is characterised by a unique psychological structure and social development. This research focuses on students aged 9–10 years old, who are taught English for the first time as a main subject in Saudi primary schools. This research investigates EFL teaching strategies from a cultural-historical perspective to develop new approaches that support English speech development of students (Grade 4, 9–10 years old) in Saudi primary schools.

## 1.4 Personal motivation and objectives

I have worked as an English teacher in schools that are supervised by the Saudi MOE and have experienced some difficulties teaching English to high school (intermediate and secondary) students during the last 15 years. Most of the students feel anxious about learning English. Unfortunately, only some of them can use English to communicate and most are not able to use the language at all. This led me to think carefully about determining the real reasons behind this situation. *Do the students feel anxious because they are too old to learn a new language? Should they start learning English earlier? Is the curriculum difficult? Are the ways of teaching-learning EFL in Saudi Arabia implemented effectively?*

Notably, most studies (i.e., Al-Nasser, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013) concluded that Saudi students are not able to use English for international communication. Accordingly, research of EFL teaching strategies and approaches may contribute to a solution to this problem.

## 1.5 Context of the study

It can be seen that the MOE recognises the importance of teaching/learning English at an early age (Alotaibi, 2014). Consequently, English education is now taught at Grade 4 in Saudi primary schools. This research study was conducted in Saudi primary schools (fourth grade) to find the most common EFL teaching strategies used by Saudi teachers in their English classes. I preferred to conduct this research in primary schools because of my personal belief that the students who start learning English

early hugely benefit from the longer exposure to a foreign language. Birdsong (1999, p. 176) believed that “children are better second language learners than adults”. Also, it is good to investigate a problem from the beginning. Therefore, I think if a higher proficiency level of English speech can be reached at an earlier stage of a school child’s development, the process of teaching/learning EFL will succeed in the future. When the students start practising English with peers and teachers inside the classroom, in groups and then individually, they will become more proficient and confident to use English in other social contexts in the future.

According to Vygotsky (1987), speech is a means of communication in a social environment, a means of conveying meanings. This point of view contributes to understanding the process of speech development of students through participation in various social situations. It is important in the process of a child’s development to engage them in everyday life situations (Hedegaard, 2009). Vygotsky’s theoretical concepts of zone of proximal development (ZPD) and interaction between ideal and present forms are used as analytical tools for investigating the research problem of this study.

Cultural-historical theory (CHT) is also applied in this research study to investigate EFL teaching strategies that support the English speech development of students in Saudi primary schools. It will be shown in the literature review (Chapter 3) that there are some significant studies that have adopted a sociocultural approach and CHT to investigate teaching and learning a second language (e.g., English). Most of these studies examine the development of learning a new language through interaction and communication. However, this study utilises the CHT of Vygotsky (1987) as the theoretical framework; specifically, it is concerned with thinking and speech. It examines EFL teaching strategies to find new teaching approaches and techniques to be implemented by engaging the students in everyday life situations. Vygotsky’s theoretical concepts of ZPD and interaction between ideal and present forms are used as theoretical analytical tools for investigating the research problem of this study. The development is a process that happens through the interaction of ideal and present forms (Vygotsky, 1994). The findings of this study introduce some new thoughts related to the research problem. Thus, the reasons behind the failure of most Saudi students in the English subject, as well as their negative feelings towards this subject, will be explored. The findings of this study coincide with other Saudi researchers that emphasise teaching/learning EFL through communication to enable Saudi students to practise the learned language in different social contexts. The study will discover effective ways and approaches for teaching EFL through communication and

interaction to encourage the students to speak, listen, read, write and think in English, which will support the development of their English speech.

Drawing upon Vygotsky's CHT, the research questions of this study are formulated then answered clearly to show how social interaction supports the development of students' English speech. Saudi English teachers in primary schools must find new methods and approaches to enable the students to use English in different social situations.

## 1.6 Research questions

1. What are the strategies that English teachers use in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
2. What are the conditions that the English teachers create to support students' English speech development in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
  - a. What are the ideal forms that are presented by the English teachers in their English classes, and how do these ideal forms interact with the present forms?
  - b. What are zones of proximal development created in English classes in Saudi primary schools?
3. How might teaching strategies be changed drawing upon the cultural-historical theoretical concepts to support the process of English speech development of primary school students in EFL classes?

## 1.7 Explanation of terms

Explanations of some terms used throughout the thesis are as follows:

- **English as a foreign language (EFL):** English as taught to people whose main language is not English and who live in a country where English is not the official or main language.
- **English as a second language (ESL):** the teaching of English to people who speak a different language and who live in a country where English is the main language spoken.
- **English as an additional language (EAL):** a learner of English as an additional language is a pupil whose first language is other than English.
- **second language acquisition (SLA):** a term to describe learning a second language.



- **The Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE):** the governmental organisation that is responsible for the educational system in Saudi Arabia.

## 1.8 Thesis structure

The first chapter includes an introduction to this research study and background on the significance of English in the world, specifically in Saudi Arabia. Notably included in this chapter is the rationale of the study and the main objectives behind conducting this research. The research questions that guided this study were introduced as well as some special terms that are used throughout the thesis were defined.

The second chapter of this thesis focuses on the explanation of cultural-historical concepts that are used as analytical tools for investigating EFL teaching strategies to solve the problem of this research study. This helps to ensure a clear understanding of Vygotsky's concepts in relation to speech development.

The third chapter presents the literature review that shows relevant studies that were conducted in the field of teaching-learning ESL that adopted a sociocultural approach and used the CHT. Further, the chapter includes the literature that considers ESL teaching/learning approaches and the roles of the teachers and learners in a second language classroom. A further discussion about some English teaching/learning strategies are presented at the end of this chapter.

The fourth chapter presents the methodology of this study. It includes the philosophical assumptions and paradigms, the research design, and research approach with the dialectical-interactive approach and the cultural-historical research methodology. Moreover, the role of the researcher, the methods of data collection and data analysis are presented in this chapter.

The fifth chapter shows the research data collected through observations of two Grade 4 classes and from the interviews of two English teachers. The chapter introduces the research sites and different views of the teachers about teaching/learning EFL.

The sixth chapter presents the most common strategies used by the two English teachers in their Saudi primary schools.

The seventh chapter recognises some significant issues regarding English oral speech development by analysing some of the implemented strategies that were outlined briefly in Chapter 6. It includes some arguments based on Vygotsky's works in relation to a child's speech development.

The eighth chapter continues presenting the findings, which include some important arguments drawing upon cultural-historical concepts regarding the analysed EFL teaching strategies and activities, to see whether they support the development of English written speech or the process of learning/acquisition of the English language.

The ninth chapter answers the third research question by deliberating on some suggestions based on cultural-historical understanding, to develop new approaches for teaching EFL that support students' English speech development. It provides possible solutions to implement in English lesson activities that are observed by this study to be effective in supporting the development the English speech of students.

The tenth chapter concludes this thesis by summarising the study. It highlights several important issues and implications about the findings, including some critical facts about English language learning/acquisition and English speech development. Then, it describes some challenges that confronted the researcher. Lastly, suggestions and recommendations to help Saudi teachers improve their EFL teaching strategies are presented and the potential contribution of this study is discussed.

## 1.9 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the rationale of the study and my personal motivation. In addition, it revealed some important issues regarding the prominence of the English language as a lingua franca of the world. This was followed by presenting some facts that shape the status of English in the Saudi context. In addition, the Saudi MOE objectives of teaching EFL were highlighted, which shed light on English being used as a common language for communication in some countries with a diversity of people speaking other languages. Further, research questions were presented and key terms used

throughout the thesis were defined. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical framework of this study to clearly identify the theoretical concepts used in this research.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

### Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory

The process of second language teaching is grounded in the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, which emphasizes meaningful interaction among individuals as the greatest motivating force in human development and learning (Eun & Lim, 2009, p. 13).

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the key concepts from the CHT, which provide the theoretical framework of this study. According to Vygotsky (1987, p. 190), “to perceive something in a different way means to acquire new potentials for acting with respect to it”. It is important to thoroughly understand the phenomenon that is going to be explored to allow us to employ new ways of studying it from different perspectives. CHT argues teaching and learning processes are “much more than face-to-face interaction or the simple transmission of prescribed knowledge and skills” (Daniels, 2016, p. 2). Thus, in the light of CHT and concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD, this study examines the English speech development of Saudi students. It investigates the implemented EFL teaching strategies used in the English classes from the perspective of how they support this process of development. This chapter shows how CHT serves to clarify the development of English speech as a higher mental function (HMF).

The following sections of this chapter introduce a general view of Vygotsky's theory and significant issues regarding speech as an HMF. Speech will be discussed from a cultural-historical point of view to show how language and speech are different. Then, the unity of development of speech and the development of verbal thinking will be discussed. In addition, the two main CHT concepts of interactions of ideal and present forms and ZPD, and other Vygotsky's concepts (e.g., mediation) are presented and discussed as analytical theoretical tools of studying the process of speech development.

## 2.2 A view on cultural-historical theory

Lev Vygotsky was a famous Russian psychologist who believed that child development is a process that occurs within a sociocultural context (Levykh, 2008). Vygotsky's CHT studies the process of sociocultural genesis of HMFs (logical memory, speech, abstract thinking, voluntary attention, etc.) that are specifically related to human minds (Veresov, 2010). As a subject matter, this theory takes the very process of development of human HMFs (e.g., speech) that can be investigated by a system of interrelated theoretical and experimental analytical tools (Veresov, 2014). The process of HMFs development is "a complex process of qualitative change, reorganization of a certain system" that includes several key aspects (its source, nature, moving forces, specific features, results, and laws of development) (Veresov, 2010, p. 84). These aspects are explained theoretically through concepts of CHT and experimentally with the principles of genetic research methodology (GRM). For Veresov (2010), CHT studies the development of HMF where the concepts and the principles of the theory refer to certain aspects of the development of these HMFs.

Vygotsky (1997) discussed the idea that the development of HMFs begins with the "interpsychological" plane (social) and then moves to the "intrapsychological" plane (individual) via social interaction. It was argued that the social environment and interactions are the source of development of HMF functions (Vygotsky, 1998). For Brėdikytė (2011), the development of a child starts as a response to social interaction with other people (parents and family members) in the social world. From Vygotsky's point of view, the environment that is experienced by the child expands through his/her life as it begins within his/her mother's uterus until he/she is born in the external world among people surrounding him/her. This means the child lives in several social environments, which influences the process of his/her development, mainly when he/she starts learning in educational institutions. The child hears different words, which may have several meanings for them depending on whether he/she understands speech or does not yet understand it at all (Vygotsky, 1994). The cultural environment plays a definite role in the development of "a child's personality, his consciousness and relationship with reality" (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 347); that is, social interactions that occur in the child's environment are the source of development of HMFs.

## 2.3 The development of higher mental functions

Human mental functions are classified into two types: higher and lower mental functions. According to Veresov (2010, p. 84), "lower mental functions are completely biological by their origin, whereas

higher functions are completely social”. The development during school age is a transition from attention and memory as lower functions to voluntary attention and logical memory as higher functions (Wertsch, 1985). For Vygotsky (1999, p. 20), “the transition from the biological to the social path of development is the central link in the process of development, a cardinal turning point in the history of the child’s behaviour”. CHT studies the genesis of HMFs, their social origins and development (Vygotsky, 1997).

Culture creates special forms of behaviour, changes the functioning of mind and constructs new directions in developing the system of human behaviour. In the course of historical development, social humans change the ways and means of their behaviour, transform their natural premises and functions, and elaborate and create new, specifically cultural forms of behaviour (Vygotsky, 1997). In CHT, the changes in humans do not occur because of changes in brain structures, but are due to the changes in other aspects of HMPs (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992):

Higher mental functions are not built on top of elementary processes, like some kind of second storey, but are new psychological systems comprising a complex nexus of elementary functions that, as part of a new system, being themselves to act in accordance with new laws (Vygotsky, 1984, as cited in Veresov, 2010, p. 84).

Vygotsky (1981) argued that the child’s HMFs develop through communication and social interactions by using psychological tools and signs. According to Vygotsky (1994), any HMF development of a child results from the interaction between the ideal and present forms. Vygotsky (1994) stated an example of a mother who talked to her child with full grammatical sentences while the child can only say single words. This example shows the child’s speech as a present form that interacts with the mother’s speech as an ideal form.

Vygotsky (1994) described the child’s speech as a primary or rudimentary form that is going to develop under specific conditions of interaction between the ideal and the present forms. In other words, the child’s speech as HMF is immature, yet will develop as a result of social interaction. Vygotsky (1998) indicated that these immature functions, which are in the process of maturation, can be defined by the ZPD. He stated that ZPD is the distance between the child’s actual level, which is determined by the task the child can solve individually and independently, and the potential level of development, which is defined with the help of the tasks the child can solve in cooperation or with the help of more capable persons (Vygotsky, 2011). From this perspective, it can be seen that social

interaction between ideal and present forms within the child's ZPD leads to speech development as the immature function of the child's speech interacts with the mother's speech as the ideal form. According to Vygotsky (1987), the general genetic law of cultural development means that any HMF develops first with the "interpsychological" plane and then moves to the "intrapsychological" plane as a result of social interactions between ideal and present form within a child's ZPD.

Notably, the HMFs begin as an interpsychological category on a social plane, then move to the individual plane as an intrapsychological category (Vygotsky, 1997). For Vygotsky (1998, p. 170), "in the process of development, every external function is internalized and becomes internal". The HMFs develop in the process where individuals interact with others in social contexts (Vygotsky, 1997). Coinciding with this perspective of Vygotsky, speech as a mental function initially occurs as a social form of interaction (communication). According to Vygotsky (1987, p. 48), "human speech, a system that emerged with the need to interact socially in the labor process".

Vygotsky proclaimed that there are integral relations of developed and developing higher psychological functions (e.g., thinking, perception and speech), which reflect the whole child who interacts socially with others in an environment. According to Vygotsky (1987), there is an inter-functional relationship between thinking and speech in the development of the individual. Corresponding to Vygotsky's view, Chaiklin (2003) declared that the integration of psychological functions (e.g., thinking, perception and will) is essential to understand the process of a child's development. Thus, it is important to discuss this inter-functional relationship between thinking and speech.

## 2.4 Thinking and speech

In Vygotsky's (1987) work analysing thinking and speech, he explored the relationship of thought and word, and focused on verbal thinking that tied in word meaning. He argued that speech and thought cannot be separated from each other and introduced word meaning as a unit of verbal thinking. According to Vygotsky (1987, p. 44), "speech is represented as the external expression of thought, as its vestment". Therefore, verbal thinking is important for studying meaningful speech, because the word without meaning is not a formation of human speech, it is only a natural sound as it is separated from human thought.

Vygotsky (1987) used the concept of inner speech when he described the relationship between thought and word in the process of speech development. The inner speech is different from the external speech as the first represents the thoughts of the individual (speech for oneself), while the second aspect occurs when a person socially communicates with others.

Vygotsky (1987, p. 48) further claimed that “sign, word, and sound are the means of social interactions”. It means that human speech occurs when people need to interact socially. He outlined that “the initial and the primary function of speech is communicative. Speech is a means of social interaction, a means of expression and understanding” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 48). He stated that “speech is a means of social intercourse. It arises from the need for means of communication”. This “communication is brought into development by an act of personal contact” (Vygotsky, 1998, pp. 272–273). He argued that it is only humans who have a unique ability to use speech to control their own behaviour. They are characterised with consciousness and thinking that are used effectively to develop psychologically among social contexts (Vygotsky, 1987). Donald (1991, 2002) outlined that only human beings are able to use cognitive tools in sharing their thinking by generating and realising culture.

Thus, speech and thinking cannot be isolated from each other as both are constructed as a unity that constitutes the unit of word meaning, which is revealed in social interactions. It can be seen that when speech as an HMF develops in a child, thinking will simultaneously develop. Specifically, it is noteworthy that this research study is based on CHT as this theory studies HMF (e.g., speech and thinking). As previously mentioned, there is an inter-functional relationship between thinking and speech. Thus, it can be argued that the development of a student’s English speech is the stage in the development of his/her thinking in English. The English speech of a student becomes internal as he/she tries to understand the message of the English words used in meaningful communications. The student will master his/her own behaviour as he/she uses the English language to think and speak or write for communicative purposes. Hence, the difference between language and speech should be explained.

## 2.5 Language and speech

From the CHT perspective, language and speech are different. Language is a cultural tool that has been developed historically and exists independently from the child. According to Vygotsky (1987,



p. 3), “language, used first as a communicative tool, finally shape the minds of those who adapt to its use”. Language is one of the most important tools in a child’s development (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992). Vygotsky (1987, p. 241) claimed that “the device the child uses for affecting things is simply a unique language that he uses in communicating with the people around him”. For him, through the language that flows among individuals, all learning was first achieved (Wink & Putney, 2002).

However, language is the most complex system, which involves sounds, symbols, words, sentences and other features that allow human beings to efficiently communicate with each other. In several social contexts, utterances are used as a communicative tool with different functions as acts of speech (Egorova, Shtyrov, & Pulvermüller, 2016). In other words, the language that contains utterances, symbols, sounds and others is used as a tool to communicate with others in a form of speech that is developed through this social interaction. Language in CHT is a complex tool; however, speech is a mental function, as it “is initially a means of socialising with those around the child and only later, in the form of internal speech, does it become a means of thinking” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 103). In other words, language is used as a cultural tool in communication with others, whereas speech is one of the HMFs of the individual and therefore develops according to general genetic law of cultural development (Vygotsky, 1987).

There is a non-verbal message in a human mind that is verbalised into utterances and words that are full of meanings; for example, in oral speech where the use of abbreviations arises because of the known subject between the speakers. The main form of oral speech is dialogue as it is a cultural phenomenon that needs interaction between human beings: “Dialogue is speech that consists of rejoinders” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 272). A message that comprises sounds and meanings is transferred between the interlocutors through grammatical and phonological components, which are finally produced as a language (Bock, 1995). This learned language, including grammar and words, is used for communicating through speech (Gernsbacher, 2004). This argument reveals one important distinction between the two processes of speech development and language learning/acquisition in a child’s development. A child acquires a language and learns its rules, grammar and words to communicate with others who speak this language. As a result of language use, the child’s speech develops through this social interaction. The child learns and acquires the language that enables him/her to use it in communicative situations within social contexts. Through these social interactions, the child’s speech as an HMF develops because he/she practises using the learned language to serve himself/herself within social contexts. Janet (as cited in Van der Veer, 2008) argued that language is considered basically as a command to perform some actions. When the child’s speech

develops through communication, this may contribute to his/her language acquisition as he/she still learns the language aspects (grammar, vocabulary, sounds) through communication with other people. It can be seen that language learning/acquisition and speech development are two interrelated processes that contribute to each other.

Vygotsky (1997) emphasised that language is a psychological tool to socially communicate and interact. This psychological tool mediates the process of development of human mental functions. In terms of this research study, it can be seen that English language was used as a psychological tool of English speech development in Saudi students. English as a language is used as a cultural tool that occurs in social interaction. This tool acts as a mediator of this social interaction. The participating English teachers used the English language to mediate the interactions between ideal forms (i.e., teacher developed English speech) and the present forms (students' English speech) that occurred within the students' ZPD. Therefore, the next section gives an overview of Vygotsky's concept of mediation.

## 2.6 Cultural-historical mediation

Mediation is an important concept in Vygotsky's theory. As stated previously, every HMF is mediated by psychological and cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1997). Kozulin (2003) stated that there are two faces of a mediator, the first is human and the other is symbolic. He propounded that:

Mediation serves as a key word in a considerable number of recent studies ... Approaches focusing on the human mediator usually try to answer the question, what kind of involvement by the adult is effective in enhancing the child's performance? Those who focus on the symbolic aspect pose the question, what changes in the child's performance can be brought about by the introduction of symbolic tools mediators? (Kozulin, 2003, pp. 18–19)

It can be realised that in child development, human (adult) and symbolic tools both mediate the interaction, which first appears on the social plane and then on the individual plane. Veresov (2010, p. 87) outlined that "CHT presents the sign from developmental perspective: the sign (or system of signs) originally exists as an external tool, as a kind of cultural material, and later it becomes a tool of internal mediating activity". Daniels (2008) stated that Vygotsky explored the use of tools and signs in the human development of HMFs, which appears through interaction and communication in a social environment. Vygotsky (1997, p. 62) determined the distinction between the sign and tool:

The tool serves for conveying man's activity to the object of his activity, it is directed outward, it must result in one change or another in the object, it is the means for man's external activity directed toward subjugating nature. The sign changes nothing in the object of the psychological operation, it is a means of psychological action on behaviour, one's own or another's, a means of internal activity directed toward mastering man himself; the sign is directed inward.

According to Vygotsky, the main distinction between a sign and tool is revealed in the way they adjust humans' behaviours. For Ridgway (2010, pp. 26–27), “mediation tools such as artefacts, signs, languages, and the social and cultural practices, in which they are used and developed re-used or re-developed, are known to facilitate and shape learning, and in turn, be shaped through the processes of dynamic interaction”.

In terms of the current study, the school child has to be encouraged to use language (a cultural tool) for social interaction to develop the HMF of speech. According to Lantolf et al. (2014, p. 210), “language in all its forms is the most pervasive and powerful cultural artefact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other, and to themselves”. Thus, while humans communicate, they use language to mediate their social interactions:

In the process of development, the functions of memory and attention are initially constructed as external operations connected with the use of an external sign ... they were a form of group behaviour, a form of social connection, but this social connection could not be implemented without the sign, by direct intercourse, and so here the social means become the means of individual behaviour (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 170).

From this perspective, the English language in this research is considered a cultural tool to mediate the communication between the teacher and the students, as explained in Chapters 7 and 8. The current research examines the process of (oral and written) speech development of students ages 9–10 years old in EFL classes in the school environment. This process is studied through investigating EFL teaching strategies used by the English teachers in Saudi primary schools. The investigation shows how the English language is used as a symbolic mediator to facilitate the social interaction between the teachers and their students.

The school child uses the English language to mediate his/her social communication, which leads to the development of his/her English speech. This social interaction, as Vygotsky (1998) argued, is the source of the development of HMF (e.g., speech development). According to Vygotsky (1998, p. 203), “the social environment is the source for the appearance of all specific human properties of the personality gradually acquired by the child or the source of social development of the child which is considered in the process of interaction of ‘ideal’ and ‘present forms’”. To understand this development, it is important to shed light on the learning and speech development that is revealed by the interaction between ideal and present forms.

## 2.7 Ideal and present forms

One significant concept of CHT is the interaction between ideal and present forms. In light of Vygotsky’s CHT, the cultural environment is the source of a child psychological development. That is, “An ideal or final form is present in the environment and interacts with the present form found in children, and what results is a certain form of activity which then becomes a child’s internal asset, his property and a function of his personality” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 353). The interesting example stated earlier was the mother who speaks to her child in full grammatical sentences while her child speaks in single and uncompleted words. The child will actually reach his/her mother’s stage in speaking at the end of his/her development (Vygotsky, 1994). This means that to develop the speech, the ideal form must be presented in the environment to interact with the child’s rudimentary form, “only then can speech development be achieved” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 349).

The interaction of ideal (cultural) and present (rudimentary) forms refers to the source of development (Veresov, 2010, pp. 84–85). The ideal form is a culturally developed form, which is considered an invitation to the child to accept or decline to act and respond to merge into interaction with others and master it. Thus, the child will reach the same level of speech as the ideal form by gradually producing the primary forms of speech through a process of interaction between the ideal and present forms.

Similarly, from my experience in Saudi schools, the teacher in English classes speaks to the students (9–10 years old) in full English grammatical sentences, whereas the students speak single words or uncompleted sentences as their English speech is not matured. Here, the teacher has developed English speech as the ideal form, which the child is going to obtain during the process of speech development.

In contrast, if the environment of the child is only made up of children their own age who are all at the lower level of speech development, the process will develop slowly in an unusual way. The child's speech development will never reach a higher level because of the absence of the ideal form in the environment (Vygotsky, 1994). Likely, the students' English speech in English classes cannot develop properly when they learn in isolation without the presence of ideal forms. In English classes, different ideal forms can be presented to interact with the students' present form. For instance, the English speech that is presented in English stories through the media can be an ideal form that enables students to acquire the language and then communicate with peers, which then develops the student's English speech. Further, the developed English speech of a teacher or a more capable peer is another ideal form that can be presented in English activities. The teacher can organise the interaction between the ideal and the present forms to support the development of English speech. Otherwise, the development of the English speech of students will be limited in the absence of the ideal form (e.g., English developed speech).

It can be presumed that through communication and interaction with their teacher (developed speech as the ideal form) and peers (present forms), they will certainly develop their English speech. Through this interaction they practise, think and convey a message using the English language. This asserts Vygotsky's (1994, p. 352) claim that "a human being is a creature who is social by his very nature, whose development consists of, among other things, mastering certain forms of activity and consciousness which have been perfected by humanity during the process of historical development".

This research is focused on the conditions teachers create for the development of English speech in primary students. English teachers can create conditions for English speech development by engaging the students in several communicative activities. Children who participate in activities such as reporting, questioning and dialogue will learn effectively as they depend on collaboration and social interaction (Kazuo, 2003). For example, during an English lesson about shopping, the teacher can act as a seller and the buyer alternately to ask about the goods and their prices while the students observe. Then after practising, the same scene could be repeated with different actors (teacher and students). The teacher can ask the students to do that task at home with older family and friends who are able to speak English and play such roles. These communicative interactions between the teacher, students, family and others can be conceptualised as an interaction of the ideal and present forms, which is the condition for English speech development.

The previous example proves the claim of Vygotsky (1994), which is the child's mental development cannot proceed properly without the interaction of ideal and present forms. This shows that the concept of interaction between ideal and present forms is a powerful tool for the analysis of the conditions for the development of English speech.

This study investigates what the teacher can do to help the students develop their English speech through the interaction between the ideal and present forms and conditions created within the students' ZPDs in English classes, to answer the second research question:

2. What are the conditions that the English teachers create to support students' English speech development in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
  - a. What are the ideal forms that are presented by the English teachers in their English classes, and how do these ideal forms interact with the present forms?
  - b. What are zones of proximal development created in English classes in Saudi primary schools?

The next section explains Vygotsky's ZPD, which is used as one of the key theoretical concepts and analytical tools in this study.

## 2.8 Zone of proximal development

Most Vygotskians pay attention only to the first part of the fundamental formula of cultural-historical theory "from interpsychological functions to intrapsychological ones" and emphasize only the aspect of interpsychological functions, that is, only adult guidance or collaborate activities with adults or peers in understanding the concept "ZPD". However, we should note that Vygotsky never proposes dealing with interpsychological functions separately from the entire formula "from interpsychological functions to intrapsychological ones". Therefore, we must not isolate the aspect of interpsychological functions from the whole formula and, of course, we must not give it our sole attention in understanding the concept "ZPD". We must understand the concept "ZPD" by grasping the formula in its totality. (Nakamura, 2003, p. 2)

Vygotsky (2011, p. 204) defined the ZPD of a child as “the distance between the level of his actual development, determined with the help of independently solved tasks, and the level of his possible development, defined with the help of tasks solved by the child under the guidance of adults or in cooperation with more intelligent peer”. It is the “difference of the child’s actual level of development and the level of performance that he achieves in collaboration with the adult” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 209). The child who is assisted or guided by others is more capable of solving a problem than the one who solves it independently, as the children are not at the same level of mental development. Using ZPD helps educators predict the possible progress of the child’s mental development (Levykh, 2008). Thus, scholars and practitioners are now using ZPD, mainly in the educational sphere, to see what the students can do with others (adults and peers) and what they are able to do independently (Davydov, 1995).

ZPD is determined with the aid of tasks in collaboration with more capable companions in the learning environment. It must be taken into consideration that “learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 350). It is one of Vygotsky’s perspectives in education that “authentic teaching/learning and upbringing come through collaboration by adults with children and adolescents” (Davydov, 1995, p. 13). Vygotsky’s ZPD provides a conceptualisation of the relationship between human learning and development (Chaiklin, 2003). Vygotsky discovered that learning and development are dynamic, interrelated processes where the students actively participate and learn through interactions with others by using language as a tool to communicate (Wink & Putney, 2002).

From Vygotsky’s point of view, there are different levels of development of psychological functions in a child. There are “buds” (functions not yet developed), “flowers” (functions will develop) and “fruits” (functions developed) (Vygotsky, 1994). Functions that are the buds of development will now be fruits of development. It was indicated that “the zone of proximal development has more significance for the dynamics of intellectual development and for the success of instruction than does the actual level of development” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 209). Vygotsky (1987, p. 205) proclaimed that “instruction depends on processes that have not yet matured, processes that have just entered the first phases of their development”. The children in schools receive instruction not in what they can do individually, but in what they cannot yet do. They receive instructions in what is accessible to them in collaboration with, or under the guidance of a teacher (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 210):



A central feature for the psychological study of instruction is the analysis of the child's potential to raise himself to a higher intellectual level of development through collaboration, to move from what he has to what he does not have through imitation. This is the significance of instruction for development.

It was confirmed that “the child can imitate only what lies within the zone of his own intellectual potential” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 209). Teaching is effective if it focuses on the child's potential level of development, which exists in the ZPD (Kazuo, 2003). The children can solve a problem and do more difficult tasks in collaboration and when they are assisted (Vygotsky, 1987). Then, “the teacher must orient his work not on yesterday's development in the child but on tomorrow's. Only then will he be able to use instruction to bring out those processes of development that now lie in the zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 211). For Chaiklin (2003), instruction aims to fully develop the child, not a specific skill. ZPD is not about the development of skill in any task but is concerned with the whole process of development (Chaiklin, 2003). Therefore, instruction must be used with a clear understanding of a child's current level of development.

In this study, the developed speech of the teacher (ideal form) is presented in the classroom environment, which then, in collaboration, will be obtained by the students in the near future. Here, the adults (teachers) certainly are not in a mutual process of development, because they are already developed in speech function. The English teacher participates in the process of development by providing appropriate ideal forms for the students and organises the process of interaction with these ideal forms through English practice. As a result, a condition for English speech development is created by the teacher when the child collaborates with their classmates of the same age group to attain the developed speech of English. For example, the teacher may present an English word (e.g., girl) and show a picture of this word. The teacher encourages students to describe the picture even in the Arabic language. She tries to help the students to think and participate in English. One student may say “Jameelh”, then the teacher, as a helper, will form the word in English and say “beautiful”. Likely, the teacher can extend the discussion and ask the students to bring more adjectives to describe the girl in the picture (e.g., thin, tall, etc.), which will improve the students' thinking and speaking that indicates the beginning of oral English speech development. Together the students can discuss and write in groups all the mentioned adjectives on distributed pictures of the girl that shows the development of English written speech, as they can write full English words. Of course, the mental developmental level of the individuals is not the same, but with a little help from an adult or other capable peer within the child's ZPD, English speech will move to a higher level of development. It is



important to identify the child's ZPD where the interpsychological function changes into the intrapsychological one.

The process of English speech development as a mental function in an individual can be understood only by examining the social and cultural processes from which it derives. This refers to Vygotsky's belief of the "general genetic law of development" that is fundamental in CHT to explore the social interaction as the first plane where the mental functions of a child occur. It states, "every function in the cultural development of the child appears twice, first, in the social plane between people as interpsychological category, then in the psychological one within the child as an intrapsychological category" (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 106).

In the current research, English speech development is a function that first appears on the social plane, then later moves to be an individual function within the school child. This law is important for understanding ZPD as it shows that HMF (e.g., speech) develops through social interactions and in collaboration with others.

## 2.9 Speech development through social interaction

For Vygotsky (1998, pp. 272–273), "speech is a means of social intercourse. It arises from the need for means of communication ... [This] communication is brought into development by an act of personal contact". He claimed that "the initial and the primary function of speech is communicative. Speech is a means of social interaction, a means of expression and understanding" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 48). Through speech development, there are two substantial aspects or planes, the inner speech and the external speech. The first accompanies the semantic aspect, whereas the second is the auditory aspect. In the development of inner speech, the child progresses from the whole (sentences) into the parts (words) to master their meanings. Conversely, the development of the external aspect in the child begins with single words and utterances to the stage of complex phrases and sentences. It is obvious that the inner and external aspect of speech are moving in opposite directions during the whole period of early childhood (Vygotsky, 1987). It is a complex process where a transition might occur from the syntax of meaning to the grammar of words (Vygotsky, 1987).

Vygotsky (1987) stated that speech is important for communication and referred to the relation between signs, meaning and interaction. He claimed that human speech is a means of social

interaction, a means of expression and understanding, in which sign, word and sound are the means of social interaction (Vygotsky, 1987). Several types of interaction might be revealed in a child's environment. As noted, the adult is one important partner that the child can interact and collaborate with during the process of HMF development. Kudriavtsev (1999) outlined three types of adult-child interaction in an educational environment: 1) developmental type, which is based on the genuine collaboration between the child and the adult and leads to creative and productive development; 2) reproductive type, where the child has to imitate the model of the adult; and 3) quasi-heuristic type, which is based on hands-on activities and problem solving (as cited in Brédikytė, 2011). Hence, the first type of interaction between the adult and the child is more appropriate to the investigation in this research study.

In this research, the English speech of the students is studied by investigating EFL teaching strategies that are implemented in Saudi primary schools. The interactions of the students with others (teacher and peers) in English classes are observed to thoroughly examine the process of English speech development within the school environment. The environment in which all social interactions occur plays an efficient role in child development. For example, in an English class, the developed speech of the English teacher is going to be understood and mastered by the primary students gradually, as a result of frequent communication and thinking in such a language. Here, the developed speech of the teacher as an ideal form is already available or present in the environment of the English classes from the outset. This will influence the very beginning of the school child's development of speech, which is achieved under particular conditions of interaction in the English class environment.

The teacher can create conditions to support speech development and provide the students with the knowledge connected to practical activities. It is better to connect the subject matter knowledge in schools with everyday knowledge of the child. If this happens, "the child will be able to use the learned subject matter knowledge as tools for analyzing and reflecting on his everyday activities" (Hedegaard, 2012, p. 307). For instance, in English classes, the teacher can show a video about food as a brainstorming tool then ask the students to name the different foods shown in the video. Then, they may ask the student to mention the name of the preferred recipes made by their mother at home. As a result, after more practice with the help of the teacher, the child can describe his/her favourite recipe in English. As a result, the English speech of students is in the process of development through this social interaction between the teacher and the students due to the fact that speech is a means of communication in a social environment (Vygotsky, 1998).

Thus, it can be seen that the English speech develops as HMF moves from the interpsychological category on a social plane to the individual plane as the intrapsychological category. For Vygotsky (1998), the development of HMF begins socially then becomes internalised. English speech develops when the student interacts with others (teacher and peers) inside the classroom. Conditions for English speech are created to support the development. For instance, an interaction between ideal and present form is indicated between the developed English speech of the teacher and the immature English speech of the student, which leads to English speech development. Accordingly, speech as an HMF initially results from this kind of social interaction.

## 2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined a general view of CHT and the development of HMFs. The role of the environment in which social interactions occur was also discussed to show how English speech develops as a result of communication. It was essential to provide an explanation of the main concepts of CHT that were used to analyse concrete examples from the collected data to examine the development of the English speech of students in Saudi primary schools. The interaction between ideal and present forms, mediation and ZPD were discussed to obtain a clear understanding of these key concepts. Specifically, implementing CHT and its concepts in investigating English teaching strategies may help to develop new ways of teaching EFL that support the process of English speech development. It was clearly shown that language and speech are different, which means the two processes of English language learning/acquisition and English speech development are not the same but do contribute to each other, as is further explained in the final chapters of the thesis. The next chapter reviews the literature concerning teaching/learning EFL and other relevant work from a sociocultural point of view.

## Chapter 3: Literature Review

### Approaches to language education in ESL/EFL classroom

Intercultural approaches to language teaching and learning take the development of cultural understanding and the ability to use cultural knowledge to facilitate communication as primary goals for language learning, along with the development of language competence and linguistic awareness (Liddicoat, 2008, p. 289).

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the first chapter of this thesis, I outlined the significant role that the English language plays in the world. English is taught as a second or foreign language in many countries, and one excellent example is Saudi Arabia. Therefore, a brief background about the system of education in Saudi Arabia was presented, followed by a summary of English education in Saudi schools. The chapter also outlined the main objectives of teaching EFL in Saudi schools and deliberated on Saudi scholars' works in relation to this matter.

The current study draws upon CHT to investigate EFL teaching strategies to support the English speech development of Saudi students. This chapter reviews relevant existing literature considering the sociocultural approach to language education. It begins by introducing the sociocultural view on learning a language. Then, it presents a brief overview of studies that focus on teaching/learning a second language from a sociocultural perspective, followed by a discussion on some works on teaching/learning ESL within the sociocultural context. Next, the teacher/learner role in ESL/EFL classrooms is reviewed by discussing teacher-centred and student-centred approaches. Finally, methods and strategies for learning and teaching ESL/EFL are deliberated in this chapter to show how the current study is situated within the literature of ESL/EFL in relation to children's speech development within social settings while learning the English language.

#### 3.2 Sociocultural approach to language education

##### 3.2.1 Learning a language from a sociocultural perspective

The sociocultural approach is originally grounded in the psychological theory of Vygotsky and his colleagues. It argues that the HMF of an individual develops through participation in social contexts (Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2014). According to Lantolf et al. (2014, p. 208), the developmental processes of human mental functions occur “through participation in cultural, linguistic, and historically formed settings such as family, life, peer group interaction, and institutional contexts like schooling, organized social activities, and workplaces”. HMFs such as logical memory, abstract thought and voluntary attention are organised and improved through participation in social activities. These HMFs are mediated by material artefacts (e.g., computers) and cultural symbolic tools (e.g., language) (Lantolf et al., 2014). Kao (2010) outlined that language can powerfully mediate a human’s mental and physical activities, as it is one of the most essential semiotic tools. However, it is not a thing to be learned, it is a method for seeing, comprehending and conveying thoughts about the world, and every language user utilises their language(s) distinctively (Unisaedua, 2016). Subsequently, it is important to know how to use words, rules and knowledge of a language to communicate with speakers of the same language.

Anton (1999) argues that language is the most dominant semiotic tool used in the process of human development. Language as a tool can mediate a child’s learning and improve their abilities (Kao, 2010). Scarino and Liddicoat (2009, p. 16) suggested that “language is something that people do in their daily lives and something they use to express, create and interpret meanings and establish and maintain social and interpersonal relationships”. Significantly, culture is not a set of information, but a system in which individuals practise their lives and discuss imparted implications with each other (Unisaedua, 2016).

In language learning classrooms, it is important to engage the students in learning activities that enable them to use the language to communicate with others. It was emphasised that “learners need to engage with the ways in which context affects what is communicated” (Unisaedua, 2016, p. 18). Katayama (2013, p. 16) proposed that “Language teachers are encouraged to bring students to engage with language learning, that is, students do not merely learn a body of knowledge of the language, rather, they participate in the meaning-making and interpretation processes of the language”.

It is crucial for language learners to learn the ways of using the words and the rules of a language for effective communication with others who speak that same language (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). Likewise, it is important to know “how that language is used to create and represent meanings and how to communicate with others and to engage with the communication of others” (Scarino &

Liddicoat, 2009, p. 16). Debey and Bombard (2007, p. 91) declared that “language is all about communication, and we wanted the children to connect with all the teachers”. Oxford (1997) referred to Dewey, the famous American philosopher, who emphasised the importance of learning by being a part of the surrounding community rather than learning in isolation. She referred to Vygotsky’s works and acknowledged that any “individual’s cognitive system is a result of communication in social groups and cannot be separated from social life” (Oxford, 1997, p. 448). These viewpoints show that language is an important tool, which is used for communication with others in various social contexts. In other words, the language learners should be encouraged to use the words, grammar and rules of a learned language to enable them to communicate with speakers of that language. Speech, as an HMF, develops as a result of this social interaction.

From a sociocultural perspective, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) propounded that the processes of the development of human beings take place through participating in social contexts like families, schools and other culturally formed settings and environments. All human environments provide children with opportunities for communication that motivate the process of language acquisition (Hoff, 2006). In this sense, Kao (2010, p. 117) declared that “interaction with people, usually parents, teachers or peers, with different levels of skills or knowledge often leads to effective learning, which then encourages learners to move on to the next stage of learning or understanding”. Hence, language is not simply a discourse of transactions, but it helps to make meaningful communication through social interactions (Johnson, Delarche, Marshall, Wurr, & Edwards, 1998). Therefore, modern language teaching emphasises that social interactions are important in the school setting and the outer community (Johnson et al., 1998). Thus, this study highlights that based on CHT, social interaction is important for EFL learning and speech development.

### 3.2.2 Sociocultural approach to second language learning

Framed in a sociocultural approach, many valuable studies were revealed in the SLA field (primarily Aljafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Donato, 2000; Donato & McCormick, 1994; Frawely & Lantolf, 2006; Kramsch, 1998, 2000, 2002; Lantolf, 1994, 2000, 2005, 2006; Lantolf & Poehner, 2004, 2008, 2011, 2014; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Ohta, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2005; Thorne, 2000, 2003, 2009). Katayama (2013) believed that the sociocultural approach based on Vygotsky’s theory is a powerful approach to studying second language (L2) learning. Likewise, Kao (2010, p. 115) announced that “adopting sociocultural theories offers researchers theoretical perspectives with which to examine language learning as a social practice, consider students as active participants in constructing learning

processes, and investigate the interaction between different factors involved”. Consequently, Donato (2000, p. 45) concluded that “within a sociocultural framework, however, learning, including the learning of second languages, is a semiotic process attributable to participation in socially-mediated activities”. In other words, the sociocultural approach strongly argues that participating in social contexts that require communicative activities is an effective way to learn a second language.

### *3.2.2.1 Acquiring a second language through engaging in social contexts*

The process of L2 learning involves becoming part of the culture of the learning community. Dongyu, Fanyu and Wanyi (2013) affirm that learners become knowledge constructors, like the teacher, when they are included in the learning community rather than being receivers of the knowledge. The sociocultural perspectives offer a comprehensive framework to study, interpret and analyse the interactions of language learners that occur in the L2 learning process (Kao, 2010). For Ellis (2000), the sociocultural theory emphasises the influence of interaction between learners to accomplish tasks in L2 classrooms. It was assumed by Shah, Hussain and Nasseef (2013, p. 106) that “sociocultural context plays a pivotal role in the development of learners’ L2 as it influences teaching practices, classroom environment and learners’ progress”. As a result, the classroom environment for learning a L2 has to be provided with language learning resources that enable the students to interact:

the second language classroom is more than simply the physical (or virtual) location where comprehensible linguistic input is delivered to students for them to process and assimilate by means of their own individual cognitive mechanisms. Instead, the second language classroom is a dynamic environment that provides a unique set of semiotic ‘resources’ for students to interact with. Such resources include aspects of the tangible environment including various media (textbooks, authentic materials, chalkboards, televisions, computers), socially complex interlocutors (teacher, peers) as well as intangible resources such as learning tasks and activities and classroom discourse in all its shapes and forms. It is through interaction with these resources that classroom language learners acquire most of their second language. (Watson, 2007, p. 18)

Social communication is important for learning a second language and teachers need to help students develop their ability to communicate efficiently in several social and professional contexts (Finney, 2002). Initiating and entering the child into communicative activities in social institutions is the beginning of the development of human beings (Hedegaard, 2009). Here, the child can improve through interactions and communication with others, and through imitation and collaboration with

teachers and advanced peers:

a basic principle underlying all communicative approaches is that learners must learn not only to make grammatically correct, propositional statements about the experiential world, but must also develop the ability to use language to get things done ... simply being able to create grammatically correct structures in language did not necessarily enable the learner to use the language to carry out various real-world tasks (Nunan, 1988, p. 25).

Thus, language learners should learn how to form full grammatical sentences to express their thoughts about the world and use the language in everyday life situations. It is crucial to engage the students in several language communicative activities that enable them to later practice the language in several social contexts.

Katayama (2013, p. 16) declared that:

Learning a second language is not all about learning linguistic aspects of the target language such as grammar and phonetics. When people engage in learning a foreign language, at the very same time they are exposed to cultural aspects of the target language either consciously or unconsciously.

Katayama clarified these words by giving the example that learning a greeting in any target language does not mean to learn words and phrases only. Nonetheless, it requires learning and being subject to the cultural aspects (e.g., customs, ideas, skills, etc.) that characterise people of that target language (Katayama, 2013). This indicates that language learners do not learn the language from dictionaries; instead, language is learned from other people who have values and social characteristics (Tarone, 2007). That is, second language learners acquire the language through their participation in social contexts, which then enable them to use that language as a tool for communication, resulting in a development of speech as an HMF:

Higher mental functioning through social interaction is fundamentally mediated by cultural artifacts, activities and concepts, of which language is the primary and most important tool. Theoretically, the sociocultural context affects language development, including second language acquisition, as a social process. (Li, 2012, p. 27)



### *3.2.2.2 Drawing upon theoretical concepts in studying second language acquisition*

Some sociocultural studies in SLA used CHT concepts such as ZPD and mediation (see Chapter 2), and the metaphor of scaffolding. CHT concepts help language teachers understand the potential development of the learner can be attained by “using a mediator and assisted help from teachers and peers” (Dongyu et al., 2013, p. 169). Donato (1994) and Storch (2002) argued that scaffolding can occur between peers who work in pairs or in groups. With scaffolding, learning a L2 takes its place through assistance from more capable persons.

Aligned with the concept of mediation, Vygotsky’s important concept of ZPD in the process of learning was enthusiastically researched. Mitchell and Myles (2004, p. 196) interpreted ZPD as “the domain of knowledge or skills where the learner is not yet capable of independent functioning but can achieve the desired outcome given relevant scaffolded help”. Likewise, Harvard (1997, p. 40) referred to Vygotsky’s ZPD and argued that ZPD is “the distance between the child’s independent capacity and the capacity to perform with assistance”. In other words, there is a ZPD where the child needs the help of other capable persons and peers (scaffolder) to perform a given task. For Safonova (2018), the concept of ZPD is crucial in understanding the process of a child’s mental development and it has a significant influence on pedagogy, mainly in the field of foreign language teaching and learning.

In regard to ZPD in language learning, Ohta (1995, p. 96) stated that ZPD is “the difference between the L2 learner’s development level as determined by independent language use, and the higher level of potential development as determined by how language is used in collaboration with a more capable interlocutor”. Here, Ohta pointed out that there is a clear relation between the process of language acquisition and ZPD. However, the learned language can be used independently and collaboratively to support the development of speech as an HMF. In collaboration, language is used as a tool for communication through speaking and reading, as well as writing. For example, interlocutors communicate through dialogue or conversation using a specific language, which then leads to the development of speech. Learners of a second language develop their speech through learning a language collaboratively in schools to be able to use it independently in the external world. Once the learned language is used to communicate with others in different social contexts, development of an HMF, which is the learner’s speech, occurs through this interaction and collaboration.

Further sociocultural research in the L2 field was conducted by Katayama (2013), who examined the learners' dialogue during their collaborative interaction in a Japanese language course at an Australian university. The participants were from different countries with different backgrounds (e.g., Australian-born, Australian-born-Asian parents, others not Australian-born), although they were competent enough to speak English. The researcher identified the role of the English language, which was used between these students to interact collaboratively in a second language classroom. Katayama (2013) outlined that English plays an important role when the students work in groups and they provided scaffolded help to each other. The findings of the study demonstrated that English "as a tool of communication plays an important role during learners' collaborative interactions in language classrooms" (Katayama, 2013, p. 4). As this study was conducted in a second language classroom, the only tool of communication between the students was the English language that was used by the learners to interact in groups to help each other. Thus, using a language as a tool of communication is important in the process of human development. It can be seen that interaction and collaboration in second language classrooms lead to better results when learning a language.

Notably, the literature is full of works that indicate the efficiency of applying sociocultural perspectives to studying SLA. The acquisition of ESL is investigated using a sociocultural approach in the next section.

### *3.2.2.3 Sociocultural approach in examining the acquisition of English as a second language*

This section sheds light on studies that used sociocultural theory to investigate teaching and learning ESL. First, some studies emphasised Vygotsky's (1994) claim that the cultural environment is the source of a child's psychological development, including learning a language. This was approved by ESL researchers such as Yang and Kim (2011), who examined two ESL learners in study abroad (SA) contexts. They concluded that "learners need to recognize the need to become volitionally engaged with the L2 community on the basis of clear L2 goals in order to attain satisfactory SA experiences" (Yang & Kim, 2011, p. 332). They outlined that one of the two ESL learners emphasised the importance of active participation in various L2 communities for developing language skills. Likewise, it was confirmed by the second ESL learner in their study that a "L2-rich environment is important to increase L2 speaking proficiency" (Yang & Kim, 2011, p. 329). These studies show that engaging ESL learners in the target language environment promotes their English language learning, as well as their English-speaking proficiency. In L2 learning, "if learners gain confidence in

approaching fluent speakers of the target language in a virtual environment, they are more likely to approach them in real life situations” (Gaukrodger & Atkins, 2013, p. 304).

According to Katayama (2013, p. 4), “language used during interaction needs to be carefully looked at in order to understand what is happening in terms of learning during learners’ collaborative interaction”. Therefore, interpersonal communication is important for learning ESL, as the students should work together on tasks to accomplish a mutual goal (Johnson et al., 1998). In line with this, Watanabe (2008) conducted a study based on sociocultural theory that investigated the interaction between Japanese ESL learners of different proficiency levels during problem-solving tasks. The participating ESL learners engaged in different patterns of interaction while solving a linguistic problem. For example, there were three patterns of interaction as outlined by Watanabe (2008): collaborative interaction, dominant–passive and expert–novice interaction. The findings of the study showed that the nature of the peer–peer interaction is important for enhancing learning opportunities. Watanabe (2008, p. 629) documented that “how social relationships are co-constructed during pair interaction and how these relationships affect the collaborative dialogue, hence the participants’ language learning”. This means that different patterns of interaction are co-constructed by ESL learners while working in collaboration, which provides opportunities for successful English language learning. However, social interaction is not only effective for English language learning. Notably, using the learned English skills in collaborative dialogues and social interaction leads to English speech development. ESL learners who use the English language to communicate with peers and teachers can achieve a high level of development in English speech. This significant matter is going to be a focal point in this research study.

Other researchers who investigated ESL learning and teaching from sociocultural perspective coincide with Vygotsky’s statement that students need the assistance of other capable persons to work properly within their ZPD (Dabarera, Renandya, & Zhang, 2014). For instance, Simeon (2015) explored how an ESL teacher provided scaffolding to the learners during writing lessons. For Simeon (2015, p. 21), “certain necessary conditions are needed for English as a second language (ESL) learners to develop into successful writers”. The findings of Simeon’s study showed that the ESL teacher implemented scaffolding to support students by engaging them in deciding and choosing their writing strategy, as well as placing them in groups to discuss and plan a story. The teacher determined that the students could plan their work independently after engaging in group work and receiving help from capable peers:

Creating contexts for linguistic and academic learning in the ZPD occurs in part through the

scaffolding of social interaction. Scaffolding is closely related to the ZPD. In fact, it is only within the ZPD that scaffolding can occur ... working in the ZPD means that the learner is assisted by others to be able to achieve more than he or she would be able to achieve alone. Scaffolding refers to the detailed circumstances of such work in the ZPD. (Walqui, 2006, p. 163)

Consistent with Simeon (2015), the ESL teacher provides the students with instructional scaffolding by encouraging them to share personal experiences or activating their prior knowledge to build a connection between the students (students' life) and the subject matter (new material). This is called "bridging", which is classified as one type of instructional scaffolding defined by Walqui (2006).

To sum up, these studies showed how the teacher can use scaffold learning to promote the development of ESL students within their learning zones. Accordingly, the next sections discuss the role of the teacher/learner in the language education setting, and teaching/learning approaches implemented by teachers in their ESL/EFL classes.

### 3.3 Issues in teaching and learning ESL/EFL

In this section, I present various arguments regarding teaching and learning ESL/EFL. As stated earlier, a teacher plays an important role in developing students' learning in English classes. The current approach in language education also emphasises the role of the learner to improve the process of English learning. Therefore, the following section reviews the literature related to the role of teachers/learners in English language classrooms. Then, some approaches and strategies of teaching/learning ESL/EFL are discussed.

#### 3.3.1 Teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches in second language classrooms

Second language learning is a mutual process between the teacher and the learner. The role of the learner can be described as director, planner and assessor of learning while the teacher's role is the facilitator of learning (Johnson et al., 1998). Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 44) stated that "teaching, however purposeful, cannot automatically lead to learning for the simple reason that learning is primarily a personal construct controlled by the individual learner". In other words, the understanding of the role of the teacher in ESL/EFL classrooms has changed due to the learners' need to be active agents in their learning (Dewey, 1938).

In traditional learning, the English teacher plays a very dominant role as they are considered the source of knowledge. They often bear the burden of the whole class on their shoulders and the learner mainly listens and repeats or is directed by the teacher (Choudhury, 2011). The teacher is seen as an expert who is responsible for the classroom and the resource person of the required knowledge (Xing, 2010). In traditional teacher-fronted classrooms, the teacher is described as a controller who tells the students things, reads aloud and organises drills (Harmer, 2007). Language is only used for educational purposes, as knowledge the teacher teaches the learners is gained by presenting new material (Johnson et al., 1998). There is limited interaction between the students and opportunities for the ESL learner to communicate with others. However, interaction is important for learning a language as it provides learners with opportunities to get assistance from each other as well as the teacher. For Vygotsky (1997), the transformation of cognitive processes starts when the children begin to use language to guide and monitor their own activities.

According to Harmer (1991, p. 253), “teachers must be aware of the different roles they can adopt and know when and how to use them”. Different teachers’ roles were distinguished, including the “controller”, “prompter”, “participant”, “resource” and “tutor” (Harmer, 2007). The successful teacher must employ various roles in the class; for example, the prompter is someone who will encourage the learners and guide them while they learn. Likewise, the teacher can be a participant who interacts with the students and assists them in doing activities and tasks. The teacher also has to be a resource of knowledge that provides the students with information. Lastly, they have the role of a tutor, which is a combination of a prompter and a resource to help the students, as individuals or groups, to develop their ideas and encourage them to work on bigger projects (Harmer, 2007).

However, Scrivener (1994) identified three categories of the teacher’s roles in the class: the “explainer”, who explains and presents the knowledge; the “involver”, who engages in tasks and activities to get the attention of the students; and the “enabler”, which may refer to several roles such as “guide”, “resource” or “counsellor”, depending on the students’ needs and circumstances. Renandya (2012) described teacher roles in the English classroom as a motivator, organiser of language activities, material developer, monitor of students’ learning and provider of the knowledge. The teacher in ESL classrooms is responsible for preparing the students for the new language, organising them, introducing tasks and feedbacks, and giving instructions (Harmer, 2007). Another responsibility of the ESL teacher is managing the classroom by organising learning and its activities (Wright, 1987). For Jang and Jimenez (2011), it is important for L2 teachers to create concrete

classroom activities that encourage the students to identify and improve their ways of learning. Learners of a language have to communicate and guide each other, while the educator's role remains as an assessor and facilitator in the classroom environment (Gaukrodger & Atkins, 2013). The teacher can observe while the learners practice the language (Johnson et al., 1998). A positive relationship between the teacher and the student must be created. It was asserted by Kohonen (1992, p. 32) that better student autonomy involves the teacher trusting the learner's "willingness and ability to cope with the various learning tasks, and a respect for his or her person and choices".

The different roles that the teacher plays in second language classrooms are summarised in Table 3.1.

*Table 3 1 Different approaches of teacher's roles in a second language classroom*

| Teachers' roles  | Snapshot of teaching activities   | Scholars                  |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| <b>Dominant</b>  | Bearing the burden of the whole class on his/her shoulders and directing the students.                                | Choudhury, 2011           |
| <b>Expert</b>  | Being responsible for the classroom and the resource person.  | Xing, 2010                |
| <b>Controller</b>  | Telling the students things, reading aloud and organising drills.   | Harmer, 2007              |
| <b>Prompter</b>  | Encouraging the learners and bringing them on the right track while they learn.                                       | Harmer, 2007              |
| <b>Participant</b>   | Interacting with the students and assisting them in doing activities and tasks.                                       | Harmer, 2007              |
| <b>Resource</b>  | Serving the students with information.  | Harmer, 2007              |
| <b>Tutor</b>   | Helping the students as individuals or groups to develop their ideas and encouraging them to work in bigger projects. | Harmer, 2007              |
| <b>Explainer</b>   | Explaining and presenting the knowledge.  | Scrivener, 1994           |
| <b>Involver</b>  | Engaging the students in tasks and activities to get their attention.   | Scrivener, 1994           |
| <b>Enabler</b>   | Playing a role of 'guide', 'resource' or 'counsellor' depending on the student's needs and circumstances.             | Scrivener, 1994           |
| <b>Organiser of language activities and material developer</b> | Organising language activities.   | Renandya, 2012            |
| <b>Provider of the knowledge</b>                               | Providing the students with the knowledge.  | Renandya, 2012            |
| <b>Observer</b>  | Observing while the learners practice the language.   | Johnson et al., 1998      |
| <b>Assessor and facilitator</b>                                | Assessing and facilitating in the classroom environment.  | Gaukrodger & Atkins, 2013 |

In fact, the literature considered the role of the environment in supporting the acquisition of a new language. Consequently, an optimal situation of learning is created when the learning environment is

provided with useful materials and resources, and volunteer teachers. Then, the environment contributes to language acquisition by illustrating communicative interaction (Hoff, 2006). Implementation of a learner-centred curriculum is a desirable change that is needed in foreign language education. Nunan (1989, p. 19) suggested:

a learner-centred curriculum will contain similar elements and processes to traditional curricula, a key difference will be that information by and from learners will be built into every phase of the curriculum process. Curriculum development becomes a collaborative effort between teachers and learners, since learners will be involved in decisions on content selection, methodology and evaluation.

Coinciding with Nunan, Tudor (1993) claimed that the role of the students in the learner-centred approach is not like the traditional approach, as they have to play an active role and participate in their learning. He argued that the role of the teacher in the current curriculum of the learner-centred classroom is to involve the learner actively in the process of learning. For Weimer (2002), learner-centred teaching gives the students the chance to share thoughts and opinions while doing more learning tasks, such as summarising a reading text and drawing its conclusions. The “new learning is built on prior learning—that is, the ideas and concepts that students bring to learning. Teachers work with these preconceptions in order to facilitate learning” (Unisaeduu, 2016, p. 31).

The formal, traditional learning and teaching of drilling information have changed to create an environment where the students and the teacher work together to introduce and receive the knowledge. Each student is a member of the learning community in a collaborative learning classroom. According to Wang (2008, p. 197), in recent times, “there has been a shift from teaching to learning, from transmitting to interacting. Teachers and learners are members of a learning community in which collaboration is one of the key learning experiences”. It is an opportunity for the students to give and receive feedback on their work in language skills (Storch, 2005). It is a teaching strategy that allows several students with different abilities and talents to accomplish a common goal (Essien, 2015), and a current vision that learning and teaching will succeed through collaboration and interaction in a social environment. For example, the study by Storch (1999, 2005) showed that exercises given to pairs were completed more accurately than the ones completed by individuals.

The learner-centred approach provides a new insight into the ESL classroom that highlights the role of the learners to achieve high proficiency in the target language by being engaged in multiple



linguistic tasks to be accomplished collaboratively. The EFL teachers can apply different teaching strategies with several communicative tasks in EFL classes that can be effective to improve the process of English language acquisition, and further support the development of English speech. The following section presents a brief overview of the existing work in the literature in relation to teaching/learning ESL/EFL approaches.

### 3.3.2 Strategies and approaches for teaching/learning ESL/EFL

During recent decades, much research has investigated the effective strategies of second language teaching/learning (such as Carson & Longhini, 2002; Chamot, 2005; Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Rubin, 1975). Rubin (1975, p. 43) defined learning strategies as “techniques or devices which the learner may use to acquire knowledge”. He outlined that a good language learner is one who practices the language and communicates or learns from a communication (Rubin, 1975). Similarly, Scarcella and Oxford (1992, p. 63) defined learning strategies as “specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques—such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task—used by students to enhance their own learning”. For Wenden and Rubin (1987, p. 19), learning strategies are “any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information”. Similarly, Oxford (1990, p. 8) defined language learning strategies as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations”. Notably, using a combination of teaching and learning strategies that involve several communicative activities achieved in pair or in groups, will enhance the process of learning and teaching a second language (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

Different techniques and strategies to motivate the learners to participate in their learning are emphasised for use in teaching/learning L2. ESL/EFL teachers should create a learning environment where the learners are assisted by others and feel low levels of anxiety (Allison & Rehm, 2011). That is, teachers of ESL/EFL have to use various strategies and techniques to facilitate the process of learning a new language. Accordingly, there are a number of various ESL/EFL teaching strategies effectively used in L2 classroom that were explored in the literature of the field, such as interactive teaching strategies, collaborative learning strategies and cooperative learning strategies.

#### 3.3.2.1 *Interactive teaching strategies*



These teaching strategies require ESL learners to interact with classmates in pairs or in groups to do several tasks that are given to the entire class. The interaction involves teachers and students as they act upon and engage with each other in meaningful ways (Oxford, 1997). The students are provided with more opportunities to communicate with their peers through discussion and dialogues (Allison & Rehm, 2011). The teacher should support and facilitate the process of learning by conducting groups and preparing several communicative tasks, which are defined by Nunan (2004, p. 4) as:

a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form.

Hence, oral and written proficiency in English will be achieved as the students are “involved in communicative activities that generate teacher–student and student–student active interaction” (Javid et al., 2012, p. 65). Allison and Rehm (2011) stated that the English language learners who are encouraged to speak and interact with their classmates can develop their academic language better and faster as a result of their participation in speaking with others in the classroom. Consequently, Momani, Asiri and Alatawi (2016, p. 19) declared that the “students learn best when they engage with course material and actively participate in their learning”. These researchers identified some of the active learning strategies that are designed to take the students out of their textbooks, and to move and think actively through engaging them in thinking about different sides of an issue. These strategies include brainstorming that involves a topic or a problem to be discussed; games and puzzles; role playing, which involves the students participating in real-life stories and situations; and pair work or group work (Momani et al., 2016).

According to Thompson (2012), incorporating the students in small group work and pair work in EFL classes might help them feel relaxed, which reduces the anxiety of learning the target language. Thus, this social interaction in pairs or in groups leads to the development of the student’s HMF. Children use their cognitive and social functions to participate in communicative activities in language classrooms (Fahim & Haghani, 2012). It can be seen that interactive teaching strategies are designed and provided by the teacher who organises and facilitates communicative activities that engage the EFL learners in interacting with others in the classroom. These teacher-focused strategies are helpful in an L2 classroom; however, there are other EFL learning strategies that involve the learner-centred approach and consider the learner as an active agent, which will be discussed in the next sections.

### *3.3.2.2 Collaborative learning strategies*

Collaborative learning is “based on the idea that learners working in groups towards a common goal can learn better than the students who can work on their own” (Istifci & Kaya, 2011, p. 88). It is a learning approach that depends on the learners themselves as they are engaged with more capable others who provide guidance and assistance to solve a problem or accomplish a task (Oxford, 1997). According to Saha and Singh (2016), the approach of collaborative learning is effective in helping language learners to attain collaborative skills for becoming successful leaders and supporting their personalities. Collaborative learning requires mutual support and positive commitment as every member of a group shows their active participation, which leads to the success of the group (Istifci & Kaya, 2011). This helps to create a positive social environment and facilitates comprehension. Working in teams helps the students assist each other, which forms more positive relationships with peers, social support, higher self-esteem and academic success (Nunan, 1992).

According to Alasmi (2016, p. 24), the “collaborative learning is the type of methodology that allows the students to exchange information as well as create ideas, solve problems, and resolve the tasks”. The students work collaboratively, encourage and teach each other, and desire the others’ success to reach the goals of the learning (Istifci & Kaya, 2011). For Bruffee (1995), students should be left on their own to manage themselves in the collaborative learning model and the teachers should not interfere. The group is responsible for finding the answers and completing the tasks given by the teacher using their own sources and materials (Alipour, 2016). The students in a group organise the work for themselves. Istifci and Kaya (2011) stated that positive mutual collaboration occurs when the students work together freely to make their decisions. Here, the interaction and engagement with more capable students who guide and assist will definitely help the students identify the difficult points and reach the level of comprehension of a task by themselves. The teacher can finally assess the performance of each group to show them how to improve their work.

### *3.3.2.3 Cooperative learning strategies*

Other student-centred strategies that have been used in EFL classes are cooperative learning strategies. These are similar to collaborative learning strategies in the learners’ role, as they work in small groups to achieve a mutual goal. However, cooperative learning is an instructional method in which students work together to accomplish an instructional goal that is provided by the teacher

(Nelson, 2007). For Oxford (1997, p. 444), in cooperative learning, “the individual is accountable to the group and vice versa; teacher facilitates, but group is primary”. The teacher monitors the groups at each stage of solving a problem and controls the class while the students work in groups (Alipour, 2016). The students are provided with a problem or a question with the sources that help them to solve it under the supervision of the teacher (Alipour, 2016). In other words, cooperative learning is an instructional method, as the teacher directs the students and provides them with the task and sources to accomplish it.

Essien (2015, p. 126) summarised in a study about the effectiveness of cooperative learning in the English learning field that “cooperative learning definitely enhances students’ learning attitude towards English language in several ways”. The researcher declared that “cooperative classrooms are classes where students group together to accomplish significant cooperative tasks” (Essien, 2015, p. 121). The students work in groups to discuss, clarify and encourage each other to complete tasks towards academic goals (Essien, 2015). All students in a group are asked to complete the given task, which then improves their language skills through sharing knowledge and discussion.

For Nunan (1992, pp. 34–24), “cooperative learning teams provide an effective context for development of new understandings”, because “sometimes learners seem to be able to translate the teacher’s explanations into a ‘kid language’ which is easier for their teammates to understand”. The students in a group explain things to each other to understand the teacher’s instructions, which helps to accomplish a task. Allison and Rehm (2011) assumed that cooperative learning strategies (such as numbered heads, think-pair-share, and jigsaw) promote interaction and improve English language learning within a group of students with different academic abilities. Activities of cooperative learning give the learners the opportunity to improve their English through communication with other peers in a group to accomplish a common goal. Here, the students depend on themselves rather than their teacher, as they can ask for help from peers and share materials with other group members (Allison & Rehm, 2011). The teacher in these kinds of activities supervises and guides the students by giving them the instructions to solve a problem and the resources necessary to complete the task.

Essien (2015, p. 126) stated that “cooperative learning is essential if English language teachers are to change the students’ perceptions, their ability to discuss, and their perception of working with one another in English language class”. In this situation, the teacher is expected to be an advisor and guide, which the learner seeks when facing any difficulty. This kind of group work will increase the chances of language practice, allowing the teacher to address the individual differences of the

learners, and support and motivate the learners to learn (Xing, 2010). Different cognitive skills are revealed through engaging students in several cooperative activities that encourage each learner to express and show their abilities to explain, understand and discuss the task to be accomplished.

The previous discussion shows that the interactive teaching, collaborative learning and cooperative learning strategies are efficient in language education as they focus on interaction, cooperation and collaboration to achieve the goals of the process of learning a language. They all highlight social interactions as an important aspect of ESL/EFL learning. However, they are different in some points, such as the teacher's role, the nature of the task and the students' participation in the activities (see Table 3.2).

*Table 3 2 Strategies and approaches in teaching-learning ESL/EFL*

| <b>Interactive teaching strategies</b>  | <b>Collaborative learning strategies</b>  | <b>Cooperative learning strategies</b>   |
|---|---|--|
| Interaction is required between the teacher, learners, and others which occur in meaningful ways. | Learners in small groups organise the work for themselves to explore a significant task or work in a project.                 | Learners work face-to-face in groups structured by the teacher who organises the work role for each member of a group. |
|   | Learners work independently and gain assistance and guidance from more capable others to achieve a task given by the teacher. | Learners solve a problem with the assistance of the teacher.   |
| Resources of the activities are provided by the teacher with games, puzzles, and role playing.    | The students work together using their own resources to solve a problem and the teacher can assist if needed.                 | The task and resources are provided by the teacher.  |
|   | The teacher only assesses each group and provides suggestions for improvement.  | The teacher facilitates and guides the students to complete the task.  |

*EFL, English as a foreign language; ESL, English as a second language*

#### *3.3.2.4 A further discussion on teaching/learning ESL/EFL approaches and strategies*

Some other EFL teaching/learning strategies were presented throughout the literature of teaching ESL/EFL. First, Allison and Rehm (2011) suggested that the EFL teacher has to interact with the students for a long time during the school day to discuss various problems, which leads to building a good relationship between them and the students. The EFL teacher can encourage the students to feel good about their English tasks. Moreover, they should choose brilliant approaches that simplify the

knowledge and encourage students to share in pairs or groups, asking for assistance when required. This was emphasised by Lin (2001) who claimed that the teacher who builds good relationships with the English learners will promote better results in English learning. The EFL teacher might help the students use their imagination, especially in reading lessons that have stories or articles. Moreover, the use of teacher planning, brainstorming, revising and giving feedback on the students' development in English speech are also useful strategies in EFL classes.

Second, Krashen (1982), the famous scholar in SLA, discussed some methods and approaches for teaching L2; for instance, he mentioned that in *audio-lingual language* teaching, an L2 learner can mimic and memorise dialogue after practising and drilling. He referred to conversation as one of the efficient activities that help the L2 learner to interact in the target language with a partner who makes the conversational topic more comprehensible (e.g., a language teacher). Malone (2012) also mentioned that the second language is learned through repetition of the grammatical patterns in L2, followed by positive reinforcement when the learner reproduced correctly, and negative reinforcement when they incorrectly reproduced the language.

Further, Krashen (1982) recommended the *pleasure reading* strategy, which is when the student has the option to choose the preferred readings and can skip all sections that are difficult to understand or not interested in. He assumed that “devoting several months to free reading of easier material might be the fastest way to bring students to the point where they can read great literature in a second language without a serious language barrier” (Krashen, 1982, pp. 166–167). In addition, he suggested to *use the language laboratory* with several teaching aids and resources to provide the L2 learners with comprehensible knowledge. He classified them in taped stories, pictures that clarify the meaning and add enjoyment, radio programs, etc. (Krashen, 1982).

For Liton (2012, p. 148), “EFL teachers should endeavour to use various teaching methods, such as mainly Grammar Translation Method (GT) and Communicative language teaching (CLT) or measure to meet EFL learners' diverse needs”. Krashen (1982) also outlined the GT approach as one of the strategies used in teaching a second language. He stated that “most grammar translation classes are designed for foreign language instruction and are taught in the students' first language” (Krashen, 1982 p. 127). Correspondingly, Alasmi (2016) outlined that this method focuses on reading and writing and neglects speaking and listening. It is based on translating the knowledge into and out of the target language. As a result, “students are forced to read word by word, and consequently rarely

focus completely on the message” (Krashen, 1982, p. 128). Then, foreign words and sentences are comprehensible for the L2 learners.

In the same manner, Ismail, Zaid, Mohamed and Rouyan (2017) outlined some English vocabulary learning strategies, such as using pictures, illustrations, visual cues, dictionaries, repeating particular vocabulary to memorise them, and engaging the students in several activities using their imagination to learn new words. For Thomson (2012), the language teacher chooses pictures to help the students understand and remember the unknown words. Teaching a foreign language through visual materials makes learning more meaningful, effective, interesting, inspirational and exciting. It helps the teacher clarify the meaning of the foreign words (e.g., via pictures), which are then memorised in the students’ minds, which leads to them speaking in the target language to identify the name of things presented in the pictures (Ramirez, 2016).

Alasmi (2016) suggested implementing *web-based language learning* where the EFL learner uses and enjoys more web activities inside and outside the class. According to Istific and Kaya (2011), the Internet can be used effectively in teaching a second language. They declared that:

the Internet has four kinds of interactive teaching environments. These are web sites, text-based conferences, audio conferences and video conferences. Among these environments, video conference stands out in teaching a foreign language or a second language. The quality of learning process changes in an interactive environment in teaching through the Internet. (Istific & Kaya, 2011, p. 89).

*Error correction* is another L2 teaching strategy that involves providing the L2 learner with corrective feedback about any mistakes in grammar or pronunciation without explicitly calling attention to the error (Thomson, 2012). One example mentioned by Krashen (1982) is when a student of ESL says: “I goes to school every day”, then the teacher corrects him/her by repeating the correct sentence and saying: “I go to school every day”. Here, it is supposed that the ESL learner will recognise that “s” could not be used with the first person. Likewise, Ellis (1989) found out that the L2 learners welcome the correction from the teacher for their mistakes, as this will help to enable them to perform correctly in the target language.

To date, many recent qualitative studies have investigated second language learning in light of a sociocultural approach to show that social interactions impact positively on the process of learning

ESL/EFL. However, rare are studies that encounter the process of English speech development through social interactions in English practices among children of primary schools in countries that speak languages other than English, such as Saudi Arabia. Some studies even addressed the issue of SLA from a sociocultural view (Donato, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Ohta, 1995, 2001), although no one directly attempts to investigate the phenomenon of the English speech development of students when participating in English activities, particularly in a country which speaks a different language than English. Tarone (2007) declared that there is a need for more studies that examine the development of an L2 learner's speech who interacts with others who speak that language.

As mentioned previously, there is a lack of proficiency in the use of English for Saudi students graduating from intermediate and secondary schools. Therefore, the Saudi MOE has made changes to English education in the country and outlined objectives for teaching EFL, which highlight enabling the students to learn to communicate with others worldwide. Aligned with the MOE demands, this research study applies CHT to examine the English speech development of Saudi students through exploring the implemented strategies for teaching EFL in primary schools. The investigations show that some developmental conditions may be created by the English teachers to help the primary school students improve their English speech through communication and interactions with others in social environments. However, before I discuss ESL/EFL teaching/learning approaches, it is notable that the contemporary approaches and strategies for teaching ESL/EFL from a sociocultural point of view need to be explored. As reviewed, studies conducted in the field of teaching/learning EFL/ESL have investigated the process of learning/acquiring ESL based on a sociocultural perspective. Different theoretical concepts were taken into consideration while examining teaching/learning a second language (e.g., scaffolding within ZPD). In the current study, it is important to apply some CHT concepts to study the phenomenon of English speech development of students in Saudi Arabia. Vygotsky's concepts of ZPD and the interaction between ideal and present forms are extensively discussed throughout several chapters to clarify the connection between theory and practice. This research specifically aims to help the English teachers in Saudi primary schools improve their EFL teaching to develop the English speech of students.

### 3.4 Conclusion

This review of the literature provided an intensive discussion of the existing research about teaching EFL from a linguistic approach, as well as from a sociocultural perspective. First, the chapter



introduced the sociocultural view on learning/acquiring a language. Second, teaching and learning ESL/EFL was discussed from sociocultural perspectives using Vygotsky's CHT. Third, the teacher/learner role in the ESL/EFL classroom was discussed. Finally, I deliberated on some ESL/EFL teaching/learning strategies revealed in the literature.

Overall, I concluded by stating that this study addresses the gap in the current teaching/learning ESL/EFL literature by using CHT to provide a theorisation of the institutional practices in English classes with particular relevance to teaching strategies used by primary school teachers in the Saudi context in supporting of English speech development of students. Notably, this research study examines the development of English speech of Saudi students through investigating EFL teaching strategies. Studies focusing on English speech development in Arabic countries are rare. It is significant as this study applies CHT to study the development of English speech as an HMF while other sociocultural studies examine the acquisition of ESL. The theoretical concepts and approaches are used in this study to find better ways of teaching EFL towards developing the English speech of the students in Saudi primary schools.

In the following chapters, I explore EFL teaching strategies used by Saudi teachers to examine the interactions between ideal and present forms, ZPD, and communication with the teacher and peers in the English classes. This cultural-historical study will contribute to improving results in English classes by inviting the students to participate actively through speaking, listening, reading, writing and thinking in English. It is assumed that the English speech of the learners may develop through communication and interaction in a social environment such as school. Therefore, this study investigates this environment (with all aspects of communication), which provides the facilities to create conditions for the English speech development of students. The next chapter presents the methodology of this study and the process of collecting data that help to answer the questions of this research study.



## Chapter 4: Methodology

### Research approach, procedure, data collection methods and data analysis

#### 4.1 Introduction

Methodology is defined as “the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena” (Rajasekar, Philominathan, & Chinnathambi, 2006, p. 5). It helps the researcher identify efficient methods for collecting data and being accurate about the results of these methods. It is a coherent process across the entire research that helps to clarify the research problem formulation, methods of data collection, and techniques for data analysis. The investigation takes place “on basic principles and reasons for occurrence of a particular event or process or phenomenon” (Rajasekar et al., 2006, p. 7).

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methodology that was implemented in this study. The methodology of this cultural-historical research is closely associated with the theoretical framework described in Chapter 2. The different issues discussed in relation to this research methodology include the paradigms and philosophical assumptions, research design, research approach, and the role of the researcher. Subsequently, a detailed description of the procedure of data collection that answers the research questions of this study is introduced. Then, the process of data analysis at different levels of interpretation is presented to answer these research questions:

1. What are the strategies that English teachers use in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
2. What are the conditions that the English teachers create to support students' English speech development in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
  - a. What are the ideal forms that are presented by the English teachers in their English classes, and how do these ideal forms interact with the present forms?
  - b. What are zones of proximal development created in English classes in Saudi primary schools?
3. How might teaching strategies be changed drawing upon the cultural-historical theoretical concepts to support the process of English speech development of primary school students in

EFL classes?

Finally, the chapter concludes with the research rigour and validity, followed by presenting some ethical concerns that were taken into consideration while conducting this research.

## 4.2 Research procedure

Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2006, p. 9) declared that “qualitative research is concerned with qualitative phenomenon involving quality”. The exploratory aim of this kind of research is to obtain the meaning and describe the situation of a problem that involves qualitative descriptive data, which cannot be turned into graphs and numbers as it investigates how and why decisions are made (Rajasekar et al., 2006). This research investigates EFL teaching strategies to find new approaches to teaching that support the development of students’ English speech. The nature of this research seeks facts and further details about the revealed problem using qualitative methods (i.e., observations and fieldnotes, and audio recorded interviews) that enable the researcher to get an extensive understanding of EFL teaching strategies and approaches that support English speech development.

The nature and character of the research questions that seek to find EFL teaching strategies that support the development of English speech and how these strategies might be improved is another main reason for using a qualitative research methodology. In quantitative research, there is a measurement of quantity or amount that the research will be based on and it is important to get numbers and statistics in this kind of research. However, the current research study is qualitative as it applies reasoning and aims to explore the examined situation to answer “how” or “why” question about certain phenomenon using words rather than numbers and statistics (Rajasekar et al., 2006). This current qualitative study draws upon CHT and aims to answer the above research questions through philosophical assumptions and paradigms.

### 4.2.1 Philosophical assumptions and paradigms

According to Creswell (2007, p. 15), “the research design process in qualitative research begins with philosophical assumptions that the inquirers make in deciding to undertake a qualitative study”. It is necessary for good qualitative research to make assumptions, establish paradigms and investigate theoretical frameworks. This study examines the process of English speech development of students

from a cultural-historical perspective. It investigates the strategies and approaches that are used by the English teachers in their English practices and classes to discover new ways of teaching EFL that might support the process of speech development of students.

From a philosophical perspective, the epistemological framework of this study is constructivism, where “meaning is constructed, not discovered” through interaction with the outside world (Gray, 2013, p. 20). It helps the researcher build the whole structure of the research design and recognise the best design for certain research (Gray, 2013). According to Crabtree and Miller (as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545), constructivism characterises the advantage of “the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories”. Thus, the researcher is able to better understand the participants’ views through their stories (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993, as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545).

From a theoretical perspective, I use the CHT concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms, and ZPD as lenses to analyse, interpret and theorise data that examine English speech development through the investigated EFL teaching strategies. The research methodology is then influenced by that theoretical perspective. GRM is where several principles are involved to create a system of experimental tools for the study, which in this case is the process of English speech development (Veresov, 2014). Conditions for English speech development are revealed through the investigations that help answer Research Question 2. Indeed, “without a theoretical frame empirical research results only in a collection of ‘objective’ facts” (Hedegaard, 2008a, p. 34). In other words, we need to study facts and explicate the conditions of establishing these facts by drawing upon the theoretical concepts. In this study, the CHT drives the research methodology.

As suggested by Cotty (as cited in Gray, 2013), there is a relationship between the researcher’s view of epistemology, the theoretical status adopted in the research, the methodology and the used methods (see Table 4.1).

*Table 4 1 Relationship between epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology, and research methods (adapted from Gray, 2013)*

| Epistemology | Theoretical perspectives | Methodology | Methods |
|--------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------|
|--------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------|

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Constructivism:</i><br/>where ‘meaning is constructed not discovered’ through interaction with the outside world.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Cultural-Historical Theory:</i><br/>using CHT, mainly two concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms, and ZPD.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Experimental research:</i><br/>using the GRM where several principles are involved that create a system of experimental tools for the study of the process of development (Veresov, 2014).<br/><br/>• <i>Dialectical-interactive approach:</i><br/>to examine conditions as well as children participation in everyday activities to help to conceptualise the process of development as a whole from a social and individual perspective (Hedegaard, 2008a). The research problem is handled in connection with different perspectives (Hedegaard, 2008e). It includes the Saudi MOE’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perspectives.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Class observation.</i></li> <li>• <i>Teachers’ interviews.</i></li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|---|

#### 4.2.2 Research design

As stated by De Vaus and De Vaus (2001), the research design refers to the process that is used by the researcher to integrate the whole components of the study logically and provide a strategy for data collection and analysis. Its function “is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible” (De Vaus & De Vaus, 2001, p. 9).

This study aims to examine the strategies that the Saudi English teachers use in their English classes. The conditions that may be created to support the process of English speech development of students in primary schools are investigated. Moreover, this research determines new ways to improve these strategies to more efficiently develop English speech in students. Therefore, the study examines a case study, which “enables the researcher to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ type questions, while taking into consideration how a phenomenon is influenced by the context within which it is situated” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 556). Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 544) claimed that a “qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources”. Likewise, Gillham (2000, p. 1) defined the case study as “an investigation to answer specific research questions which seek a range of different evidences from the case settings”.

Yin (1994) mentioned three types of case study: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. This study is an exploratory case study in two schools as it explores how Saudi English teachers interact with students in an institutional context (Saudi primary schools). It investigates the strategies that teachers use through English practice to help their students learn English and develop their English speech. Yin (as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548) declared that “this type of case study is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes”.

## 4.3 Research approach

### 4.3.1 Cultural-historical methodology

The term “methodology” might be used in two contexts. Firstly, a set of concrete specific tools and instruments of research selected by the researcher according to his/her research question and theoretical framework ... Another meaning ... is a general view on methods and principles which constitute scientific knowledge. (Veresov, 2014, p. 216)

As I am using the CHT framework in this qualitative study, it was useful for me as a researcher to answer questions proposed by Toomela (2010):

- What are my research questions?
- Why do I want an answer to these questions?
- What specific procedures do I use to answer my research question?
- If I answered the above three, are they complementary to each other? (as cited in Veresov, 2014)
- Then, what theoretical and experimental tools do I need to answer my research questions? (Veresov, 2014)

Therefore, drawing upon CHT, this research studies students’ speech development and conditions that educators might create to best support young children’s speech development. CHT drives the methodology of the research. Vygotsky’s CHT informs the way to investigate this research problem. It provides the concepts as theoretical instruments, as well as the experimental instruments to investigate the process of development by using Vygotsky’s GRM (Veresov, 2014).

### 4.3.2 Genetic research methodology

The “non-classical” GRM that is provided by CHT to study the process of a child’s mental development is the methodological framework of this study.

#### 4.3.2.1 Overview on genetic research methodology

GRM has two interrelated components—theoretical concepts and principles—that emphasise and reflect key aspects of the process of mental development, such as a source of development, its nature or character, moving forces, main directions, its specific features and results. However, it includes the “experimental genetic method”, in which several principles are involved to create a system of experimental tools for the study of the process of development. These principles are considered the experimental instruments that correspond to certain concepts of the CHT (Veresov, 2014).

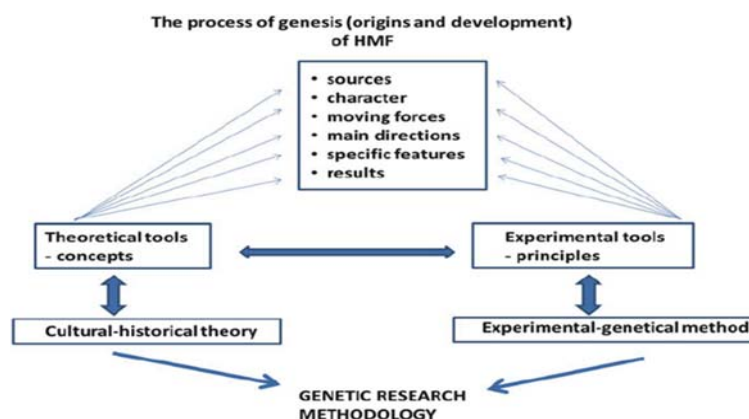


Figure 4.1 General model of GRM (Veresov, 2014)

#### 4.3.2.2 Experimental genetic method

The experimental genetic method is characterised by certain features and traits. First, the target of the analysis is the process of the development in its complexity and is dynamic rather than the object or a result:

In short, the problem of such an analysis can be reduced to taking each higher form of behavior not as a thing, but as a process and putting it in motion so as to proceed not from a thing and its parts, but from a process to its separate instances (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 68).

Second, according to Vygotsky (1997), there are two types of analysis in experimental genetic method: phenomenological and conditional-genetic.

Phenomenological ... analysis takes a given phenomenon as it is in its external manifestation and proceeds from the naive assumption that there is a coincidence between the external appearance or manifestation of matter and the real, actual, causal-dynamic connection that

underlies it. Conditional-genetic analysis proceeds from disclosing real connections that are hidden behind the external manifestation of any process. The latter analysis asks about origination and disappearance, about reasons and conditions, and about all those real relations that are the basis of any phenomenon. (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 69)

The experimental genetic method of analysis provides a causal analysis of a phenomenon, not a phenomenological analysis, to find the conditions and causes behind the appearance of any phenomenon. This method of analysis is “based on understanding the process of development as a complex process of qualitative change” (Veresov, 2014, p. 134). Thus, this research project applies the experimental genetic method of analysis to examine and understand the process of speech development of students by disclosing the real connections and causes behind the external manifestation of such development. Together, theory and method construct a unity of Vygotsky’s GRM (Veresov, 2014).

#### *4.3.2.3 Principles of genetic research methodology*

Veresov (2014) presents five principles of GRM:

1. buds of development (functions in their embryonic stage within the ZPD)
2. interaction between ideal and present forms (social environment as a source of development)
3. drama (social relations appears emotionally and mentally experienced as social drama)
4. developmental tools (in relation to signs and sign mediation)
5. sustainable results (qualitative neoformations of functions).

As discussed previously, these principles (experimental tools) correspond to concepts of CHT (theoretical tools) that explain key aspects of the mental development process. In this study, the main principle of interaction between ideal and present forms was applied in investigating the phenomenon of speech development of Saudi students in primary schools. It considers the social environment as the source of development, where some immature functions of speech within the ZPD were observed through the investigations. The cultural-historical concept of interaction between ideal and present forms is used as a theoretical tool that describes the characteristics of the development of English speech of students. It is also used as an experimental tool to help examine and understand this process of development, which explains an aspect of the source of development because there is no development without interaction in a social context. Specifically, ideal and present forms’ interaction

in a social context is a source of speech development. According to Vygotsky (1998, p. 203), CHT considers the social environment as the source of development, not as a factor:

The social environment is the source for the appearance of all specific human properties of the personality gradually acquired by the child or the source of social development of the child which is concluded in the process of actual interaction of «ideal» and present forms.

Through investigations, this study explores the ideal forms (e.g., developed form of English speech) that are presented by the Saudi teachers in the English classes, and how these ideal forms interact with the present forms of the students (immature function of English speech). Notably, the 9–10-year-old school child may pronounce single English words while the teacher talks to him/her in full, grammatical sentences (as will be shown in Chapter 7). This interaction in a social environment is the source of development because there is no development of speech without social communication (Vygotsky, 1998). It was important to see how the student imitates and interacts with the teacher, and therefore how the present form (immature English speech) interacts with the ideal form (teacher's developed form of English speech). Subsequently, teaching strategies and activities during the English lessons were analysed as interactions of ideal forms (developed English speech) and present forms (immature English speech of students).

The process of speech development of the students was observed in the “acting out a story” activity, which was introduced to the classes by the two teachers, Afnan and Eman, in their English classes. More explanation and analysis is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 to determine the conditions that may be created by the English teachers to best support students' English speech development. One significant issue noticed through data analysis was that the child speaks or writes words and sentences in English while interacting with the teacher and peers until the required task is finished and understood. Consequently, without interaction between ideal and present forms, there would be no speech development. Therefore, it is important to analyse each created condition and its every concern.

Ultimately, it was important to identify some issues in conducting a coherent strategy for this study. First, the process under study was the process of development of students' English speech as an HMF. Second, the learning environment (social context) was analysed as a source of speech development. Conditions for development of English speech that teachers create are analysed with the concepts of interaction of ideal and present forms and ZPD. It is noteworthy to see how the developed form of



English speech (as ideal forms) interacts with students' English speech (as present forms). Moreover, speech development of primary students is examined through conditions that may be created within the students' ZPDs, as their English speech is not yet fully matured (at the embryonic stage).

#### 4.3.3 Dialectical-interactive approach

This cultural-historical research aims to find conditions for the development of students' English speech. It is essential to consider the dialectical-interactive approach while investigating EFL teaching strategies to examine the English speech development of students. This approach aims to "research conditions as well as how children participate in activities. This allows the conditions and the child's development to be conceptualized as a whole" (Hedegaard, 2008a, p. 35). The research problem is handled in connection with different perspectives, including that of the Saudi MOE, the child and the teacher. Thus, it was necessary to take into account "the child as an individual person and see the child as a participant in a societal collective interacting with others in different settings" (Hedegaard, 2008e, p. 10).

#### 4.4 Role of the researcher

In this study, as a researcher, I wanted to "discover how children develop motives, projects and orientations through participating in institutional activities in their everyday lives" (Hedegaard, 2008b, p. 48). Therefore, I gave an explicit introduction to my research problem and the theory employed by arranging meetings with the English teachers in the selected schools. I also clarified the goals and number of visits to make observations and conduct interviews. The aim of my research was clarified so the teachers understood why I was an active research partner who repeatedly came back "into the activity setting or ask the children to talk to them" (Hedegaard, 2008d, p. 203). It was important to create a trusted relationship between the researcher and the participants (teachers and students). I met the teachers and discussed my observations of several classes I attended. I played two roles, "as the researcher and as having a personal relationship to children and adults in the settings" (Hedegaard, 2008d, p. 205). Respect between the researcher and participants was important to produce an efficient discussion, which was helpful in finding out more about the research topic.

During all observations, I was within the context (classroom) where the participants (teacher and students) were interacting with English activities. I observed the English classes by taking fieldnotes and audio recordings of all observed lessons and activities. In cultural-historical research, the

researcher is positioned within the activity as a partner with the researched person. In this way, it is possible to examine how children contribute to their interactions with adults and other children within the family, community and educational institutions in which they are involved (Hedegaard, 2008a, p. 30). In other words, this research investigates EFL teaching strategies and identifies the interactions that occur between the students and their teacher and other peers in English activities to see how this might support the development of their English speech.

#### 4.5 Setting, sampling and recruiting participants

In this study, a purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants. According to Creswell (2012, p. 206), “in purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon”. This research was conducted in two classes of Grade 4 students aged 9–10 years, in two government primary schools in the northern district of the city of Makkah in the western region of Saudi Arabia. The schools have between 400 and 600 students, and the targeted sample was only two classes.

Religious and cultural issues were taken into consideration when selecting the participants. In Saudi Arabia, there are separate schools for girls and boys. As a female researcher and observer, I can only present my research in girls’ schools as it is prohibited to access male schools. As a result, girls’ schools were chosen to conduct this research. Second, this study investigated the English speech development of students in Grade 4 at primary school, as this is the first year of learning English in Saudi schools. Further, all participating teachers were female with a college or bachelor’s degree and above, as is required by the MOE in Saudi Arabia. In terms of the sample size, my study considered a specific number of teachers and students in two schools, Al-Noor and Al-Salam primary schools. There were two teachers (Afnan and Eman) who participated in this study and one class of Grade 4s from each school (see Table 4.2).

Table 4 2 The research participants

| Site                                  | Location              | Participating teacher  | Participating class                              |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|
| School 1<br>(Al-Noor primary school)  | Saudi Arabia, Makkah. | Afnan, 40 years old, graduated from the College of Education in Makkah. Has been an English teacher for 15 years.<br><br>She teaches Grades 3, 4 and 6 in primary school.    | 36 students (9–10 years old) in Grade 4 Class 1. |
| School 2<br>(Al-Salam primary school) | Saudi Arabia, Makkah. | Eman, 38 years old, graduated from Umm Al-Qura University in Makkah. Has been an English teacher for 14 years.<br><br>She teaches Grades 3, 4 and 6 grade in primary school. | 31 students (9–10 years old) in Grade 4 Class 1. |

Then, face-to-face meetings were conducted with the principals of Al-Noor and Al-Salam primary schools to get their permission to conduct this research in their schools. It was important to gain permission to access the selected sites and individuals such as “a teacher, a principal, a group leader” (Creswell, 2012, pp. 211–212). It is necessary for any research project to get informed consent from the participants, who should have a good understanding of the project, procedures, risks and benefits of doing the research (Escobedo, Guerrero, Lujan, Ramirez, & Serrano, 2007). The participating teachers and students provided me with written informed consent before the data collection. Likewise, the students’ parents provided me with permission to observe their children for eight hours in English classes over a period of about three months. My data collection process occurred from 20 November 2016 until 10 February 2017, after receiving the Directorate of Education’s approval (number 171711114) for accessing the sites to start collecting data.

## 4.6 Data collection methods

Methods are the techniques used for data collection within the study framework defined by its methodology (Schensul, 2011). As declared by Gillham (2000), qualitative methods enable the researcher to understand the meaning of what is happening, as this kind of method focuses principally on evidence from what people tell the researcher or what they are doing. Creswell (2012) categorised

the forms of the qualitative data collection into observations, interviews and questionnaires, documents and audiovisual material. Accordingly, to answer the research questions of this study, I implemented interviews with two English teachers and observed two English classes to collect my data (see Table 4.3).

*Table 4 3 Forms of qualitative data collection (adapted from Creswell, 2012)*

| Forms of data collection  | Type of data                             | Definition of type of data  |
|---|--|---|
| Observations (English classes).   | Field notes and drawings.                | Unstructured text data and pictures taken during observations by the researcher.  |
| Interviews (English teachers).  | Transcriptions of open-ended interviews. | Unstructured text data obtained from transcribing audio files of interviews or by transcribing open-ended responses to questions on questionnaires.                                       |
| Audiovisual materials (English activities, teacher's and student's works, group activities that students engaged in the class). | Pictures, photographs, sounds.           | Audiovisual materials consisting of sounds of teachers and students in the class recorded by the researcher or images of the classrooms, teacher's work and students' English activities. |

#### 4.6.1 Observation

Observation is a process of observing people and places in a chosen site to gather explicit information about a research problem (Creswell, 2012). Collecting data for this study using observation was done in several steps. First, selected sites (two classes) were chosen to be observed to find EFL teaching strategies that may help to understand the process of the students' English speech development. The next step was to take a general overview of the sites and identify what and who should be observed. It was important to identify if I observed external, internal or physical settings of the selected site (Creswell, 2012). It was essential to identify the selected sites (two schools and two classrooms) and participants (students in two classes and two teachers) in two schools prior to starting my observations. The observations were done in eight hours within eight weeks for two English classes at two primary schools. The observations helped to capture a whole picture of the current level of development of students' English speech while learning English through interaction and communication.

Fleer (2008, p. 104) explained the effectiveness of video recording in everyday practices and activities to "document visually the practice traditions and the transitions and conflicts between institutions".

Accordingly, video recordings were used in my study for observing students' interaction while doing tasks in the English classes. The students' identities were not exposed or revealed when recording videos, in line with the strict rules generated by the government disallowing the use of video cameras for recording videos due to religious reasons unless permission is obtained. However, the most effective tool used for collecting data through observation was field notes. Moreover, a digital camera was used to capture some snapshots and photos of students' English tasks and the teachers' visual materials used in their English classes. Some English activities were video recorded (e.g., writing exercise); these concentrated on hand movements without focusing on the students themselves, to analyse the screenshots of the videos by drawing upon the cultural-historical concepts.

#### *4.6.1.1 Field notes and photographing*

During an observation, it is helpful for the researcher to use field notes by recording or writing texts and words (Creswell, 2012). I used field notes to write a description of each event and activity that occurred in the English lessons. I preferred to use an audio recording of the sessions and then re-listened and transcribed the sessions in my field notes.

Additionally, after getting formal consent from parents of the school girls to observe their participation in the English classes, I captured photos and short video recordings for them while interacting with each other without showing their faces. This certainly helped me better understand their behaviours and reactions while doing the English activities. According to Fler (2008, p. 104), "for cultural-historical research using digital video technology, is capturing the dynamics of a child's participation in several institutional settings and recording what possibilities this holds for the child's development". Through video observation, capturing students' participation and interaction in English activities allows the researcher to find conditions for English speech development. The analysis of some pieces of data (i.e., singing in English and writing the alphabet activity, which are discussed in Chapter 7) shows that recording videos and making clips are effective tools for collecting and analysing data as it helps the researcher identify teachers' and students' perspectives regarding the implemented English activities. For Fler (2008, p. 105), "digital video observations make it possible to look at these different perspectives visually as video clips and to discuss these observations with participants either informally or more formally with interview questions". Discussing these recorded videos of the activities with the participating teachers helped me fully understand the teachers' perspectives regarding the use of some interactive teaching EFL strategies in their classes.

Notably, video observation during the English class was helpful in determining how the interaction between the students creates a condition for English speech development.

Moreover, some photos were taken of some students' work, which were used in the data analysis of this study to show how the students develop their English speech. Visual methods such as photos and drawings in this research were beneficial to get a clear understanding of students' behaviours and examine the process of their English speech development. Scholars (e.g., Anthamatten, Wee, & Korris, 2012; Holt, Spence, Sehn, & Cutumisu, 2008) declared that the visual methods of photographing and drawing are beneficial to comprehend children's perception while doing physical activity (as cited in Wee, DePierre, Anthamatten, & Barbour, 2013, p. 166). In other words, using photos as a data collecting method is useful to understand and critically analyse the students' engagement and their peer interactions in the activities as one of the main conditions for English speech development.

#### 4.6.2 Interview

The interview is defined as “a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the [life-world] of the interviewee” with regard to clarification of the meanings of a chosen phenomenon (Kvale, 1996, p. 174). According to Hviid (2008, p. 140), “an interview consists of dialogues between two or more persons focused on a specific set of topics that are the most often chosen by the interviewer”. There are three types of interviews that the researcher can conduct to collect data: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. In this research study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants by asking them some open-ended questions to see how they will discuss their answers. “Semi-structured interviews consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail” (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008, p. 291). This kind of interview helps the researcher clarify any ambiguity in the questions (Bernard & Bernard, 2011). For this study, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with the two participating teachers. In all interviews, I started with one general question then moved on to sub-questions. This helped me, as a researcher, to make a cohesive cycle of related points, which I wanted to prove through the responses.

The first interview was conducted prior to initiating the observations with each teacher on the site. In the first session of interviewing, I met each teacher separately at their schools and introduced myself as a researcher. I described the project and clarified different issues, such as the purpose of my study,

sources of data collection, how data would be kept confidential and the length of the interview. Next, I showed my happiness for including them in my research and my appreciation for their participation. Then, I started asking the prepared questions that included some open questions about the techniques and strategies that were commonly used for teaching EFL in English classes. The following are the questions from the first interview:

1. What is your usual language of instruction in your English classes?
2. Do you think it is better to let the students speak only in English while doing tasks or they can use their mother tongue language (Arabic)?  
  
(Probe: Q. Could you please tell me how to encourage the students to do that?)
3. Do you think learning English through interaction is helpful? If yes, could you please give me some examples?
4. How do you present your English lessons? What are the strategies and approaches that you apply in your way of teaching English?
5. If you could make a recommendation to the English teachers, what would it be?

It was interesting to note that each answer for these questions targets one issue, which finally all achieved the same goal of asserting the importance of interaction to develop the speech of the students and learning English efficiently. For instance, Q1 observes the desirable language of instruction in English classes. Q2 helped me find the preferred language that English learners use to communicate with their peers, and Q3 may prove the previous finding when the English teachers explain the positive consequences of using English as the language of instruction and communication. Later, Q4 investigates the strategies for teaching English and other conditions and strategies English teachers employ to encourage the students to communicate in English. Finally, some recommendations were taken through the last questions. Sometimes, I enhanced the interview and used a probe, as shown in Q2, by asking the participants to clarify some ambiguous answers. A “probe” is defined by Creswell (2012) as sub-questions under each main question to elicit more information.

In the second interview, after all the observations were done, open-ended questions were similarly used. These include some questions concerning the researcher’s field notes and comments about the implemented English activities and strategies during the English classes. Here are some of the questions:

1. Do you wish to achieve the best outcomes of English speech development of your students?
2. What is your opinion at this stage? At which level of development are they?
3. How did the students learn to sing in English that videos you showed them?
4. What are the students' reactions at the first time when you asked them to learn singing in a new language?
5. Did they enjoy those practices in English?

I conducted the third interview with the participating teachers to discuss CHT, and to check any questions from the first and second interviews that were still not answered or needed further clarification. It was helpful to realise the teachers' knowledge of CHT and give them the opportunity to discuss its concepts. The teachers had the chance to ask questions about this theory and give their opinions about the introduced theory and concepts. I discussed with the two teachers the current situation of the English speech development process of their students and the usefulness of applying theoretical concepts to experiments through English practice and lessons. I suggested CHT and some of its theoretical concepts, such as ZPD and interaction between ideal and present forms in classroom environments, which may help develop the students' English speech. Some final comments and recommendations were included in this third interview.

In a face-to-face interview, it is possible to tape record the conversation after getting permission from the interviewee (Opdenakker, 2006). I recorded all the questions and answers while I was taking notes during the interviews, to check that all the questions were answered. Creswell (2012) confirmed that the researcher in qualitative interview asks one or more general or open questions and records the answers. Accordingly, in my research, I interviewed the two English teachers in Al-Noor and Al-Salam primary schools for an hour at each of the three visits. I asked open-ended questions that related to my research questions and recognised the participants' perspectives. These interviews were audio recorded for further use in analysis and discussions.

Of course, it was important to prepare and check all of my equipment prior to the interviews, then to initiate the conversations and keep my opinions to myself. Moreover, I kept the interviews on track and checked all the questions were covered in my interview protocol. It was essential to schedule the time of the interview and record the real-time while I collected my data (Creswell, 2012).



## 4.7 Data collection process

I investigated in detail the current techniques and strategies that the teachers used in their English classes and what the teachers did to support their students to develop their English speech. Table 4.4 illustrates the data collection process of this study:

*Table 4 4 Data collection summary*

| Institution             | Research procedure   | Participants                    | Focus   | Visits and hours                       | Total hours |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|--|-------------|
| Al-Noor primary school  | Orientation of the project inside the classroom  | English teacher<br>Students     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students' intentions</li> </ul>  | 1 hour                                 | 1 hour      |
|                         | Observation<br><br>Field notes<br><br>Photographing  | English teacher<br><br>Students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interactions</li> <li>Children behaviours</li> <li>Intentions</li> <li>EFL teaching strategies</li> </ul>  | 1 hour<br>×4 visits<br>×4 weeks        | 4 hours     |
|                         | Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1st interview before observations</li> <li>2nd interview after observations</li> <li>3rd interview</li> </ul> | English teacher                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orientation</li> <li>Perceptions</li> <li>Interactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional practices</li> <li>Perspectives on teaching EFL</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | 3 hours<br><br>×1 teacher<br>×3 visits | 3 hours     |
| Al-Salam primary school | Orientation of the project inside the classroom  | English teacher<br>Students     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students' intentions</li> </ul>  | 1 hour                                 | 1 hour      |

|                    |  |                 |   |                                    |                 |
|--------------------|--|-----------------|---|------------------------------------|-----------------|
|                    | Observation  | English teacher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactions</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> </ul>   | 1 hour                             | 4 hours         |
|                    | Field notes  | Students        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children behaviours</li> </ul>   | ×4 visits                          |                 |
|                    | Photographing  |                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentions</li> <li>• EFL teaching strategies</li> </ul>   | ×4 weeks                           |                 |
|                    | Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st interview before observations</li> <li>• 2nd interview after observations</li> <li>• 3rd interview</li> </ul> | English teacher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions</li> <li>• Interactions</li> <li>• Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Institutional practices</li> <li>▪ Perspectives on teaching EFL</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | 3 hours<br>×1 teacher<br>×3 visits | 3 hours         |
| <b>Total hours</b> |  |                 |   |                                    | <b>16 hours</b> |

*EFL, English as a foreign language*

Table 4.4 shows the research procedure that was structured to collect the data. The initial step before starting class observations and teachers' interviews was to meet the two classes with their teachers to introduce my research topic and the nature of my study. It was important to seek the students' consent through this meeting and discuss their intentions and reactions towards learning the English subject. This first meeting to orient my study was helpful to build a friendly environment to start my research with the participants. The students were ready to be observed in English classes and the teachers were enthusiastic to be interviewed and participate in the study.

## 4.8 Data analysis

The collected data were organised and sorted into different tagged folders on my computer. For example, I organised material by sites, then by type, including all observations, photographs and interviews for each school. Then, I prepared copies of them and uploaded them in several drives. Moreover, I worked on "converting audiotape recording of field notes into text data" (Creswell, 2012, p. 239). Also, the audio recordings were uploaded to my personal computer, then sorted into their categories and date recorded.

In this research, the first stage in the process of data analysis was organising the written observations. All written data were typed in text files on my computer. Also, the audio recordings and photographs were uploaded to my computer and sorted by names and dates. The transcripts and interpretations were discussed with the participating teachers in the interviews. After data gathering, organisation and transcription, the process of data analysis began by exploring the data then developing codes (Creswell, 2012).

At the stage of coding data, as a researcher, I organised data and information that helped me to answer my research questions. For example, the responses for the question: “What are the strategies and approaches that you apply in your way of teaching English?” were varied. Therefore, I classified teaching strategies into three tables. The first table included the most common strategies used by the two English teachers. The second table showed different strategies used, while the third presented the same strategies applied. The next step was to retrieve and examine data by defining the process and comparing the responses of other questions in the interviews. Finally, I had to draw a conclusion by summarising the prominent findings of the study that answered my research questions. In short, the process of data analysis was conducted in many steps:

organizing the data, finding and organising ideas and concepts, building overarching themes in the data, ensuring reliability and validity in the data analysis and in the findings, finding possible and plausible explanations for findings, and an overview of the final steps (O’Conner & Gibson, 2003, p. 65).

It was important in this study to analyse data from several perspectives (such as teachers’ and students’ perspectives) because of the interactions that occur in everyday practices as the social process can change over time (Hedegaard, 2008a). Hedegaard (2008c, p. 181) claimed that “a cultural-historical methodology reflects the conceptions of dialectical thinking and knowledge that are realized by research into social practice”. Therefore, it was essential to adapt the three main levels of interpretation proposed by Hedegaard (2008b) in the process of data analysis, as described in the following section.

#### 4.8.1 Common-sense interpretation

As this is the first level of interpretation, “the interpreter is commenting on his/her understanding of the interactions in the activity setting. This kind of interpretation does not demand explicit concepts, but some obvious relations stand out and the patterns in interaction can be seen” (Hedegaard, 2008b,

p. 58). In other words, there was no focus on the theoretical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD at this level of interpretation. Therefore, my common-sense understanding was used to express my initial interpretations without the orientation of any theoretical perspectives. When interpreting at this level, the interpretation “objectifies” the students’ interactions with the activity settings, where the researcher is not a part of the shared activity (Hedegaard, 2008b). Thus, through the common-sense interpretation, I was able to get a sense of the classroom activities, the interaction between students and teachers, and the communication in the English class.

#### 4.8.2 Situated practice interpretation

This focuses on “an interpretation of the practice in an institution in relation to specific children and caregivers” (Hedegaard, 2008b, p. 58). According to Hedegaard (2008b, p. 58), “the conceptual relations are used explicitly in analyzing the concrete activity settings, and findings conceptual patterns”. The researched problem was explicated at this level by interpreting data from different perspectives, such as the child’s perspective (students in each observed class), teachers’ perspectives (teacher Eman and teacher Afnan), and societal perspectives (the Saudi MOE). The interpretation was based on theoretical conceptions that take into consideration the participation of the child in social institutions with different institutional practices, and the qualitative change of the child’s motives and competence (Hedegaard, 2008a).

Hedegaard (2008b) outlined four themes for interpretation in this level, which I adopted to determine particular themes for this study. First, the intentional orientation, where I read through all observations and interviews to mark the researched participants’ intentions and allocated it as the first theme. Second, I found different interaction patterns, such as the teacher–student and student–student interaction in English classes as the second theme. Third, I identified EFL teaching strategies that were implemented by the participating teachers in their English classes, and the conditions created by the teachers to support the process of English learning. Lastly, I analysed the areas where the children did or did not demonstrate competence of English speech development while they were participating in and presenting their English work.

#### 4.8.3 Thematic level of interpretation

This level of interpretation is directly related to the purpose of the research where obvious relations are formulated by using theoretical concepts (Hedegaard, 2008b). According to Hedegaard (2008b,

p. 61), “the researcher starts with the preconceptions and through analysing the situated interpretations evolves these conceptions into a relational scheme of interpretation”. This study sought to observe the speech development of students in Saudi primary schools, and how children’s speech developed through interactions with adults (English teachers) and other children (peers). Interpretation at this level required me to interpret data using different theoretical lenses, such as the concepts of ZPD and interaction of ideal and present forms. The EFL teaching strategies and English practices used were analysed to identify some implications about Saudi students’ English speech development.

## 4.9 Rigour and quality of the study

To enhance the quality or trustworthiness of this study, as a researcher I addressed all issues regarding ethics, validity and reliability. For this cultural-historical research, I was careful in collecting and analysing data using theoretical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD as the main analytical tools. As a result, the research questions of the study were answered. Choosing an appropriate case study design and purposeful sampling strategies helped answer the research questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It was clearly structured to have research questions that were formulated and answered in the study:

1. What are the strategies that English teachers use in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
2. What are the conditions that the English teachers create to support students’ English speech development in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
  - a. What are the ideal forms that are presented by the English teachers in their English classes, and how do these ideal forms interact with the present forms?
  - b. What are zones of proximal development created in English classes in Saudi primary schools?
3. How might teaching strategies be changed drawing upon the cultural-historical theoretical concepts to support the process of English speech development of primary school students in EFL classes?

## 4.10 Ethical considerations

This project number 0723 was granted from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee in Melbourne, Australia, as I am one of the postgraduate students in the Faculty of

Education at Monash University. Permission to conduct this research in Saudi schools was first provided by the General Directorate of Education in Makkah, which was contacted by the Saudi Cultural Mission in Australia to commence my research investigations. It was approved by the MOE in Saudi Arabia, mainly because I had been an English teacher in one of the Saudi schools. It was necessary to show them all forms of the explanatory statements and data collection tools in English and Arabic languages.

At the beginning of my data collection period, particularly before initiating my observations and interviews, it was necessary to fill in all the consent forms by the two teachers, students and their parents. Orb and Wynaden (2001, p. 93) proclaimed that “qualitative studies are frequently conducted in settings involving the participation of people in their everyday environments. Therefore, any research that includes people requires an awareness of the ethical issues that may be derived from such interactions”. Consequently, I ensured that all participants were pleased to provide informed consent and participate in the study by signing consent forms. I respected the participants’ privacy and did not reveal their real names and identities. I carefully considered how to keep all respondents’ information confidential. According to Creswell (2012, p. 23), it is important through the process of collecting data to “respect the site in which the research takes place” by requesting permission. The permission to access the two school was issued by the General Directorate of Education in Makkah, which was followed by getting the permissions of the schools’ principals. Significantly, the participants (teachers and students), including the principals, believed in the positive impact the data would have on the respondents and society as a whole.

Regarding the issue of validity, I have to assess the quality of the sources in term of four criteria: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (J. Scott 1990, as cited in Bryman, 2004). For instance, I had to check that the documents and data I gathered were clear and comprehensible, which is called the meaning. I was reliable in interpreting and presenting the research data and findings as the “data should be reported honestly, without changing or altering the findings to satisfy certain predictions or interest groups” (Creswell, 2012, p. 24).

## 4.11 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research procedure and methods used to make this research study consistent with Vygotsky’s CHT. The qualitative method was explicated and an overview of the research design was provided. This description was followed by a presentation of the settings and

process of recruiting participants for the study. Then, the data analysis process was described through different levels of interpretation to inform the use of cultural-historical concepts (interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD) as theoretical lenses in analysing the collected data. The chapter concludes with some issues regarding the research quality and other ethical considerations that have been addressed while conducting this study.

The next chapter presents in detail the context in which this study was accomplished, and some data will be shown in relation to teaching EFL, which contributed positively to answering the research questions of this study.

## Chapter 5: Data Presentation

### Presentation of the research sites and Saudi teachers' views about teaching/learning EFL

Educational change depends on what teachers do and think—it's as simple and as complex as that (Fullan, 2007, p. 129).

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the collected data of this research study, which was designed to take place in two primary schools in Saudi Arabia. I begin with a brief description of the sites where this study was conducted and the participants who played major roles in this study. Then, teachers' visions of EFL will be presented. Some data in this regard will be revealed and described in this chapter. In Chapter 6, an overall picture of EFL teaching strategies implemented by the Saudi teachers will be presented as the first finding of this study. Then, Chapter 7 will introduce some of the collected data that was analysed and discussed thoroughly in relation to two concepts of CHT: the interaction between the ideal and present forms, and ZPD.

#### 5.2 Research sites: The Saudi primary schools

As mentioned in Chapter 4, this research was conducted in two primary schools, mainly in the northern region of one of the main cities of Saudi Arabia, Makkah. Two classes of Grade 4 were chosen for observations and two English teachers participated in several interviews to find the answers for the questions of this research study. Pseudonyms (Al-Noor and Al-Salam) were chosen to refer to the two primary schools in this study, which are described in the following sections.

##### 5.2.1 School 1: Al-Noor primary school: Context and participants

Al-Noor primary school is a pseudonym of a Saudi government school in the northern district of the city of Makkah. There are over 190 students in Grade 4 (9–10 years old) in this school, which has a



total school population of approximately 700 students. Located in the metropolitan area, the school building is well organised and provides most facilities that support the process of teaching and learning of several subjects. There is a large central common space for assembling every morning and for the children to play during recess in the middle of the day. However, there is no special English laboratory in the building, which would enable the English teacher to present more English materials to help the students to learn a new language in a well-organised environment with all the required equipment, such as listening and speaking materials. The only laboratory in the school is for science. Moreover, there is a library and other special spaces for other subjects, such as household and family education and arts. The classrooms are painted and decorated with colourful drawings of content from the different subjects illustrated in the Arabic language (see Figure 5.1). There are few words or letters written in the English language in several spaces of the building, as Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia.



*Figure 5 1 Classroom of Grade 4/1 at Al-Noor primary school*

When I visited the school on 25 December 2016, I met the principal to obtain her permission to conduct my research in her school. She kindly approved and enquired about the nature of the study, its objectives and purpose. She invited the English teacher to have a conversation with me in her office after finishing her teaching class. We discussed the number of students in each class at Grade 4 (35–40). Some issues about the failure of some students in studying English after they completed the primary school level were debated, mainly when they enrol in the intermediate school with a negative feeling towards English. We concluded that the possible reason behind this may be because English is a new foreign language, or because the curriculum of English is required by the MOE. This indicates that:

a considerable number of Saudi students believe that learning English is beyond their reach.

They perceive English as a dry and boring subject learned for instrumental purposes, chiefly

to pass an examination. In the view of the majority of Saudi students, English remains largely an academic exercise, and they have little motivation to learn more than what is required in order to pass a test. (Al-Seghayer, 2014, p. 19)

Al-Seghayer (2014) also stated that many constraints are impeding the process of teaching English in the country, including the Saudi EFL curriculum, time of EFL instruction and EFL learning resources. These are some of the significant difficulties for teaching English highlighted in the literature, which show different EFL teachers' views in Saudi Arabia.

The participants from this school are one observed class (Class 4/1) with around 36 metropolitan students aged 9–10 years old, and the English teacher Afnan (self-chosen pseudonym) who is teaching the English subject for the three upper levels (Grades 4, 5 and 6) in the school. Teacher Afnan received her bachelor's degree from the College of Education in Makkah. She has 15 years' experience teaching English at different levels in several schools. She has been teaching English in this primary school for more than two years. She teaches about three or four English classes a day for the Grades 4, 5 and 6 in this school. There are seven periods a day and she teaches 3–4 periods daily, as she stated in her first interview. The teacher and the students filled in their own distributed written consent forms, and the parents were given two days to sign their own forms as they had some points that needed clarification from the researcher. Copies of the explanatory forms and consent forms are provided in the Appendix.

### 5.2.2 School 2: Al-Salam primary school: Context and participants

Al-Salam primary school is also a pseudonym of a school that is under the supervision of the Saudi government, mainly the Department of Education in the northern district of Makkah. This school is smaller than the first school but has all the facilities that create a good environment for teaching and learning the main subjects, such as science and English. In general, there is a large space for different purposes; for example, an assembly every morning and the students' daily breakfast time. Although this school is small, there is a special laboratory for computer classes and another one for English activities. This Saudi school also has drawings and illustrations with some Arabic phrases on many walls (see Figure 5.2).



Figure 5 2 Classroom of Grade 4 at Al-Salam primary school

The principal of the school gave me permission to conduct the study. We discussed the nature of the study and the main goals of improving English education in Saudi Arabia. She organised the timetable for me to meet the English teacher who was very eager to be part of this research. Teacher Eman (self-chosen pseudonym) teaches English for the three higher levels (Grades 4, 5, 6) in the school. She graduated from Umm Al-Qura University in Makkah with a bachelor's degree in social sciences from the Department of English Language. She has taught English for nine years at different levels (intermediate and secondary schools) in different regions in Saudi Arabia and spent five years teaching English in this school. She seriously wants to improve her EFL teaching and attain a higher education certificate in the field of teaching EFL. There were around 31 metropolitan and rural students in Grade 4 observed in their English classes. All the students and their teacher were happy to participate in this study and directly gave their consent.

It is important to indicate that all this information was gathered during the first visits to the sites on 25 December 2016. The first class observations were conducted at Al-Noor primary school on 2 January 2017 and in Al-Salam primary school on 4 January 2017. The first interviews, which were conducted with the English teachers on the next visit, were also helpful to build a general view of these two research sites and the participants.

A brief outline of all visits during approximately two months, which were conducted in the two schools, for the observations of the English classes and the interviews with English teachers are shown in Table 5.1.

*Table 5 1 The researcher's visits at the two schools*

| Visits   | Al-Noor primary school   | Al-Salam primary school   |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Meeting the principal and the English teacher | 25/12/2016<br>10:00 a.m. | 25/12/ 2016<br>12:00 p.m. |
| 2. Orientation                                   | 26/12/2016               | 27/12/2016                |
| 3. 1st interview with the English teacher        | 29/12/2016               | 28/12/2016                |
| 4. 1st class observation                         | 2/1/2017                 | 4/1/2017                  |
| 5. 2nd class observation                         | 9/1/2017                 | 11/1/2017                 |
| 6. 3rd class observation                         | 16/1/2017                | 18/1/2017                 |
| 7. 4th class observation                         | 23/1/2017                | 25/1/2017                 |
| 8. 2nd interview + final interview               | 8/2/2017                 | 15/2/2017                 |

During these visits, different issues relating to teaching and learning EFL were revealed, as can be seen in the following sections.

### 5.3 Saudi teachers' viewpoints about teaching and learning EFL

As mentioned in the background chapter of this thesis, English is taught as a foreign language at different levels of education in Saudi Arabia. This section highlights some of the Saudi teachers' views about teaching and learning EFL in primary schools.

#### 5.3.1 Teacher Afnan's viewpoint

It was revealed in the first interview with teacher Afnan that the usual language of instruction in her English classes was English. However, she sometimes used the mother tongue language (Arabic) to clarify unclear points for her students. There is an agreement between the teacher and her students to use English as the only language in English classes. The teacher usually encourages them to think, speak and discuss using the English language. The students sometimes try to speak in Arabic when they cannot express their own opinions and show their understanding of the foreign language. She assumed that pictures, interactive books and visual materials were helpful for clarifying English words and sentences. Her assumption clearly coincides with Ramirez (2012), who declared that visual materials are considered a powerful tool to help the students better understand the target language.

Teacher Afnan asserted that the young age of students (9–10 years) is one factor that helps them actively learn a foreign language. Students of this age are described as butterflies from the teacher’s point of view. They are eager to learn new things and to work on tasks collaboratively in all English classes. Afnan mentioned the most common strategies she applies in her English classes. For example, she uses active learning strategies like chanting together, role play and acting out a story. She also believes that using English songs, videos and stories are beneficial for warming up the class at the beginning of each lesson. Research and evidence confirm that active learning strategies used by teachers are helpful to engage students with tasks that use the knowledge meaningfully (Momani et al., 2016). In other words, implementing active learning strategies is an effective way to give the students the opportunity to talk, chant, act and interact with peers in the classroom. Chapters 7 and 8 will detail some of these strategies to find out whether they support the school age children’s English speech.

*Table 5 2 An extract from teacher Afnan’s first interview protocol*

| First interview protocol<br>29/12/2016 at 9:00 a.m.   | Researcher’s common-sense interpretation   |
|---|--|
| <p>Researcher: Do you think learning English through interaction is helpful?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, it’s very helpful.</p>  | <p>The teacher agrees that interaction is helpful in learning English.</p>   |
| <p>Researcher: How do you usually interact with your students?</p> <p>Teacher: Usually, they have interactive activities in their books, like ask and answer, for example, they make school, classroom objects with clay. For example, they made pencils, books, rubbers, chairs use clay to make them, and they ask each other what’s this? It’s a desk, or is that a chair? No, it isn’t, it’s a desk, like this.</p> | <p>The students collaborate while doing English activities. She mentioned one example of the students using clay to make school objects. Students ask each other to guess these objects.</p>   |
| <p>Researcher: So, they collaborate while doing this?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, they share together, asking and answering about classroom objects using clay, and Wh- questions or Yes/No questions.</p>   | <p>She assumed that the students who interact in English are able to learn English better. They ask each other questions while doing English tasks by using Wh- questions and Yes/No questions until they find the right answer.</p> |
| <p>Researcher: So, they usually try to ask each other to finish the task or to find the answer for everything?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, because of their age. They are ready and, they are ready to learn, and they are like a butterfly who likes to fly, butterflies who like to fly everywhere and to learn, they are eager to learn.</p>  | <p>The teacher looks happy at her students’ level of learning English. She stated that, because of their age, they are active and eager to learn and to explore. The</p>   |

|   |  |
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| Researcher: So, you, you usually give them permission to move around the class to ask each other? | students are able to move freely around the tables in the classroom to help other peers. |
| Teacher: Yes, they can.   |  |

Notably, teacher Afnan was pleased with her students' level of progress in English learning. Several strategies used in her classes focus on the collaborative work that takes its place in a social context (with peers and the teacher). It was assumed that the interaction helps to improve the students' English speech. This issue was considered when I interviewed teacher Afnan the next time, and the data revealed the students' feelings towards learning English. The students are always ready to learn English; therefore, Afnan suggested having extra classes to practice the English language rather than only two periods weekly. She said it was compulsory to cover everything in the textbook with the current curriculum, which consumes a lot of time instructing the students to enrich their knowledge with more vocabulary, grammar, etc. Thus, there is not enough time to do more English activities such as singing, playing, acting and so on, which are the preferred way of learning for school children aged 9–10 years old.

The literature relating to English education in Saudi Arabia highlights the constraint of insufficient time that makes it difficult for the teachers to practice English through communicative activities with their students:

teachers find it difficult to cover all of the course material and effectively teach language skills ... since some of the lesson materials and associated class activities cannot be completed in a single lesson. This constraint leads to ineffective language teaching and learning experiences. Teachers' goal, as a result, centres around finding ways to cover all of the textbook's units at the expense of delivering effective language instruction with individualized teaching, along with the provision of frequent, substantive feedback for students' efforts and work. (Al-Seghayer, 2014, pp. 19–20)

It means the English teachers need more time to engage the EFL students with tasks to use the absorbed knowledge in meaningful communicative activities, instead of passively receiving the information without active participation in a real situation.

*Table 5 3 Teacher Afnan's second interview protocol*

| <b>Second interview protocol</b><br><b>08/02/2017 at 9:15 a.m.</b>   | <b>Researcher's common-sense interpretation</b>  |
|--|--|
| <p>Researcher: I come back again to do another interview about the achieved observations and to make any other suggestions about your classes, about your students. Let's start with the questions. Do you wish to achieve the best outcomes of English speech development of your students?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, I do. I wish to achieve best outcomes of English speech development of my students, and their books help to achieve the best outcomes because it's full, the book is full of activities which, in which they have speak act, speaking activities, listening activities, they have songs, they have reading stories, my students have a chance to practice or to act out dialogues in their books. They listen first, and they act out a dialogue. So, their books help them to achieve best outcomes "Enshaa Allah".</p> <p>Researcher: What is your opinion at this stage? What do you see? Are they in the upper stage or upper level, or at the beginning?</p> <p>Teacher: At this stage, they were ready to learn English. They were eager to learn English. They were happy with their books. They are like butterflies, who want to fly high in English, and what I notice, is that, they are ready to accept anything. They are ready to practice dialogues, they are to sing, they are ready to read, even if they are not very well. They eager to read, to practice English.</p> <p>Researcher: So, after my observations, I want to ask you questions about some notes which I took. How did the students learn to sing in English that videos you showed them? Because I noticed that they enjoyed singing and watching the English video.</p> <p>Teacher: At the beginning, from the first class I met them, I showed them videos on the board in which we sing together, and we act some movements like a clapping, jumping, spinning. We sing together at the beginning of each class. By the time, they can sing with me, and they can, they love singing, they love that actually.</p> <p>Researcher: So, how long do they practice the videos?</p> <p>Teacher: At the beginning of each class, as warming up and it lasts, it lasts for about 3–4 minutes.</p> <p>Researcher: So, if you say ...</p> <p>Teacher: Sometimes, we have songs within the lessons. So, they have a lot of practising songs in each class.</p> <p>Researcher: So, if we say that they start learning singing in the first week, firstly when you show them the video</p> | <p>The teacher looks for helping her students to develop their English speech. She values the textbook as it covers different activities that help the students to develop their skills (writing, speaking, reading, listening).</p> <p>"Enshaa Allah" is an Islamic expression used for hoping to achieve our goals.</p> <p>The teacher is happy with her students' level of English learning. She describes them as butterflies and draws a nice picture of her students' reaction in English classes.</p> <p>The teacher actively participates with her students in singing which leads to make them love singing in English. Practising songs many times helps the students to acquire the English language in the song. Singing is a way of warming up and practising the English language.</p> <p>The teacher provides the students with songs from outside the curriculum and others from a CD assigned with the textbooks. This shows the importance of singing as a learning and teaching strategy.</p> |



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| <p>at the first time, the next day they come back and they, you found them that they are very well, and singing very well!</p> <p>Teacher: By each time, they become better than the time before, by repeating, by repeating the songs, they are very well, they become very well.</p> <p>Researcher: So, did you ask them if they do any practice at home with others, for example, parents or ...</p> <p>Teacher: I don't ask them but some of the students like to practice at home by looking at YouTube, they asked me to give them the name of the song. So, they can practice at home.</p> <p>Researcher: So, we can say it takes one month to two months along the whole term that they will be perfect, they did perfect!</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, it depends on the words of the song. Some songs take only two classes or two weeks. And other songs take about one month because it is full of difficult words for them.</p> <p>Researcher: So, you see that all of these songs which have simple vocabulary that they can ...</p> <p>Teacher: Do it easier.</p> <p>Researcher: Yeah and imitate everything there and do it very well. Right!</p> <p>Teacher: ... and the songs, I choose the songs which are related to the lessons, like number songs, action songs like jump, run, fly and like this.</p> <p>Researcher: Did they understand each word?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, because we say the words and we do the action.</p> <p>Researcher: What are their reactions at the first time when you asked them to learn to sing in a new language?</p> <p>Teacher: Some, most of them were happy, most of them were happy and they are jumping because they are happy. Some of the students were a little bit shy. But by the time, they do the song, they sing with us, they do the moves with us.</p> <p>Researcher: So, any difficulties when you started teaching them to sing?</p> <p>Teacher: I have difficulties with the shy students. Just with the shy students, I try to make them to follow us, and sing with us.</p> <p>Researcher: So, no students, for example, bother from this song and say "No, no this is difficult, no! It's new language, no, no, it's English, no, we don't like to learn a new language!"</p> <p>Teacher: No, at this stage, they like to imitate, they like to imitate the teacher. I choose songs that have, as I said before jumping, running, flying, swimming, like this.</p> <p>Researcher: So, they like to sing and to move.</p> | <p>Practising different songs needs more time to let the students show their development in English. They can do very well and improve gradually.</p> <p>The students are interested in learning English songs by asking the teacher to give the materials and the resources of the videos, e.g. YouTube.</p> <p>The length of learning and acquiring the English song depends on the simplicity of its words.</p> <p>The teacher chooses some songs that are related to the curriculum which contains simple words. This helps the students acquire the language faster because they understand its words as they act out the song.</p> <p>The students at age 9–10 years feel happy to sing and act the words of the song.</p> <p>Shyness is one of the obstacles confronted by the teacher in English classes, but she always tries to overcome this by encouraging the shy students to share others.</p> <p>No any negative responses or feeling towards singing in English, because the students at this age are still young and like to imitate and do more actions. They feel happy and like to be active.</p> |
|---|---|



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|---|---|
| <p>Teacher: To sing and to move at the same time. They like movement.</p> <p>Researcher: Did they love those practices in English?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, they love it, and they ask me at the beginning, when they see me in the class, they ask me to show them the songs, video songs.</p> <p>Researcher: What about you? How do you feel now and at the beginning of the practices? For example, when you started teaching them this song, did you think that ooh maybe some students will be afraid, or maybe some students will say no, no, I feel bored or bothered!</p> <p>Teacher: As I said before, I see that most of the students are happy, so I feel relaxed. I just focused on the shy students, I help them, I jump with them, I run with them. I encourage them to follow us. So, I feel happy and I feel active when I do such exercises, or such activities with my students. They feel happy and they feel ready to have the lesson, in a relaxing environment.</p> <p>Researcher: So, at the end of this interview, you feel pleased and happy with your students, and their level of development in English! At this stage, at this age 10, or 9 years to 10.</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, I feel happy and pleased. They are helpful actually. They love to learn English. They are waiting for me in each class. When they see me out, when they see me out of their class, they ask me, “Teacher when you are coming to us, we love English, we love you teacher”. They are ready to learn English. But they want extra time, and extra classes because of their books.</p> <p>Researcher: Full of information!</p> <p>Teacher: Full of lessons, and each lesson takes about two periods! And they have two lessons a week and two periods a week.</p> <p>Researcher: So, I think from your speech that this age of students (Grade 4, 9–10 years) are helpful because they are still young and love singing, love playing, all of these things contribute to develop them.</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, they are active, they love to move, they love to learn. They are ready to learn new language or new things.</p> <p>Researcher: So, do you think if we ask the government to start teaching English from, maybe, previous stage or previous grade like 3rd grade or 2nd grade is better!</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, it’s better!</p> <p>Researcher: For the child himself or herself to develop in English?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, I think so. I think we should start from Grade 1 in elementary schools in Saudi Arabia, because they are ready to learn, they are active, they love to learn something new as English language. Even if we just teach them letters, and alphabet.</p> <p>Researcher: Numbers!</p> | <p>The teacher plays an efficient role to make the students feel positive towards the subject, and to motivate them to learn a new language. She assumed that the students always look for her to have another English class.</p> <p>Singing helps to create a friendly environment to learn.</p> <p>The teacher is satisfied with her students’ feeling towards learning English.</p> <p>The teacher highly praised the textbook, but she complains that the content is too long which needs more time to do more practice through the activities found in the book.</p> <p>The teacher strongly agrees to introduce English earlier before the age of 9–10 years.</p> |
|---|---|

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| <p>Teacher: Alphabet and numbers, and some words! So, when they come to Grade 4, they are ready to practice dialogues, read, act out easily.</p> <p>Researcher: Ok, one more question! Have you ever faced that some students try to speak in English when you cross from the class when they see you?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes.</p> <p>Researcher: Have they speak English outside the class?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, just saying, “How are you teacher, hello, good bye!” Like that.</p> <p>Researcher: Ok, because they are still young! Thank you, teacher.</p> <p>Teacher: You are welcome.</p> <p>Researcher: Thank you.</p> | <p>The teacher again asserted that the young age is an element that helps to learn English through active strategies.</p> <p>The students try to practice some English words with their teacher outside the class.</p> |
|--|--|

In the above piece of data, English songs were discussed with teacher Afnan. This activity will be deliberated and analysed in the following chapters. However, it is noteworthy that the teacher recommends introducing the English subject at Grade 1 for children aged 6–7 years old in Saudi schools.

### 5.3.2 Teacher Eman’s viewpoint

It can be seen from the first interview with teacher Eman that English is mostly used in English classes in Grade 4. However, the teacher assumed that Arabic is necessary for use in about 30% of her language instruction, as students of this age cannot understand all English words and instructions. Even though she uses some body language to convey the meaning of some English words and instructions, the students sometimes do not understand her point, so she uses Arabic to clarify. Moreover, she believes the students need to communicate with each other using the Arabic language in English classes because they are starting to learn a foreign language at a young age (9–10 years old). Also, she considers the Saudi context, where the Arabic language is the official language, as one factor in allowing the students to use Arabic in her English classes. Teacher Eman declared that “I let them use the Arabic but also, I have to be like a monitor, say ‘No, do not to say it in Arabic, say it in English.’ For example, if one of the students says: ‘Teacher, she *tektub*’ like that, in Arabic, so I say: ‘No, don’t say *tektub*, say: She writes, and you read’ Like this! You know, correcting them all the time, they need to be corrected” (Extract from Interview 1). It can be seen that Arabic is used in teacher Eman’s English classes; however, the teacher needs to encourage the students to use English instead to practise the language with other peers. However, because 9–10-year-old students are eager and happy to learn a new language, the teacher suggested introducing the English subject at an earlier

age of 6–7 years. She believes a younger age is better for starting to learn EFL as the students are more engaged.

It was assumed they do not have enough time to practice English inside or outside the class as they have only two periods (90 minutes) of English instruction during the whole week. Again, it is clearly highlighted that the English teachers need extra time to provide students with the opportunities to practise English with their peers. For Al-Seghayer (2014), more time is required for teaching English in Saudi schools as the EFL learners are only exposed to the target language during the English periods.

However, the Saudi teacher conscientiously organises their classes and uses techniques that support the students to learn English and practice the language. She highlighted the importance of using collaborative learning in her English classes, which engages the students, so they are ready to learn a foreign language. She uses games, songs and chanting to warm up the class. Also, she recommended building a friendly relationship with English learners as an efficient factor in the process of learning any subject. The teacher can encourage the students to be enthusiastic to learn English. The techniques the teacher uses are also effective. The students like the teacher who advises them kindly. Notably, the current EFL teaching methods, such as active learning strategies used by the teachers, give students the opportunity to be active participants in learning English in Saudi schools. This was asserted by Momani et al. (2016, p. 19) when they affirmed that “active learning strategies shift the focus of instruction from what teachers should do to students to what teachers want students to be able to do with course material”.

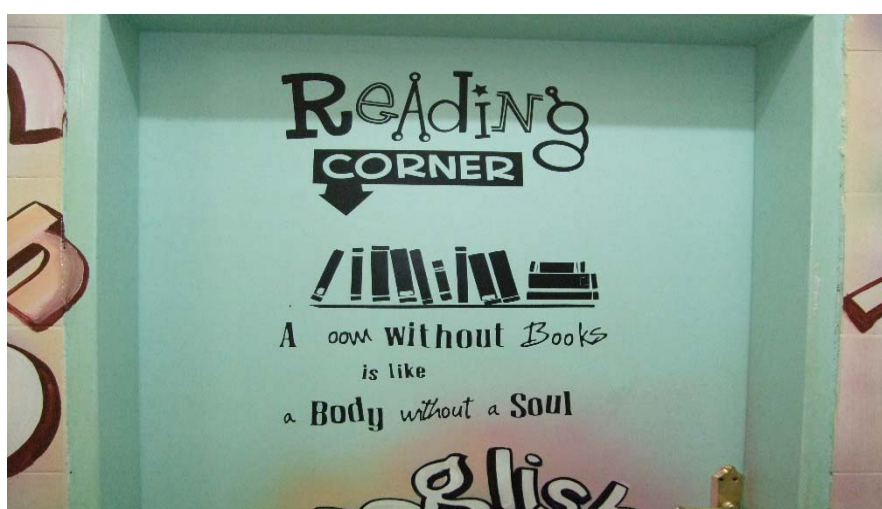
*Table 5 4 An extract from teacher Eman’s first interview protocol*

| First interview protocol<br>28/12/2016 at 12:00 p.m.   | The researcher’s common-sense interpretation                                      |
|--|---|
| <p>Researcher: Do you have any other ways to encourage them?</p> <p>Teacher: To speak English in the class in between them?</p> <p>Researcher: Ya!</p> <p>Teacher: For example, I promise them to give them a gift or, for example, like a prize, if you keep on practising the language with the friends even if I am not in the class, you are good and I will see this in the class if you, for example, if you improved in the language, so that means that you use the language outside the class, and I give her, for example, a simple present that will encourage her to use the language. And I tell them it’s ok if you have</p> | <p>Giving them gifts as a way of motivation to practice the English language.</p> |

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| <p>some grammatical mistakes, it's ok, no problem, but I want you to start speaking and practising the language.</p> <p>Researcher: You give them the chance to start, then to improve. That's good.</p> <p>Teacher: Yes.</p> <p>Researcher: Ok, do you think learning English through interaction is helpful?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, of course yes.</p> <p>Researcher: Ok, give me some examples, please!</p> <p>Teacher: Inside the class? Yes, for example, if I want her to bring something from outside the class, I order her in English. Can you go to my office, can you bring, for example, the marker, the red marker?</p> <p>Researcher: Do they understand?</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, sometimes I use body language, and she understands. For example, if I want her to go to my office and bring me, for example, the black marker, I say: Can you go to my office, got to my office, bring me the marker for the board, and she understands, and I get what I want. If she goes, for example, to my office and made mistake she didn't understand me, go back to my office again, this is not what I want. Maybe I can assign one of her friends to go and help her, go and help each other, find the, for example, the black marker.</p> <p>Researcher: Ya.</p> <p>Teacher: Yes, that's very helpful.</p> <p>Researcher: Ok, do you have any comments about, I think, the time of the class, for example, the period you start!</p> <p>Teacher: The time, the syllabus you mean! The syllabus is not enough! I said that before, two days or two classes a week is just! It's not enough, enough, deeply not enough! We need to practice the language with them, and every day and that's of the book. "Smart class" is full of vocabulary, full of sentences, full of dialogues and conversations between kids, and the students need to practice these every day.</p> <p>Researcher: So, do you think the curriculum is too long, too much information?</p> <p>Teacher: No, it's good. The curriculum is perfect and good, and full of the goals, everything in the book is good. But the time, all what we ask is the time. The time is not enough. It's good if you want to focus on the students. The student is Saudi, not a native speaker, she is a foreigner, so we want to focus on her to acquire the language correctly. So, we need more time. Yes, to practice the language, to teach her.</p> | <p>Interaction is helpful for learning English. The teacher interacts with her students using the English language inside and outside the class.</p> <p>Body language is efficient to clarify some words. Also, assigning another peer is a good way to make the students help each other.</p> <p>The teacher is annoyed about the syllabus as they have only two days of teaching English for Grade 4 that is not enough to practice English language in everyday life.</p> <p>The textbook is full of information which makes it hard to cover every point.</p> <p>It is great to have such curriculum, but not enough time to practice every activity in the book.</p> <p>More time is needed to focus on the students to be able to practice the English language. More time practising the language is better for learning English.</p> |
|--|--|

It can be seen that teacher Eman desires to have all facilities that ease the process of teaching and learning English in Saudi schools. All schools must be provided with laboratories and materials that

can be presented to the English learners to practice reading, listening, writing and speaking as native English speakers. Although Al-Salam primary school is a small building, the teacher has built her own reading room to provide her students with learning materials in an English environment to help them improve their English (see Figures 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5). It is clear that there is insufficient use of language laboratories in Saudi schools (Abdan, 1991). As there are limited teaching resources, the English teachers design their private teaching aids to overcome this constraint, which is less efficient than it could be (Al-Seghayer, 2014). In other words, some Saudi teachers try to create their own teaching resources and materials (i.e., language laboratory), which are unlike the ones that should be provided by the government in Saudi schools.



*Figure 5 3 The entrance of the reading room in Al-Salam primary school*



*Figure 5 4 The bookstand in the reading room in Al-Salam primary school*





*Figure 5 5 The reading room's walls in Al-Salam primary school*

Subsequently, in her second interview, teacher Eman stated that learning EFL through singing is an efficient way to acquire the correct pronunciation of English words. The 9–10-year-old students are young children who have a strong memory and enjoy watching the cartoons in the videos of the songs. She frequently uses this technique in her English classes as she believes it is an effective strategy to support her students in learning EFL and acquiring the language, as the analysis in Chapters 7 and 8 shows.

To sum up, it is significant from the presented interviews of the teachers participating in this research that engaging the EFL learners in communicative activities in the institution (school) is a successful strategy for acquiring the English language and developing English speech. This overcomes the obstacle stated by Al-Saghayer (2014) that Saudi students are not equipped with techniques that enable them to communicate in English classes as they are subjected to drills in reading and copying the learned vocabulary. This cultural-historical research aims to find effective conditions for English speech development through EFL teaching strategies used in Saudi schools. According to Hedegaard (2008e, p. 9), “developmental psychology and childhood research need to embrace the child as an individual person and see the child as a participant in a societal collective interacting with others in different settings”. Notably, the participating students were observed while they interacted and communicated socially with the teacher and peers within the classroom (in school as an institution). Some conditions for English oral and written speech development, and others for acquiring the language, will be revealed through the analysis in Chapters 7 and 8.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter described the sites and participants of this study. The participating teachers' viewpoints regarding teaching and learning EFL were revealed from interviews and discussions. This current study focuses on investigating EFL teaching strategies to find new ways to support Saudi students' English speech development. It explores the conditions for English speech development of Saudi students. It can be seen that the Saudi teachers implement EFL teaching strategies that offer the students the opportunity to communicate and help each other. Some interactive learning strategies and collaborative learning strategies highlighted by the two participating teachers enable the EFL learners to be engaged in communicative activities, which leads to English speech development. These will be further discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Next, Chapter 6 will introduce the common EFL teaching strategies used by the Saudi English teachers participating in this study. Then, Chapters 7 and 8 will illustrate the findings that were revealed in the analysis of the collected data, which were guided by a cultural-historical perspective that showed the conditions for English oral and written speech development.

## Chapter 6

### Most common EFL teaching strategies in Saudi Arabia

Language learning is hard work. The effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over an extended period. As we need meaningfulness in language learning and authentic use of the language, it is useful to follow and create many different techniques and procedures. (Saha & Singh, 2016, pp. 180–181)

#### 6.1 Introduction

As shown in Chapter 3, an extensive body of research in effective EFL/ESL teaching/learning strategies and techniques has been conducted in recent years. For instance, a number of researchers (Allison & Rehm, 2011; Fahim & Haghani, 2012; Javid et al., 2012; Momani et al., 2016; Nunan, 2004; Thompson, 2012) have asserted that communicative tasks prepared by teachers to support the process of English learning are effective strategies. Additionally, others (Essien, 2015; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Nunan, 1992; Oxford, 1997) have shown the importance of cooperative learning in English language classes. Further, ESL/EFL teaching/learning strategies that were highlighted by Krashen (1982), include pleasure reading, error correction, audio-lingual approach and GT approach, were also outlined in Chapter 3. Correspondingly, some EFL teaching strategies applied in Saudi primary schools are discussed in this chapter to answer Research Question 1 of this study:

1. What are the strategies that English teachers use in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?

The next section considers all the applied teaching EFL strategies, which include some English activities that were implemented by the participating teachers in this study.

#### 6.2 Strategies applied by the Saudi teachers in Grade 4 EFL classes (students aged 9–10 years)



To answer the research questions of this study, the researcher interviewed the participating English teachers at two primary schools in the city of Makkah, discussing the implemented strategies for teaching English.

Extract from Interview 1 with teacher Afnan in Al-Noor primary school:

**Researcher:** *Ok, how do you present your English lessons?*

**Teacher:** *Usually I use songs while checking homework, or they can see an English cartoon and which they can listen to a story, like, “Hello, how are you? What’s your name?” Or I have got, or I haven’t got, stories, a movie in which they can learn English. They have extra topics to learn in English, aah, like possessive adjectives, introducing each other, aah.*

**Researcher:** *Slides!*

**Teacher:** *Yes.*

**Researcher:** *What are the strategies and approaches that you apply in your way of teaching English? As you said, you use ...*

**Teacher:** *Active learning!*

**Researcher:** *Active learning. Can you name some of the active learning strategies?*

**Teacher:** *We have role play, TPR (Total Physical Response), games, drawings, chanting together, acting out a story.*

It can be seen that the most frequently applied EFL teaching strategies by teacher Afnan in her English classes are active learning strategies that encourage collaboration and interaction between the teacher and her students, and among the students themselves. Role play, acting out, drawing and chanting together are some examples of the active learning strategies, as mentioned above. According to Keyser (2000, p. 1), “active learning is any teaching method that gets students actively involved”. In addition, the literature has stated some other examples of active learning strategies, such as problem-solving, class discussion, speaking activities, library assignments and peer teaching (Houston, 1996).

Language classes should therefore include a variety of active learning experiences, such as conversations, enactment of dialogues and mini dramas, and team competitions, and reflective experiences, such as brief writing exercises and question formulation exercises (Felder & Henriques, 1995, p. 24).

Similarly, when I interviewed teacher Eman in Al-Salam primary school, the same topic of EFL teaching strategies was revealed. The strategies mentioned throughout the discussion were similar to those used by teacher Afnan at Al-Noor primary school.

Extract from Interview 1 with teacher Eman in Al-Salam primary school:

**Researcher:** *You usually start your class with what?*

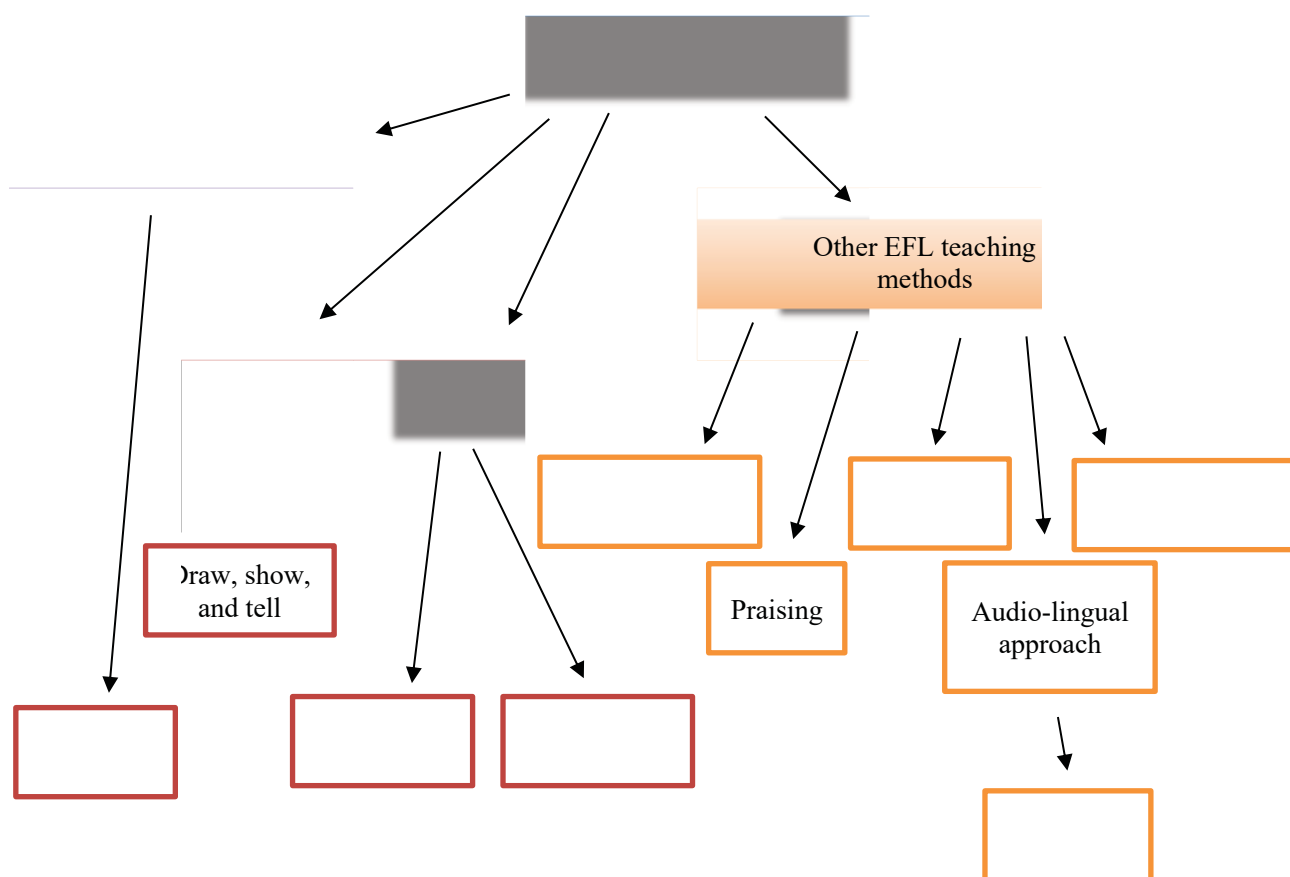
**Teacher:** *Warm up, usually I use warm up. For example, playing game, or chanting a chant, or sing a song, like this. I use certain strategies in teaching English. Yes, we have to apply active learning, and this is very good and helpful for them. I use collaborative learning, for example, learning by play, use some certain games, umm, that's it. The strategies you know.*

Teacher Eman outlined active learning and collaborative learning as some of her approaches to teach English. Active learning is defined in the literature as any activity that encourages the students to be involved in doing things inside the class (Keyser, 2000). Saha and Singh (2016, p. 181) defined collaborative learning as:

the most efficient way to help students attain collaborative skills to become a successful leader in the future while also maintaining the individuality of learners. Collaborative learning is shifting its aim from teacher–student interactions to the student to student interactions. Collaborative learning can occur in the contemporary discussions of a small group, problem-solving activities and face-to-face and virtual game settings.

Teacher Eman mentioned some techniques and activities of collaborative learning such as play using certain games. Language games are used in the English classroom as one of the collaborative learning activities that engage the students in a game to improve their social skills as well as their language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Saha & Singh, 2016). This activity will be discussed later in the chapter as it is frequently used by the participating teachers.

Generally speaking, the data gathered from interviews and observations showed that collaborative/cooperative learning techniques and interactive teaching strategies are commonly used by Saudi teachers in EFL teaching. The strategies implemented by the two English teachers in two Saudi primary schools are shown in Figure 6.1. This is followed by a brief discussion of these implemented EFL teaching and learning strategies/activities, which are frequently used in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools.



*Figure 6 1 Common strategies used for teaching EFL in Saudi primary schools*  
*EFL, English as a foreign language*

### 6.2.1 Interactive teaching EFL strategies/activities

As stated in Chapter 3, interactive teaching means the interaction between the students themselves and the teacher. For Oxford (1997), these kinds of strategies involve the teachers and the students being engaged in meaningful communication.

#### 6.2.1.1 Making dialogue

Good teaching relies on the communication of working together with the pupils. With the teachers support the pupils are given the opportunity to improve their knowledge skills as well as participate in their learning. Dialogue is an important factor for pupil participation. It is through the confirmation of the dialogue; both of the teacher as well as of the other pupils in the class that the pupils can increase their knowledge on the various subjects. (Georgii, 2010, pp. 3–4)

Dialogue is an important activity that encourages students to participate in their classes and communicate with others. It was used for practising, asking and answering in English with wh- and yes/no questions. For example, teacher Eman in Al-Salam primary school selected one of the students to start asking her: “How are you? What is your name? How old are you?” The student answered while the teacher simultaneously corrected her and helped her to make full and correct answers.

Extract from Observation 1 in Al-Salam primary school:

*The teacher asks one of the students to come to the front of the class and she makes a dialogue with her. “Excuse me, stand up please. Hello. What’s your name?” “My name is Aseel”. “How are you?” “I’m fine”. “How old are you?” The student answers: “I’m 11”. “Thank you”.*

*The teacher always stresses on the questions, instructs the class to listen carefully. She shouts: “Class, class”, students reply: “Yes, yes”. The teacher asks them to ask each other.*

Another example is when the students in Al-Noor primary school practised dialogue with their teacher with yes/no questions such as: “Are you hungry?” “Are you thirsty?” “Is she happy?” The students accordingly responded in English. Dialogue is used as a tool for communication in English classes. It is an efficient way to practise using English knowledge.

Extract from Observation 3 of Class 4/1 in Al-Noor primary school:

*The teacher introduces how to answer Yes/No question by saying the answers aloud and focus on the end of the sentences. Working in pairs asking and answering. The teacher asks: “Is she happy?” Then says: “Yes, she is.” Doing the same with other pictures. Still reading and repeating the questions and their answers aloud until the students got the point.*

*Starting Ask & answer activity. The teacher picks up two students to practice questioning and answering about some pictures. The students who participate are happy and proud of themselves because they do it correctly and get praise from the teacher and the class. (Clapping). The teacher helps the students to say the correct sentences and make great conversations. Some students don’t want to be video recorded. They whisper to each other.*

The teacher first provided the students with the English materials (questions and answers) and showed them how to use them in pair dialogues asking each other about the pictures. The teacher maintained complete control of the class and monitored the students while they participated in pair dialogues. She directly helped them and provided them with the correct form of a sentence that was used in the students' conversations. As a result, the students' present form of English speech is developing because of the communicative situation created by the teacher, which helped them to use the absorbed English knowledge for making a meaningful dialogue.

Another significant example that shows the effectiveness of pair dialogue in EFL classrooms is the conversation between teacher Eman and one of her students to bring a marker from outside the classroom. Pair dialogue is used in this example to encourage the students to practise using the English language in everyday life. This English activity will be discussed and analysed extensively in Chapter 7 to discover whether the condition is made for English speech development.

### 6.2.2 Collaborative learning strategies/activities

The literature review in Chapter 3 also discussed the cooperative and collaborative learning strategies that share the same goal to allow the students to work in groups. However, the teacher's role is different in the two approaches. In collaborative learning, the teacher assigns a task to the students and asks them to work in groups using their own resources and to ask for help from a more capable peer. The teacher gives assistance when needed, as the students ask for help from a more capable other (teacher and peer) in collaborative learning (Oxford, 1997). Barkley, Major and Cross (2014) outlined some examples of collaborative learning techniques that are effective in the teaching and learning process in general, such as think-pair-share, learning cells, buzz group and think-aloud pair problem-solving.

#### 6.2.2.1 *Drawing pictures to do show and tell*

Drawing helps the students describe and express their thoughts in English. For example, in Al-Noor primary school, the students described their family members using some written sentences in English. The 9–10-year-old students were able to describe their own drawings in English because they drew simply something they felt, and this encouraged them to write, then speak, using the learned English knowledge.



*Figure 6 2 Drawing pictures combined with English description*

The teacher asked the students to work together and draw pictures, including English sentences they had learned, to present to the whole class. This collaborative activity shows that some students were able to write and speak in English, which indicates a condition for English speech development. The students worked together to accomplish a project of presenting their work through the show and tell activity.

### 6.2.3 Cooperative learning strategies/activities

Nelson (2007) defined cooperative learning as an instructional method in which the teacher facilitates the process of learning. When applying cooperative learning strategies, the teacher plays a dominant role as they organise the groups of students and assign them different roles to play in a team. They can give the students materials and resources to help them to accomplish a given task. The following revealed some English activities from the collected data that show how the EFL learners are instructed and cooperate with each other during the English tasks.

#### 6.2.3.1 Playing games

Language games provide the context for learning and make it interesting for learners. Different kinds of games played in small groups help to lower the anxiety level of the students and encourage shy learners to participate in it. Language games may help the learners not only

to develop language skills but also to attain collaboration skills like active listening, respect, manners, positive attitude, and social awareness. (Saha & Singh, 2016, p. 181)

Playing games using different English words is an activity used by the participating teachers in their English classes as one of the most important active learning strategies to motivate the students to learn a new language. The students in language classes have to know and understand the rules of the game. They have to be conscious of what has been and will be done, as they have to perform some actions and play with each other (Wright, Betteridge & Buckby, 2006). Saha and Singh (2016, p. 185) stated that “many games are competitive and need cooperation or teamwork to solve problems”. They claimed that:

different types of games are available for the teacher to use in ESL classroom. The teacher may use virtual games as well as face-to-face games in the classroom. Face to face games are like Guessing games, Picture games, Sound games, Mime, Fact-finding games, Debates, Jigsaw games, Think-pair-share, Role plays. This kind of games gives an opportunity to the learner to develop language skills as well as students’ social skills, especially in group work. (Saha & Singh, 2016, p. 185)

In the current study, the collected data from the observations and the interviews showed that the teachers used activities in the textbook to play games, such as guessing the characters of pictures (see Figure 6.3). The students were engaged in first playing with their teacher, and then playing in pairs, trying to discover the chosen character. They used the English vocabulary they had learned to form full questions and answers about the characters.



*Figure 6 3 Guessing character game*



Extract from Observation 4 in Al-Salam primary school:

*Doing another exercise in their books. Cutting a page with small pictures of characters in order to play a game. The class make a noise, the teacher says: "Be quiet." Then she makes their attention saying: "Class, class". Students reply: "Yes, yes". The teacher asks two students to come to the front of the class to play a guessing game. She gives them instructions to put the small pictures in front of them on the desk in order, she says (Fatima, Bob, Greg, Taleen, etc.) until they finish arranging. The teacher chooses two students to come to the front of the class and gives them instructions. One of the students choose one character in her mind while the other student asks her some questions (boy or girl? Short or thin?) until she got the right character. Doing the same with other characters with different students. This helps them to orally form full questions and answers.*

Regarding this extract, it is important to note that teacher Eman initially introduced new knowledge about adjectives (e.g., short, tall, thin, fat) by using pictures to clarify their meanings. Then, she taught the students how to answer yes/no questions by saying "yes" if the adjective is compatible with the chosen character, and "no" if it is not. For example, "Is he thin?" The answer should be: "Yes/no, he is (not)". After that, the students started practising asking some yes/no questions by playing the game to guess the chosen character.

Another game used by teacher Afnan at Al-Noor primary school is a game about guessing letters. Students played together to guess the written letters on their backs. This game was used after the lesson of writing the alphabet was completed. Here, the teacher applied this kind of game to evaluate her students' understanding of the correct way of writing the learned letters in an enjoyable environment. According to Saha and Singh (2016, p. 184), "games as a strategy in ESL classroom is considered a learning-centred activity that gives students the opportunity to train and use languages with practical purpose and to use their creative skills in a joyful atmosphere". This means that playing games are a useful strategy used in language classes that encourage the ESL learner to enjoy their EFL learning.

Teacher Eman in Al-Salam primary school used a chain game with her students to practise saying new numbers in English. Extract from Observation 1 of Class 4 in Al-Salam primary school:

*The whole class play Chain game to say the numbers in order. One of the students stand and says: "One." The next student has to say the next number. If the students make mistakes, they*



*have to start the chain again because one of the students doesn't say the right number. The students say: 'Oooo' and make gesture of finger (thumb) points down. The chain was cut twice because they did mistakes in saying the numbers in order. The teacher helps them until they correctly get numbers after 10.*

The students were active and excited while playing the chain game. They tried to avoid any mistakes that resulted in cutting the chain of numbers. Thus, a playing game strategy encourages the class to be active and energetic, as the students enjoyed playing while practising using some English language under the supervision of their teachers. It can be seen that some chosen games support the process of English speech development, such as the guessing character game, as it is structured in English pair dialogues in which the students act as interlocutors asking and answering about given pictures of characters in their textbook. Here, the students use the learned English vocabulary and grammar to form full English questions and answers. Teachers used this game, which involves using the learned vocabulary and sentences of the lessons, to improve the students' skills in using English sentences or words in everyday life and practices. Playing games in language classes (e.g., English) is effective to improve the students' ability to communicate using the new language with each other in a social context. This point is strongly asserted by Saha and Singh (2016, p. 184) when they stated:

While participating in any game, learners have to speak or write to express their point of view or give information and also have to understand what others are saying or have written. In this way, the learner learns to collaborate with each other which help them to adjust themselves to others in the real social situation. Games are one of the best social skill training activities and also an active breaker.

#### *6.2.3.2 Acting out stories and role playing as drama activities*

Acting out is a helpful drama strategy in teaching EFL. It helps build an English environment in which the EFL learners use some English sentences with each other inside the class, which as a result contributes to developing the cognitive skills of the learners, such as reading and listening, and enriching their English knowledge. This was emphasised by Rieg and Paquette (2009) when they declared that through acting out stories and drama activities, English language learner can develop in different aspects, such as reading fluency, understanding of syntactic knowledge, writing stories, reduced anxiety, increased motivation to learn, and new vocabulary learned and acted out. As a result, the EFL learner can practise the learned English knowledge in a social environment through

cooperation and communication with peers, which finally contributes to develop the students' English speech. For Boudreault (2010, p. 3), "in the ESL/EFL classroom, role playing is a powerful tool. It teaches cooperation, empathy for others, decision-making skills and encourages an exchange of knowledge between the students".

The teachers in the two observed classes used a smart board to show stories from the textbook. Then, the students were asked to listen and repeat the story sentences many times before acting the scene out in front of the class. They had to watch and listen carefully, then read the sentences of the story that were written in their textbooks. Teacher Eman at Al-Salam primary school presented a story about two women and a crying baby to prepare the students to acquire the pronunciation of English words they had heard and watched many times. Drilling is a common technique in language classes, which emphasises repeating words and sentences through oral practice (Swanto & Din, 2014).

After teacher Eman finished discussing the scene and the characters of the story, it was acted by three students in front of the whole class, as seen in the extract from Observation 4 of Class 4 in Al-Salam primary school:

*It is time for Acting out activity. The teacher asked the students to come to the front of the class to act a dialogue showed on the smart board. She helps them to read the dialogue and enjoy it. She praises them and says: "Give them a big wow", after they finish. Three other students did the same dialogue and the teacher correct them in saying the sentences of the dialogue. Student 1 (baby): Act crying. Student 2 (woman): "Is she hungry?" Student 3 (mother): "No, she isn't. She's thirsty." Then they listen to the dialogue from the CD. Video recorded (screenshot in Figure 6.4)".*



Figure 6 4 The display of a story on the smart board

## 6.2.4 Other EFL teaching strategies

### 6.2.4.1 *Audio-lingual language approach*

Krashen (1982) identified the audio-lingual language approach as an EFL teaching method that requires presenting the learners with the correct models of English sentences to be repeated and memorised. Presenting several models of English songs to be listened to, repeated and memorised is one excellent example that has been used by the participating teachers in this study.

#### 6.2.4.1.1 *Singing an English song*

It is well known that songs are one of the most powerful resources in language classrooms that can help develop listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. Learning English through singing provides a non-threatening environment for the students (Millington, 2011). The teachers can choose easy, lively English songs that motivate the students to act or dance while singing. As a result, it increases the positive attitude of the students towards learning a new language without any feelings of fear (Saricoban & Metin, 2000). The foreign language learners enjoy singing songs instead of following a set curriculum, which leads to developing their second language learning (Millington, 2011).

According to Konishi (2007, p. 270), “creating songs and using chants with familiar nursery melodies is a good strategy for making children aware of rhythm and words”. The Chinese girl who was observed in Konishi’s study developed her English vocabulary with enthusiasm and enjoyment through singing songs every day in her class (Konishi, 2007). Millington (2011, p. 135) declared that “songs can provide the opportunity for vocabulary practice”. Therefore, the teacher of EFL must carefully select suitable songs with an appropriate vocabulary and simple sentences to be learned and memorised (Millington, 2011).

In the current research project, the teachers in the two primary schools presented videos of different English songs that combined animated pictures, cartoons and lyrics. The students were supposed to listen carefully to the songs at the beginning of the semester then, with practice, the teachers assumed they would become more familiar with the English context, vocabulary and pronunciation. Briefly, the teachers tried to encourage the oral production of the 9–10-year-old EFL learners. The collected data, through observations of the two classes in two primary schools and interviews with the two

English teachers, showed that even though some of the students felt anxious learning a new language—as they are at the first level (Grade 4) of learning EFL—they could successfully sing those English songs after practising many times. This was clearly revealed in the next part of the second interview with teacher Eman.

Extract from Interview 2 with teacher Eman in Al-Salam primary school:

**Researcher:** *Yeah! What are their reactions at the first time when you asked them to learn singing in a new language?*

**Teacher:** *They were excited. Yes, they were happy. They want, they love English and want to learn. There is a strong desire to learn English.*

**Researcher:** *So, no one felt afraid?*

**Teacher:** *No, at the beginning, may be some. They said: “Teacher it’s difficult!” I said: “No, just listen. I want you to listen once, twice, as much as you can and then you can do it well and know the vocabularies and the words.” They listened to me, and they listened to the music like ten times. Mashaallah, they did well.*

The extracted data above shows that the EFL learners’ first impression of learning a new language is reasonably negative. This is probably because the new knowledge and foreign words (English) they learn are quite different from their native language (Arabic). However, the English teacher’s role here is to create conditions that make them feel comfortable and relaxed in learning this new language. As the students are young, the teacher engages them in singing an interesting English song, which is combined with illustrated vocabularies and animations to ease the process of discovering the meaning of the song’s words. She asked them to listen to the song more than one time, because she believes the students can acquire the new vocabulary and sing the English song after many drills. Hence, repetition is one strategy to learn vocabulary through rote learning:

In general language strategy research, repetition is a type of strategy that is frequently used by second language learners. When using learning strategies in vocabulary learning, there have been seen usually many strategy terms, such as memorization and repetition that relate to RL (rote learning) strategies. These strategies are interchangeably used in language learning strategy area. (Sinhaneti & Kyaw, 2012, pp. 987–988)

So, through presenting an enjoyable English song and engaging the students to repeatedly sing together, the teacher created an environment that makes the students feel less anxious and more motivated to sing chorally and watch each other while doing that English activity. Millington (2011, p. 136) states that “songs, in particular choral singing, can help to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere that makes the classroom a non-threatening environment. By reducing anxiety, songs can help increase student interest and motivate them to learn the target language”. Once the students feel motivated and engaged in learning English through English songs, they will easily improve their listening and pronunciation skills, as well as enrich their knowledge with more English vocabulary (Millington, 2011).

In this study, both teachers used a variety of songs to warm up the classes at the beginning of each period and while doing some English tasks. They need to check after the students’ oral production and make the periods active and enjoyable. The students were conscious and able to say the vocabulary with a recognition of the context of the song, as the illustrations and pictures strongly contribute to easing the process of their understanding.

For example, teacher Afnan at Al-Noor primary school played the song of the English alphabet to refresh her students’ minds about the learned letters by applying an enjoyable approach to memorise the new letters.

Extract from Observation 2 for Class 4/1 in Al-Noor primary school:

*The teacher asks the class to go back to the pupils’ book to do the alphabet, listen and say. Students listen silently. Then, they start reading with the reader quietly. Then, they start reading and singing aloud all together. The teacher corrects them at the end of the song with specific rhythm. She plays the CD again and asks them to listen again silently. Listening again. Students sing aloud following the letters on their books. Listening again, the teacher says aloud, “Listen” and the students are singing in low voice. The teacher says: “1,2,3 start!” Students sing together aloud in good manner.*

In general, the school age children (9–10 years old) were excited to sing in English and felt happy to do that with their teachers. It was interesting to find that singing is an effective way to help students learn and memorise some English words. Murphy (1992) declared that we can easily remember quite long portions of a language when we learn it from songs as they stick in our memory. But is it enough in learning EFL to remember the learned words without the effective use of this knowledge to develop the English speech of the learners? This critical point will be discussed and explored carefully in the

next chapter.

#### *6.2.4.2 Using the body language and hand movements*

Using a body language is a non-verbal communication that is used in English classes. Through body language, which includes hand movements and facial expressions, the language teachers easily convey the meaning of new English words. Konishi (2007, p. 271) claimed that “the teacher’s use of body language, along with verbal expressions, will help promote children’s understanding”. In this research study, both English teachers in the two schools frequently used this technique to transform the meaning of some new vocabulary in a lesson about adjectives such as big, small, tall and short. The students quickly recognised the meaning of the new words when the teachers used hand movements and gestures. They then used them to answer their teachers’ questions when she presented a variety of objects or pictures and asked her students to describe them using the learned vocabulary. Here, the teacher interacted with her students and encouraged them to use what they had learned to form different responses and ask each other.

#### *6.2.4.3 Using media and visual materials*

Technology plays an effective role in language education as it provides educators with several teaching aids. Teachers nowadays can implement several visual aids in their teaching. Ramirez (2012, p. 5) proclaimed that:

visual aids, when integrated into the lesson plan through media, attract students’ attention to the topic presented in the class, enhance and facilitate comprehension of grammar and language, increase students’ motivation, as well as help students to memorize the new vocabulary and structures.

The English teachers who participated in this study preferred using the CD combined with the textbook to show a variety of English exercises and activities on the smart board. It was important to listen to the native speakers and practise reading and repeating after them through different activities such as dialogues, stories and songs. It is also helpful to share the answers of some exercises with the whole class and correct them rather than wasting time checking each individual’s work. This is used for teaching writing English letters and sentences, as lines are illustrated neatly and the instructions are written and read clearly. The teacher shows her lesson on the smart board and involves the students



in several exercises on the board. For instance, when the students were engaged in doing an exercise filling the correct number in the blanks, the teacher encouraged them to do it on the board while she played the CD.

Extract from Observation 1 of Class 4 in Al-Salalm primary school:

*The teacher asks the class to open their books for doing the exercise. She plays the CD and asks some of the students to write the heard numbers, e.g. "I am ... 12". She repeats number 12 many times until the student write it.*

It is the technology that brings fun into the lesson and media proves to be one of the most important teaching aids in the EFL classes that helps the learners be active and excited.

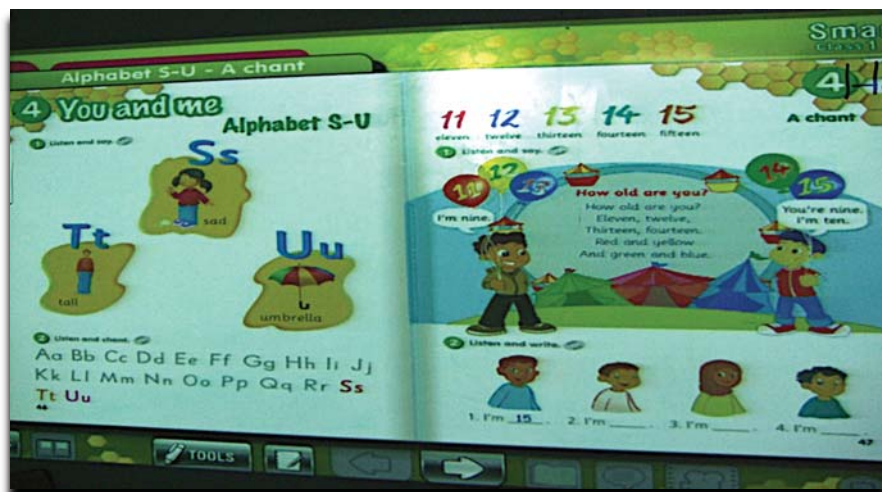


Figure 6 5 Playing the CD on the smart board at Al-Salam primary school

Further, visual materials such as pictures and cards are frequently used in foreign language education. Felder and Henriques (1995, p. 28) recommended that language teachers “use photographs, drawings, sketches, and cartoons to illustrate and reinforce the meanings of vocabulary words”. In relation to this study, it can be seen that some English teachers in Saudi primary schools use flash cards and pictures to clarify the meaning of the new English vocabulary. For example, teacher Afnan at Al-Noor primary school provided her class with flash cards combined with pictures of new words (boy and girl) to introduce the use of pronouns (he and she). The students could connect the pictures with the written words, which was helpful to learn and memorise new vocabulary and understand the grammar in this EFL classroom.



Figure 6.6 Flash cards combined with pictures used by teacher Afnan

Teacher Afnan mostly uses pictures and flash cards in her English classes to introduce new vocabulary. This technique is effective for enriching the students' knowledge of vocabulary as they make a connection between the words and the pictures.

Extract from Observation 1 for Class 4/1 in Al-Noor primary school:

*The teacher shows pictures express feelings & adjectives, e.g. thirsty, sad, hungry ... She firstly shows a picture of (Sad) and asks the students, "What can you see?" The students raise their hands and say "Abla" which means teacher. The teacher asks them to just raise their hands without saying Abla. She chooses one of the students to get the answer, she repeats the answer with strong voice and asks them to repeat the word together. Doing the same with other words (thirsty, happy, big, small).*

Flash cards and pictures of adjectives (e.g., sad, happy, small, big) effectively ease the process of learning new English vocabulary, which then can be used successfully to answer the teacher's questions about the shown pictures. This can help to develop the communicative skill to ask and answer about the English words the students have learned. As a result, the students' English speech develops by practising using these words in writing or speaking with each other.

#### 6.2.4.4 Using worksheets

During the period of collecting data through observations, one of the participating teachers used English worksheets to evaluate her students' English knowledge. The worksheets were distributed among the students for some writing and spelling activities in groups and individually (see Figure



6.5). The teacher's role was to check them and give the students some clarification about unclear tasks.

Extract from Observation 4 of Class 4 in Al-Salam primary school:

*The teacher distributes sheets with sentences and asks the students to copy them. She says aloud: "I am happy." Students made noise and the teacher asks them to be quiet. Students asks where and how to write. The teacher moves around checking their writing and telling them to write correctly and check writing their names. Doing another exercise individually about "a-an" and giving them some explanation and how to do the task by putting a circle on the right answer. The teacher asks if they finished, correcting them with some clarifications about vowel letters.*

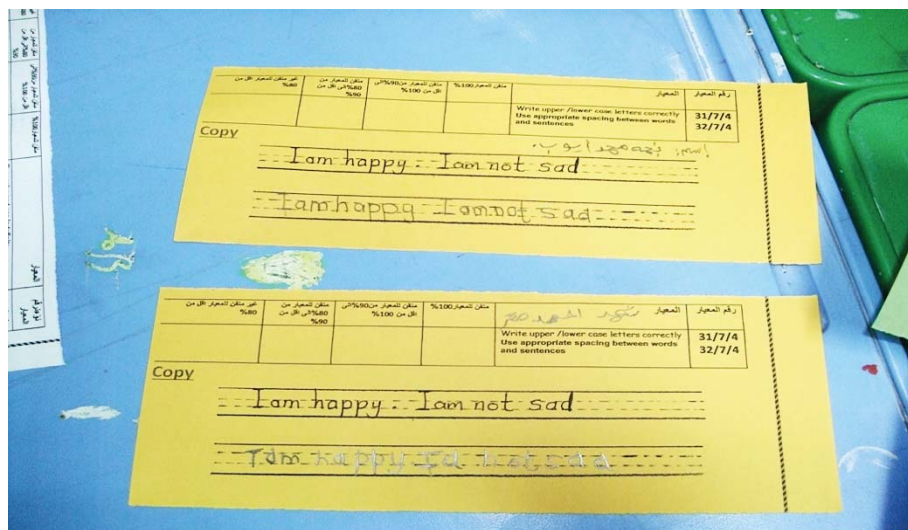


Figure 6 7 A worksheet sample of writing activity

Through assessing worksheets, the teacher can estimate the student's level of development in learning English skills and knowledge. She can evaluate her student's level of improvement in English writing skill by preparing individual or group tasks. Teacher Eman often uses worksheets in her English classes. In the mentioned extract, she used the worksheets to examine her students' previous knowledge in writing the alphabet.

#### 6.2.4.5 Praising encourages the learners to learn EFL

The idea that students need positive verbal feedback is a basic truth for most teachers. We've all probably given comments like 'nice singing' or 'you've never played better' and noticed the effect our positive comments had on the attitudes, behaviours, and actions of students in our classes. We typically classify these positive comments as "praise". (Bartholomew, 1993, p. 40)

Praising encourages the students to do better in EFL classes: "When we tell students that they have done well in class, we may be intending to show interest in them as people ... to evaluate their work, and to support and reinforce certain behaviours" (Bartholomew, 1993, p. 1). In the current research study, the collected data show that the two teachers used different ways of praising to encourage their students. At Al-Noor primary school, the English teacher Afnan usually says nice expressions such as excellent, good and very good. She also pastes some stickers and stars on the particular student's work. Praise is also used to motivate the students to learn and speak in English.

Extract from Interview 1 with teacher Afnan:

**Researcher:** *Ok, how do you encourage them to speak only in English?*

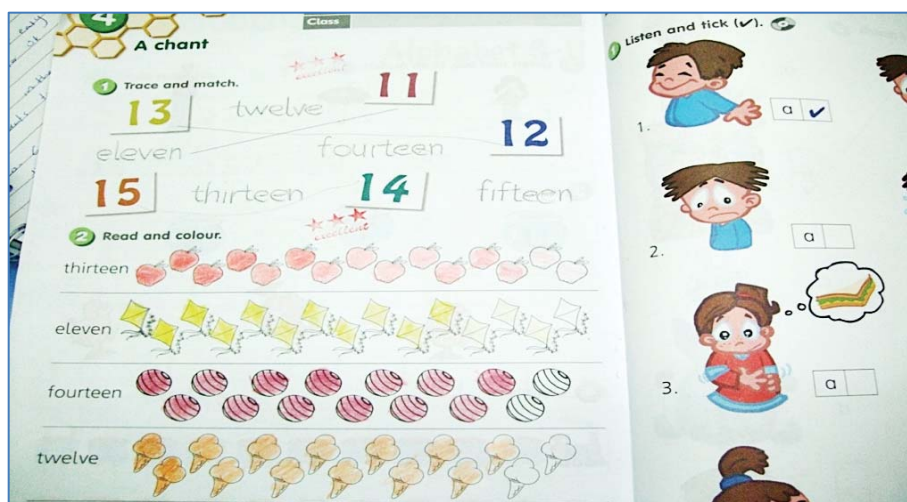
**Teacher:** *By using stars, stickers, encouraging expressions, writing their names inside a big star, giving them some gifts.*

Similarly, the English teacher Eman in Al-Salam primary school uses the same English expressions in a fun way that encourages the whole class to praise their friends by asking them to give "A big wow" to the brilliant peers. She mostly uses this to encourage the students to be more active in completing English tasks.

Extract from Observation 4 in Al-Salam primary school:

*Doing exercise to answer items by mark the right answer while listening to the CD. Pointing the correct answers on the board until they finish the whole exercise. One of the students said: "Give them a big wow". The teacher says: "Give yourself a big wow".*

Teacher Eman usually stamps the student's work and draws signs on the assessment board to create competition between different groups of students to achieve strong results in English activities (see Figures 6.8 and 6.9). Teachers also praise the students for their good behaviour and for being cooperative and active while doing the English tasks.



*Figure 6 8 Stamps as a way of praising the student's great work*



*Figure 6 9 Teacher Eman's assessment board that used to encourage the students*

It can be seen that praising is one method to encourage the students to learn a new language; however, the EFL teacher needs other techniques to support the process of English learning and speech development. Nice comments help create a friendly environment for EFL learning and support the development of a confident student who is inspired to learn in English classes.

## 6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, Research Question 1 has been answered as different EFL teaching strategies, including some English activities, have been presented (see Table 6.1). All these strategies and activities are helpful in language classes. Learning English through playing games, drama and acting out a story,

show and tell, and participating in pair dialogues are helpful to develop the EFL learner's social and learning skills. However, other EFL teaching strategies, such as using body language and movements, media and visual materials, worksheets and praise, are also effective EFL teaching strategies implemented by the Saudi English teachers in primary schools to support the students' EFL learning. It can be affirmed that interactive teaching strategies and cooperative and collaborative learning strategies/activities contribute positively to building an active English environment for the EFL learners, specifically for 9–10-year-old students in Saudi primary schools.

*Table 6 1 A summary of EFL teaching strategies and activities used by the participating teachers*

| <b>EFL teaching strategies</b> | <b>English activities</b>   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Interactive teaching</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making pair dialogue</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Cooperative learning</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting out a story</li> <li>• Playing games</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Collaborative learning</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing pictures to do show and tell</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Other strategies</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singing English songs (audio-lingual approach)</li> <li>• Praising the EFL learners</li> <li>• Using worksheets</li> <li>• Media and visual materials</li> <li>• Using body language and hand movements</li> </ul> |

*EFL, English as a foreign language*

Notably, strategies such as using media and visual materials, praise and worksheets are important in supporting the students' EFL learning, as they are used to introduce and practise the English knowledge that improves the students' English skills. However, interactive teaching and collaborative and cooperative learning strategies/activities are effective in developing the EFL learners' English speech. The students communicate with each other in several English practices, as will be shown in the next chapters.

## Chapter 7

### EFL teaching strategies: Conditions for English oral speech development

Speech is a central function of social connection and cultural behaviour of the individual. For this reason, the history of the individual is especially instructive in the transition from external to internal, from social to individual function and occurs here with particular clarity.

(Vygotsky, 1997, p. 104)

#### 7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 outlined the most common EFL teaching strategies used by Saudi teachers in their English classes, which answered Research Question 1:

1. What are the strategies that English teachers use in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?

In this chapter, some of the implemented EFL teaching strategies will be represented and the observed English activities will be analysed from the perspective of the conditions for the development of English speech of Saudi students. For this analysis, the cultural-historical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD are used as analytical tools. This leads to answering Research Question 2 and its subsidiary questions:

2. What are the conditions that the English teachers create to support students' English speech development in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
  - a. What are the ideal forms that are presented by the English teachers in their English classes, and how do these ideal forms interact with the present forms?
  - b. What are zones of proximal development created in English classes in Saudi primary schools?

Some English activities analysed in this chapter reveal some concerns about English language acquisition and learning, and English speech development. For Krashen (1982), there is a distinction between foreign language acquisition and learning. He outlined that foreign language acquisition is a subconscious process in which the children pick up the language without knowing its grammatical rules. Language acquisition can be described as natural or informal learning, where the children use the acquired language to communicate with others, without knowing if it is in the right form (Krashen, 1982). Conversely, foreign language learning is a conscious process that results from direct instruction on the rules of the language, which leads to a conscious knowledge of the language and grammar. Krashen (1982, p. 10) stated that “learning is ‘knowing about’ a language, known to most people as ‘grammar’, or ‘rules’. Some synonyms include formal knowledge of a language, or explicit learning”. That is, in English language learning, the EFL learners are taught the basic knowledge of English that focuses on language skills, including reading, writing, listening and speaking.

In line with this, the EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia are the only environment in which the students are exposed to English (Ashraf, 2018). The EFL learners receive direct instruction in the rules of the English language, as English is a subject to be learned in institutions, schools, colleges and universities. The collected data in this research study show that the students learn the rules of the English language as well as knowledge of the language that includes language skills, vocabulary and pronunciation. For instance, in Chapter 6, the presented EFL teaching strategies show that English teachers use several teaching resources to present the English knowledge in textbooks. The students listen to native speakers on CDs, watch English videos on the screen, and listening to English songs. As a result, the students learn the grammatical rules of English and acquire the words and pronunciations, as they are exposed to the English materials presented by native speakers. This research focuses on English speech development and what conditions are needed to support this process. The analysis of some English activities observed in this study indicates that the EFL learners can use the learned and acquired English language to communicate with others who speak and write in English to develop English speech, because speech is a means of social communication (Vygotsky, 1998). For Vygotsky (1994), the cultural environment where the child communicates with others is the source of his/her psychological development, which includes second language learning. As a cultural tool, language is used for communicating with others, so speech develops according to the general genetic law of cultural development (Vygotsky, 1987).

It will be proved that there are two important, interrelated aspects to support the English speech of the students: English language learning/acquisition and English speech development. The EFL learners acquire English words and pronunciation and learn the grammatical rules to study the English language (language acquisition and learning). Yet, the EFL learners use the English language to



communicate with others who speak English, and by doing this they develop English speech, because speech is a means of social communication (Vygotsky, 1998). The language is the cultural tool that is used for this communication (Vygotsky, 1997). The knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary does not automatically lead to the development of English speech. Therefore, students who learn English should have opportunities to use the language to socially communicate with their teacher and peers, which leads to developing their English speech. For Vygotsky (1998, p. 272–273), “speech is a means of social intercourse. It arises from the need for means of communication” and this “communication is brought into development by an act of personal contact”.

The Saudi MOE highlights a need for Saudi students to be able to use English for communicating internationally for Islamic, academic and economic purposes (Elyas & Badawood, 2015). Aligning with this demand, this research was conducted to find effective EFL teaching strategies that create conditions to support the development of the English speech of students in Saudi primary schools. The students need to use the English language they have learned as a tool for communication with their teachers and peers within the class, as it is the first environment that provides them with communicative activities for developing their English speech. Later, the students will be able to interact effectively using English with others in the external world.

In Chapters 7 and 8, the development of two types of speech (oral and written) was taken into consideration when analysing the EFL teaching strategies used by the teachers. An analysis of the conditions for the development of English oral speech that the Saudi teachers create using various strategies is the focus of this chapter. Vygotsky (1987, p. 277) proposed that “in oral speech, we generally move from the more stable and constant element of sense—from the word’s meaning—to its fluid zones, that is, to its sense as a whole”. He argued that “only in oral speech do we find the kind of conversation where ... speech is only a supplement to the glances between the interlocutors” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 271). In other words, oral speech is used to express opinions and thoughts using sound, vocabulary, grammar and intonation. The analysis of several English activities in this chapter demonstrates that English oral speech is shown in conversation, discussion and dialogues between the speakers (teacher–student or student–student) using sounds and utterances of English words and sentences through meaningful communications.

The following section introduces the findings revealed from the analysis of data gathered through class observations and teachers’ interviews in Al-Noor and Al-Salam primary schools in Saudi

Arabia. I begin to introduce EFL teaching strategies with the corresponding English activities that are applied by the participating teachers in this study.

## 7.2 Audio-lingual approach

As shown previously, in the audio-lingual approach the EFL learners are presented with the correct English models to be practised and memorised (Krashen, 1982). The next section considers singing an English song, which was implemented by the English teachers in Al-Noor and Al-Salam primary schools as one activity that corresponds with this approach. This is followed by an analysis that shows how the teachers can create conditions for English oral speech development of students using interactive techniques such as English songs in their classes.

### 7.2.1 Implementing English songs in EFL classrooms

According to Millington (2011), songs can be used in foreign language classes as an interesting strategy to develop the language learning of young children. He declared that:

Most children enjoy singing songs, and they can often be a welcome change from the routine of learning a foreign language. For the teacher, using songs in the classroom can also be a nice break from following a set curriculum. Songs can be taught to any number of students and even those teachers with the most limited resources can use them effectively. Songs can play an important role in the development of language in young children learning a second language (Millington, 2011, p. 134).

In the current study, the two participating teachers used singing English songs as an attractive teaching activity in their English classes. They used them in several situations, such as a technique for warming up the class, as a break while the students are busy doing several English tasks, and as a way of building a friendly environment to eliminate a negative attitude towards learning a new language.

The data of this study show that the English songs presented in EFL classes helped the Saudi students acquire the English language and correct pronunciation through listening and repeating the English sentences and vocabulary. For Millington (2011), singing English songs containing common expressions such as greetings is an excellent English activity and valuable opportunity for students to improve their listening skills as there are different intonations. In the next sections, observed activities



of implementing English songs are presented and analysed to find out whether the English songs are used to support the students' English language acquisition and English speech development.

#### *7.2.1.1 Case Example 1: Hello, let's shake hands song*

In the following example, the participating teacher Afnan at Al-Noor primary school presented a song called *Hello, let's shake hands* at the beginning of her English lesson. It was observed that the whole class was ready to sing and follow their teacher while she was singing and doing movements such as jumping, dancing, stomping and acting the lyrics of the song:

*Hello, hello let's shake hands*

*Hello, hello let's shake hands*

*It's English time again ...*

*Everyone jumps three times, 1-2-3*

*Everyone claps three times, 1-2-3*

*Every stomp three times, 1-2-3*

*Everybody jumps up high*

The whole situation is presented in the following extract from Observation 1 for Class 1 at Grade 4 in Al-Noor primary school:

*The teacher asks the students to stand up and watch a video of Hello, let's shake hands song (warm up). All the students stand and get ready to sing and feel excited about the song. The teacher sings aloud and performs the actions of the song. The students as well follow the teacher and the commands of the song (to jump, dance, act, move around, point up and down, etc.). The song ends, and the students look happy. They return back to their seats and listen to the teachers' instructions.*

This activity was discussed in the second interview with teacher Afnan, as seen in the next extract:

**Researcher:** *So, after my observations, I want to ask you questions about some notes which were taken. How did the students learn to sing in English that videos you showed them? Because I found them like they feel interesting and funny.*

**Teacher:** *At the beginning, from the first class I met them, I showed them videos on the board in which we sing together, and we act some movements like a clapping, jumping, aah, spinning. We sing together at the beginning of each class. By the time, they can sing with me, and they can, they love singing, they love that actually.*

**Researcher:** *So, how long do they practice the videos?*

**Teacher:** *At the beginning of each class, as warming up and it lasts, it lasts for about 3–4 minutes.*

From the extracts shown above, it can be seen that the English teacher selected the *Hello, let's shake hands* song to warm up the class. The observation witnesses that the song was recognised and understood, and the students looked happy and active while they sang. The students watched the video and started doing actions—shaking hands, jumping, clapping and so on—following the phrases of the song. The situation can be considered as acting the commands while singing the English song. Here, the students repeated the memorised vocabulary of the song and read the shown phrases in the video. They acted and moved according to the instructions while singing *Hello, let's shake hands* song (see Figure 7.1).

The observed English activity in this case example shows that teacher Afnan presented *Hello, let's shake hands* song to refresh the students' memory and to check their understanding of words they know, as the students had already practised the song several times during the semester. The students' knowledge was enriched with more English vocabulary as they successfully followed the commands heard in the song, indicating that they recognised the meanings of the song's words. It can be said that teacher Afnan presented a song that is full of commands illustrated in simple words and phrases that are easily understood through the animations in the shown video.



*Figure 7 1 The students doing actions of Hello, let's shake hands song*

### 7.2.1.1.1 An analysis of Case Example 1

In relation to the cultural-historical concept of interaction between the ideal and present forms, the lyrics and rhythm of *Hello, let's shake hands* song is the ideal form in this activity. The present form, which is the students' speech (unmatured English speech), was involved in the students' acquiring of English as they repeated and acted out what they watched and heard. The song is an example of English oral speech that was heard and repeated. The students pronounced words correctly and showed their understanding of the learned English phrases by doing the commands heard in the song.

However, an interaction between the ideal and present forms was not organised for English speech development. The students' present forms in this case example did not interact with the ideal form (the knowledge of the song shown through its lyrics and rhythm) in a way that leads to developing their English oral speech. The students did not use the memorised language in meaningful communication. They:

are not taught techniques that enable them to interpret spoken and written forms of English. They are not taught when to say what to whom, or how to use the language in different ways according to the sociolinguistic situation in which they find themselves. (Al-Seghayer, 2014, p. 22)

There are no created situations that encourage the students to use the vocabulary of the song to communicate with each other. This means no real social interaction occurred that leads to developing the students' English oral speech.

Vygotsky (2011) stated that ZPD is the distance between the child actual level of development, which is determined by tasks solved independently, and the possible level of development, which is defined as the tasks the child can solve with the help or guidance of an adult or in collaboration with a more intelligent peer. Looking at the case example using *Hello, let's shake hands* song from the point of view of ZPD—that is, the distance between the level of English speech they can use independently and the level of English speech they can show in communication—the analysis illustrates that because there were no communicative situations created in which children can independently use the words they learned from the song, there were no ZPDs for speech development. Children did not show their actual and potential levels of development and their ability to use words from the song in their own speech in communication with others. The level of potential development (the level of their English speech they can show collaboratively with the teacher or peers) was not indicated due to the lack of

communicative situations. The discussed example does not provide evidence of movement from the potential level of development of English speech to the actual level.

From cultural-historical perspective, “the primary function of speech is communicative. Speech is a means of social interaction, a means of expression and understanding” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 48). This social interaction must occur in the environment to support children’s speech development. It is required to develop human speech. It requires some system of means that includes the sign, word and sound (Vygotsky, 1987). As noted in Chapter 3, there is an interaction between ideal and present forms that occur in the social environment that assists in the development of a child’s speech, because without a meaningful communication, there would not be a speech development. Vygotsky (1998, p. 203) outlined that:

the social environment is the source for the appearance of all specific human properties of the personality gradually acquired by the child or the source of social development of the child which is considered in the process of interaction of “ideal” and “present forms”.

The analysis shows that the ideal form of the song presented was helpful for English language acquisition, but not for English speech development. The students involved in singing the teacher’s presented song (its lyrics and rhythm) continued listening and repeating it until they did it very well after several repetitions. A condition to support the students’ acquiring a foreign language was created in this example by presenting an English song to help them acquire and remember the English vocabulary and correct pronunciation. Further, the selected song *Hello, let’s shake hands* is a form of English knowledge that enriches the learners with new English expressions and instructions. Here, the EFL learners are in a position of learning and memorising new English words and showing their understanding of the words’ meaning by doing the actions of the commands. The students who were singing the *Hello, let’s shake hands* song were subjected to drills while listening to and memorising the words and phrases of the shown song. It is good for EFL students to learn more English vocabulary through watching and listening to an English song, and to acquire the language of the song by repeating and memorising its words and sentences. It is a dynamic process of learning English through drills to acquire the pronunciation and memorise the words. Repeating or drilling is a traditional strategy used in language classes. Swanto and Din (2014) defined drilling as:

a technique that has been used in a foreign classroom for many years. It was a key feature of audio-lingual approaches to language teaching which placed emphasis on repeating structural patterns through oral practice. There are many types of drilling techniques such as repetition

drills. For example, it can vary the drill in terms of who repeats whether the whole class, half the class, boys only, girls only, or individuals.

The subject matter of drilling and repetition was one of the main points of discussion in the second interview with teacher Afnan. She proclaimed that using English songs in her classes was helpful in teaching English. She presents English songs at the beginning of every class and her students keep watching, listening and repeating until they perform it nicely with real actions. The EFL learners learn new English words through the repetition of the new words of the song. They do movements that show their understanding of the learned vocabulary from the song. From the teacher's perspective, the students in EFL classes enjoy singing English songs, and with drilling and repetition, they can sing English songs very well.

Drilling leads to memorising the language, which does not ensure any proficiency and fluency; therefore, to ensure a high level of proficiency, the students need to be able to understand and practise the language (Swanto & Din, 2014). It is beneficial for the students to acquire the vocabulary and correct pronunciation of the words. However, building up the students' knowledge with English vocabulary is not enough to achieve the goals of teaching English as described by the MOE of Saudi Arabia in 2001 (as outlined in Chapter 2). The ministry policy makers are looking to enable Saudi students to "acquire basic language skills in order to communicate with the speakers of English Language" (Elyas & Badawood, 2015, p. 31). It is clear that acquiring the English skills (reading, speaking, listening and writing) is essential for learning English as a preliminary step for English speech development, as the EFL learners cannot start communicating in English without having the English knowledge first, such as English vocabulary.

Teacher Afnan seems to be satisfied with this kind of song in her English classes. This was shown clearly from her claim in the next extract from the second interview that this kind of song reduces the anxiety of the students in EFL classes and engages them:

**Researcher:** *What about you? How do you feel now and at the beginning of the practices? For example, when you started teaching them this song, did you think that maybe some students will be afraid, or maybe some students will say no, I feel bored or bothered!*

**Teacher:** *I see that most of the students are happy, so I feel relaxed. I just focused on shy students, I help them, I jump with them, I run with them. I encourage them to follow us. So, I*

*feel happy and I feel active when I do such exercises, or such activities with my students. They feel happy and they feel ready to have the lesson, in a relaxing environment.*

The analysis allows me to conclude that the song *Hello, let's shake hands* is a great tool for encouraging the students to repeat and memorise every word of the song. Singing is an interesting method to encourage students to learn the language and enrich their English knowledge. *Hello, let's shake hands* song is not an ideal form for English oral speech development unless the teacher creates a situation that engages the students in communicative practice to use the memorised vocabulary of the song. As explained earlier, the implemented activity encouraged the students to enjoy singing in English and feel excited in acting out all its parts, but there is no sign of development of their English oral speech, as they only repeat the memorised sentences of the song. There was no sign of verbal communication between the teacher and the students using the song's vocabulary in communicative situations where the students can use this knowledge in their English speech. This supports Al-Nasser's (2015) belief regarding the absence of communication in English classes, which acts as a barrier to learning the language in Saudi schools. A significant dilemma identified by Alshumaimeri (2003) is that Saudi students leave high school without the ability to conduct a short conversation.

The process of English language learning requires techniques that ease the EFL acquisition, such as drilling and repetition of the new English words and practising their pronunciations. However, the EFL learning process should not stop at this level, as the students need to practise the learned language in different communicative situations to move to a higher level of English speech development that enables them to think and communicate in English with others.

#### *7.2.1.2 Case Example 2: Sing the alphabet song*

In the case example that follows, teacher Eman in Al-Salam primary school presented a different type of English song, which includes more English vocabulary and information. For instance, *Sing the alphabet* is the name of the song that was observed as an English activity. *Sing the alphabet* song was implemented twice by teacher Eman during the observed English period.

Extract from Observation 1, Class 4/1 at Al-Salam primary school:

*The teacher starts to warm up the class with a song Sing the alphabet by showing its video. Then, the students directly sing the song actively and recognise every word and letter*

*pronunciations. They sing aloud and really enjoy it. They look happy and excited. The teacher sings with them some parts of the song. By the end of the signing activity, the teacher praises them and says: "Excellent, good students".*

*After that, the teacher plays a CD that comprises of the lessons of the textbook and shows on the board some English letters shown in this lesson. She asks the students to identify the letters and their sounds. First, she starts showing the letter 'C' on the whiteboard and asks: "What is the name of this letter?". One of the students identifies the letter and says: 'C'. The teacher says: "Excellent, what is the sound?" The student answer: "Ka". The teacher says: "Very good, give her a 'big wow'". The whole class say: "Wooow". Then, the teacher asks the students to give a word starts with 'C' and says: "Give me a word starts with 'C', like what?" Then, one student says: "Cat". The teacher says: "Excellent."*

*Teacher Eman continues asking about the letter 'Q'. She asks one of the students: "What is the name of the letter?" The student answers: "Qua". The teacher says: "Excellent, can you give me a word of 'Q'?" The student says: "Queen". The teacher says: "Excellent, all together say: Queen". The students repeat and say: "Queen".*

*Lastly, one more time to Sing the alphabet song together, but this time without showing the students the video of the song. The students sing and assisted by the teacher when they forget some parts of the song. The teacher sings with them until they finished singing the whole song. The teacher says: "Excellent".*

It can be seen that the song was implemented at two stages in this class. First, teacher Eman initiated a practice of singing the song *Sing the alphabet* and showed them the video of the song to warm up the class. Once the teacher presented the video of the song on the whiteboard, the students started singing its words:

*A makes a sound of ah, ah, ah. B makes a sound of bah, bah, bah.*

*C makes a sound of cah, cah, cah. D makes a sound of dah, dah, dah.*

*Sing this song so you don't forget how to say the alphabet.*

*E makes a sound of eh, eh, eh. F makes a sound of fah, fah, fah.*

*G makes a sound of gah, gah, gah. H makes a sound of hah, hah, hah.*

*Sing this song so you don't forget how to say the alphabet.*



The students were active and excited to sing the lyrics of the song. They enjoyed watching and imitating the speech of the song. They repeated each word and letter with the correct pronunciation. The students tried to sing aloud and felt excited watching and repeating the lyrics. Teacher Eman also sang some parts of the song with her students and motivated them to continue singing.

In the second stage, after the students finished singing *Sing the alphabet*, teacher Eman started asking them some questions in relation to what was presented in the song. She asked them to identify some of the shown letters on the board. Then, she asked them to mention some English words that start with some letters, such as ‘C’ and ‘Q’ (as seen in the above extract of Observation 1). The teacher encouraged the students to participate in this communicative activity by answering her questions using the previous English knowledge they have learned. After that, the students had to sing *Sing the alphabet* together without watching or listening to the song. The teacher monitored and assisted them in the forgotten parts of the song.

In fact, *Sing the alphabet* song is helpful for English language acquisition and learning as it is full of vocabulary combined with animated pictures showing an example of each English letter. For instance, “bear” for “B”, “zipper” for “Z”, “umbrella” for “U”, and so on. The teacher herself declared that even though the students do not recognise every word meaning, they could acquire the vocabulary through the music very quickly, through listening and imitating the pronunciation of the native speaker who is singing.

Extract from Interview 2 with teacher Eman in Al-Salam primary school:

**Researcher:** *Ok, how do the students learn to sing in English that videos you showed them?*

**Teacher:** *Aah, they like the videos, musical videos. They acquire the vocabulary very fast when they listen to the music, and they try to imitate. Maybe they cannot understand each word, what is the meaning of each word! But they can guess, and I’m really happy that they acquire even the pronunciation, the correct pronunciation of the word, because they listen to the music and they try to imitate it as they are doing copy to the word, and this is good. They acquire the vocabulary faster in music than, for example, in teaching.*

Teacher Eman assumes that the students can acquire the English vocabulary faster in an exciting way by showing them songs, as they listen to the music and repeat the song with a native speaker who



performs the correct pronunciations of the words. Once again, this declaration indicates that drilling and repeating is one method of learning EFL and acquiring the pronunciation of the vocabulary. This asserts Murphey's assumption (1992) that developing listening and pronunciation is one purpose of using the English songs in a young learner English classroom. The students enjoy singing *Sing the alphabet* song, which indicates that the mechanical repetition of practising many times until they perform the song pleasantly, is beneficial to the students.

#### 7.2.1.2.1 The analysis of Case Example 2

Through the analysis of the data shown in singing the *Sing the alphabet* song, it can be seen that there are two phases of interaction between the ideal and the present forms, as this song was implemented in two activities. The first is when the teacher presented the song and motivated the students to repeat the lyrics with the native speaker. As discussed in Chapter 3, the ideal form must be presented in the environment and interact with the present form of the child that leads to HMF development (Vygotsky, 1994). In this activity, the ideal form is the developed speech of the native speaker who sings, while the present form is the students' immature English speech. This present form interacted with the ideal form (developed English speech presented in lyrics and rhythm) in a very limited way, such as through repeating the song. The students imitated the sound of each English word and letter shown in the song. However, this is not a social interaction that leads to English speech development, but it is a preliminary step for acquiring and learning the English language. Here, the song is one form of EFL learning, as the students build up their memory with English knowledge (e.g., letters, words, phrases). It is used for acquiring the language through listening, repeating and imitating the English sounds. There is no condition created within the students' ZPD to develop the immature HMF (speech) of the students through communication within a social environment. In this case example, the students improve their listening and pronunciation by repeating the song to acquire the English language. Their English oral speech is not matured, but it will develop if communicative situations are created to use the vocabulary the children learn from the song.

In this example, the students listen to the song and imitate its vocabulary, even though they do not quite understand the meanings, as the teacher has pointed out: "They acquire the vocabulary very fast when they listen to the music, and they try to imitate. Maybe they cannot understand each word, what is the meaning of each word! But they can guess" (teacher's Eman second interview). Teacher Eman indicated that the students might guess the meanings of the song through practising the song, which

is part of their learning English process. It is the way the students use their English knowledge in the activity to reinforce what they have learned that is part of their practice.

However, “the word without meaning is not a word but an empty sound” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 244). Therefore, for speech development, word meaning is important. It is fundamental to use the speech as a means of communication between the child and other people in his/her environment (Vygotsky, 1987). The children participating in this study had to use the English language of the song in a situation that helped them understand and think about how to use this knowledge in a meaningful, communicative way. This was accomplished in the second part of the activity when teacher Eman engaged her students into a communicative situation to answer her questions about the implemented song. The students responded to their teacher and mentioned some English examples with their correct pronunciations, as demonstrated in the song.

Based on the theoretical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms, it can be shown that there is an interaction between the ideal form (developed English speech of teacher Eman) and the present forms (the unmatured English speech of the students). The students’ present form interacted with the teacher’s developed English speech (ideal form). Teacher Eman created a communicative situation by asking questions that the students answered successfully. The students identified some letters with some vocabulary, such as “C” in “cat” and “Q” in “queen” (these examples are presented in the song). The situation can be described as the teacher mediating the communication by using the cultural signs (English letters and vocabulary) of the song. Then, the students were able to use cultural tools (the language of the song) to communicate with their teacher by responding to her questions. At this stage, the students were not repeating the song anymore, they were practising communication that shows their understanding and thinking to construct the answers for the teacher’s questions. Thus, “speech leads to the end of the formation of thinking, transfers it to a new track, converts direct, natural thinking into cultural thinking, verbal thinking, and in this way makes it more abstract” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 238). The students successfully used their English speech to respond to their teacher.

The analysis shows that the ideal form (English developed speech of the teacher) was presented and interacted with students’ present forms of English speech. The social interaction that followed singing *Sing the alphabet* indicated that the condition created by teacher Eman was effective for developing the students’ English speech. Teacher Eman presented the song at the initial stage, where the students learned the English vocabulary and acquired the pronunciation of the words. Afterwards, she

consciously moved to the next stage to support the students' English speech development by engaging them in a communicative situation. Engaging the students in a meaningful communicative situation to practise what they learned through discussion shows that teacher Eman understood the level of the students' English and tried to assist her students in developing their English speech by encouraging them to respond using the learned knowledge from the song. As declared by Vygotsky (2011, p. 204), ZPD defines "functions that are not mature yet, but are currently in the process of maturation, the functions that will mature tomorrow". Teacher Eman defined the function that has not matured yet (English oral speech of the students) as the students tried to understand her English speech and respond using their English speech. She helped her students to develop this function by creating a condition that enabled them to use the English vocabulary in certain communicative practices within their ZPDs to achieve development (developed function of English speech).

Here, interaction is revealed between the students' present form (their English speech in responding to their teacher using words of the song) and the ideal form (the developed English speech of the teacher) through communication in the social environment, which is the source of development. In this social environment, the interaction between the ideal and present forms takes place (Vygotsky, 1998). As a result, the greatest goal of teaching English in Saudi Arabia may be achieved as Saudi students are able to communicate in English (Elyas & Badawood, 2015). Likewise, by practising the learned English knowledge with others in communicative situations, the students in Saudi Arabia can "acquire the linguistic competence necessarily required in various life situations" (Elyas & Badawood, 2015, p. 31).

It would appear from the observed English activity of singing *Sing the alphabet* that the song is one cultural form for learning EFL. Initially, the students built up their memories with more English vocabulary. This was confirmed when teacher Eman declared that her students at Grade 4 memorised the song and acquired the correct pronunciations of its words. At this stage, there was no social interaction for English speech development between the developed English speech of the native speaker and the present forms of the students, as the students were involved in listening, repeating, copying and acquiring new English vocabulary. Interestingly, the English song is an essential tool for English language acquisition because the EFL learners need to be exposed to the vocabulary of the English language and to spell, read and repeat, as is required in the process of learning a foreign language. After that, the role of the teacher is revealed to support the EFL learners to develop their English speech. This can be achieved when the conditions of the development of English speech are created in the classroom.

The analysis of the second stage of the activity, when teacher Eman asked questions relating to the *Sing the alphabet* song, shows that teacher Eman organised the interaction between the ideal and the present forms of the students for English speech development. Here, a developmental condition of English speech was created as the students were engaged in a communicative task to answer their teacher's questions and identify some letters and vocabulary. Notably, there was a good interaction or communication between this ideal form (teacher's English developed speech) and the students' present form (unmatured English speech) through practising the knowledge of the song to answer the teacher's questions. It was effective when the teacher created ZPD by helping the students use the letters and vocabulary of the song in a meaningful discussion.

According to Vygotsky (1994), a child's mental development will not properly proceed without interaction between the ideal and present forms. This means the English song cannot be an ideal form for English speech development unless the students are able to use the knowledge of the song in their everyday life. This interaction has to take its place in the process of English oral speech development once the English teacher creates conditions within the students' ZPD to make that presented ideal form (e.g., the developed speech and the English knowledge of the song) work effectively through individual use after practising collectively in a communicative situation. "Every higher mental function was external because it was social before it became an internal strictly mental function; it was formerly a social relation between two people" (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 105).

The HMF of students' English oral speech will develop as it is used on a social plane (with the teacher) and move towards being used individually (student by herself). In the case example of the *Sing the alphabet* song, the social situation (questioning and answering) allowed the students to think and explore the meaning of the teacher's English speech after being provided with specific English artefacts and cultural signs (e.g., English song) inside the classroom, which helped them to answer their teacher's questions. The teacher engaged them in a situation that enabled them to show their own use of the learned English language; specifically, creating a condition with her assistance and then answering her questions using English words individually. Here, when the students' level of English speech development was determined by the English teacher and the ideal form interacted with the present forms within the students' ZPD, the mental function of oral speech of the child moved to a higher level of development. Vygotsky (1994) proposed that speech development will be accomplished when the ideal form is being presented in the environment and interacting with the present form of the child. Consequently, students of Al-Salam primary school developed their English

oral speech through participation in a communicative activity (questioning and answering) organised by teacher Eman, where the ideal form (developed English speech of the teacher) and the present form (the student English speech using the knowledge of the song) were interacting.

## 7.3 Cooperative learning in drama activities

Drama is an efficient method to help EFL learners learn the language using many engaging activities, including drama games, group work or pair work, group discussion and role play, that motivate a large scale of students (Farmer, 2015). The following examples are from the gathered data that show some used drama activities in English classes.

### 7.3.1 Acting out a story or role playing

Acting out a story or role playing is one of the most common drama activities used in EFL classes. It helps to develop the communicative skills of the ESL/EFL learners in the classroom context, which makes the learning experience more interesting and memorable because they are acting out and interacting (Boudreault, 2010). It is used widely in EFL classes in Saudi schools, mainly the primary schools similar to the ones chosen for this study.

#### 7.3.1.1 Case Example 1: Happy friends story

*Happy friends* is the story that was acted out by the students at Grade 4 in Al-Noor primary school. The next extract from Observation 3 for one of the English classes describes this activity in detail:

*Happy friends, the name of the story which is introduced by the teacher. The teacher presents the story on the smartboard. Teacher Afnan firstly describes animals and colours. She says: "Look at the board" and asks: "What can you see?" She answers: "Croc and Ellie". She asks: "What colour is Croc?" One of the students answered: "Green". The teacher asks: "She, he, or it?" The. Students answer: "It". The teacher points to the faces of the characters and asks: "Is it happy?" A student answers: "Yes" The teacher says: "Yes, it is". Then, teacher Afnan asks about the other character (Ellie): "Look at Ellie, what colour is it?" A student answers: "Grey". The teacher says: "It's grey". The teacher says: "They are friends". The students repeat: "Friends", then the teacher says: "They are friends, like you". The teacher says: "They are happy" and the students repeat: "Happy". Next, the teacher*

presents faces of the characters and paste them on the board and says: “Ellie, Croc and a frog”. The students repeat the names. Again, asks the students: “She or he or it?” The students reply:” It”.

The teacher plays the story for the first time and the students listen quietly. Then, when the story ends up, the teacher asks the students to listen again. Then, the teacher starts reading the story and the students repeat after her. Again, she discusses what every character is saying in the story. Then, the teacher asks three students to start speaking and playing roles of the characters in the story (elephant, crocodile and frog). They hold the faces of the characters and start acting the story. The first student reads: “Hello, Ellie! How are you?” Then, the second student answers her and says: “Fine, thank you, how are you?” The teacher corrects her to say: “Fine thank you, Croc. And you?” as the student makes mistake and says: “How are you?” instead of saying: “And you?” The first student completes reading her part and says: “I’m hungry!” But, she stops and does not know how to read the rest of the sentence (“Are you hungry, too?”). The teacher gives her a hint and says: “Are you hungry, too?” Then, the student repeats what the teacher said. The second student completes reading her part and says: “No, I’m not. I’m thirsty.” The third student who acts the role of the frog reads: “Wow, it’s thirsty!” Her reading is very clear and correct pronunciation. Then, the first student (Croc) reads: “Mmm! Fish!” The second student (elephant) reads: “... 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 fish!” Then the first student reads: “Mmm”. The next sentence is (“Ah! I’m happy now”), but the second student cannot complete reading this sentence and reads: “Ah, I’m happy ...”, then the teacher helps her and says: “I’m happy now”. Then, the first student reads: “I’m happy, too! Thanks, Ellie”. That is the end of the story and the acted scenes (see Figure 7.2). The teacher asks the whole class to say: “1, 2, 3 Wow”.



Figure 7 2 Acting out the story Happy friends



From this observed English class activity, it can be seen that teacher Afnan successfully described the scene of the story and its characters before the students started acting it out. She did not ask them to act out the story until the students understood every aspect and felt confident in doing the task. Davies (1990, p. 88) claimed that in dramatic activities, “an atmosphere must be established in which both teacher and class can feel secure in the knowledge and expectation that they will enjoy and benefit from drama activities”. Once the students are motivated and enjoying practising their English knowledge, they can freely speak with their teacher and other peers using the English language as a tool to communicate with each other.

#### 7.3.1.1.1 An analysis of Case Example 1

The analysis of this piece of data shows that there are two ideal forms presented in this activity. The teacher’s developed English speech is the ideal form in the first part of the activity. The teacher uses her English speech to ask questions about the story and its characters. The students’ English speech is the present form that is immature compared to the English speech of the teacher. Teacher Afnan organised the social interaction between her English speech (ideal form) and the student’s speech (present form) by asking questions that were answered by the students using some English words learned previously. This interaction between the ideal and present forms in a social environment leads to speech development (Vygotsky, 1994). In regarding ZPD as the distance between the actual and potential level of English speech development of the students, teacher Afnan defined the students’ ZPD and engaged them in discussion to respond to her questions using the English knowledge they learned. In this part of the example, the students replied using adjectives, pronouns and colours in English to describe the characters of the story.

In the second part of this case example, the teacher presented an ideal form, which is the English sentences and phrases of the story. The present form is found in the students (immature English speech) as they read the English sentences of the characters in the *Happy friends* story while holding the faces of the elephant, crocodile and frog. The teacher supported them to develop their listening and reading skills, which are required in the process of language acquisition. She played the story twice and asked the students to repeat the story for the last time while she read the sentences from the board. There was no real social interaction between the ideal form (the phrases of the story) and the present forms (the speech of the students) as the students just repeated English sentences then read them from the board in a role-play activity. The students did not use the cultural form of the story and did not use its words in a new communicative situation to show their understanding of the English

sentences. The EFL learner has to be in a situation that enables them to use meaningful knowledge in daily interactions (Jones, 2008). If this can be applied, the English speech of the children can be developed in a drama setting.

The observed drama activity of acting out a story was implemented in a way of reading sentences from the board as the students played with the characters (elephant, frog and crocodile) and read the shown story. This does not show the students' performance to master their English speech and speak the English sentences of the story by using this knowledge in a different/new situation. Nevertheless, there is a small indication of interaction between the ideal form (the developed form of English sentences in the story) and the present forms of the students (the immature English speech of the students) in a communicative way that shows the students' understanding and performance to speak on their own. This is shown when the second student said: "Fine, thank you, how are you?", instead of reading the story's sentence: "Fine thank you, Croc. And you?" The student used her English speech and the learned English knowledge to answer the peer's question. However, the psychological conditions for the development of oral English speech were not consciously created. The ideal form of English found in the story was not in a situation of interaction with the present (immature) form of English speech of the students. The students were not allowed to speak to each other in English using the knowledge of the story. Thus, the ideal form here is for English language acquisition, as the students acquired and repeated the story sentences, which is essential for English learning proficiency as the students read the shown sentences correctly.

Improving the language skills of reading and listening of the EFL learner is crucial for English language acquisition and learning. However, it is important to consider the process of English oral speech development, which requires social interaction and meaningful communication through practising English knowledge. The students communicated in this activity when they acted out the story by reading the English sentences of the story. There was no ZPD created in acting out the *Happy friends* story and the students' immature function of English oral speech was not developed to a higher level. The teacher assisted them in reading the English sentences, which is beneficial to improve their English reading skill. However, no communicative activity was created to enable the students to use their speech and speak in English using the memorised knowledge of the story in their own practices (students together) within the social environment.

From the teacher's perspective, she uses acting out a story by first preparing the students to listen and repeat the story three times, then read its parts from the board. From the children's perspective, they enjoy watching the scenes of the story and repeating and reading sentences with the native speaker



when the teacher shows them the story on the board, then communicating together by reading the story sentences in a role-play activity. It cannot be denied that skills such as reading and listening are important for the process of English language acquisition and learning. However, to meet the MOE requirements, teachers need to improve their pedagogy by creating conditions for English speech development.

## 7.4 Interactive teaching in pair dialogues as communicative activities

Another activity of drama is pair dialogue. Dialogue is significantly used in classrooms as a popular communicative way that shows the interaction between teacher and learners, as well as among the pupils themselves in the class. It is an important technique that encourages the students to participate in the classroom, mainly through discussions (Georgii, 2010): “Dialogue is speech that consists of rejoinders” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 272).

The data from this study show that dialogue is used by the English teachers in Saudi primary schools to practise the English knowledge that is presented in the textbook.

### 7.4.1 Case Example 1: “How old are you?” in teacher–student pair dialogue

The following example is an extract from Observation 1 for Class 4/1 in Al-Salam primary school:

*The teacher teaches the students to ask about age. She asks one of the students to come to the front of the class and she makes a dialogue with the student asking about age.*

**Teacher:** *Excuse me, stand up please. Hello. What is your name?*

**Student:** *My name is Hanaa.*

**Teacher:** *How are you?*

**Student:** *I am fine.*

**Teacher:** *How old are you?*

**Student:** *I am 11.*

**Teacher:** *Thank you.*

*The teacher in this activity stresses on the questions, instructs the class to listen carefully. Teacher shouts “Class, class”, students reply “Yes, yes”. Teacher asks them to ask each other*

*the same questions in pairs. She asks the students to practice in groups to ask and answer: “How old are you?” The teacher uses an assessment board to put a tick in front of each group name to show how they are cooperative, quiet, excellent, and finished task early. The teacher corrects the students’ pronunciations, giving and helping them with words to make right answers to the questions. She asks them to work in pairs in front of the class making dialogues. The teacher chooses two students from each group to do the dialogue. She follows them and corrects them to say full questions and answers, e.g. “I am 9”. The student repeats: “I am 9”.*

*Then, the teacher asks the students to say aloud: “How old are you?” She writes the question on the board and pronounces each word aloud. She says “Class, class” to make the students attentions. She asks the students to ask: “How old are you?” She instructs them by saying: “Ask each other, stop, again” (as a game). All says aloud: “How old are you?”*

*Then the teacher asks: “How old are you?” Then sing the chant together from the textbook about it. Students immediately share their teacher singing.*

In this activity, the teacher is the organiser of the conversation, and has selected a topic from a previous lesson in the textbook to initiate a dialogue with one of the students to introduce the “How old are you?” question within the dialogue. This is followed by peer–peer and group dialogues to encourage the students to practise asking and answering questions about themselves.

#### *7.4.1.1 An analysis of Case Example 1*

The analysis of the above example shows an interaction between the ideal (developed English oral speech of the teacher and a student with a higher level of English oral speech) and the present form (immature English oral speech) of the students. The students’ present form interacted with the ideal form, which was presented in a communicative situation. The students observed their teacher while she was speaking the dialogue with a student of a higher level of development of English oral speech who speaks English correctly and fluently. Then, the students tried to copy the developed form of English speech of the teacher and the peer by using their own speech to practise the same dialogue with other peers. It can be seen that a condition of the development of English speech was created within the students’ ZPD. A student had a conversation with the teacher that shows an interaction between the teacher’s developed speech and the speech of a peer with a higher level of English speech in making their own dialogues asking about age. The students copied their teacher and the other peer’s English speech by doing their own dialogues after practising and repeating “How old are you?”

several times with the teacher, then in groups. This entire conversation is a communicative situation, as a dialogue is a social interaction, which is the source of the English speech development of students. The students communicated with each other using their own English speech for practising the same dialogue.

According to Vygotsky (1994, p. 345), “we mainly communicate with the people surrounding us by using speech. This represents one of the basic means which a child attains psychological communication with the people surround him”. The students would reach their teacher’s and peer’s developed English speech (ideal forms) as they used their immature form of speech to ask each other “How old are you?” and answer this question using a complete English sentence “I am nine”. The developed form of the teacher’s and peer’s English speech is the ideal form that was presented in the children’s environment from the beginning, when the teacher conducted a dialogue starting with revising some previous knowledge (e.g., “What is your name?”), to finally introduce the new English knowledge, asking “How old are you?”

This developed form which is supposed to make its appearance at the end of the child’s development, the final or ideal (as it is called in contemporary pedagogy)—ideal in the sense that acts as a model for that which should be achieved at the end of the developmental period; and final in the sense that it represents what the child is supposed to attain at the end of his development (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 347).

#### 7.4.2 Case Example 2: Teacher–student pair dialogue “to bring a marker”

Another example of the effectiveness of interaction between the developed English speech of the teacher and her students is one cited by teacher Eman in her first interview, shown in the following extract:

**Researcher:** *Ok, do you think learning English through interaction is helpful?*

**Teacher:** *Yes, of course. Yes.*

**Researcher:** *Ok, give me some examples, please, while doing activities or while they’re doing ...*

**Teacher:** *Inside the class? Yes, for example, if I want her to bring something from outside the class, I order her in English. Can you go to my office? Can you bring, for example, the marker, the red marker?*

**Researcher:** *Do they understand?*

**Teacher:** *Yes, sometimes I use the body language, and she understands. For example, if I want her to go to my office and bring me, for example, the black marker, I say: “Can you go to my office, bring me the marker for the board”, and she understands, and I get what I want. If she goes, for example, to my office and made mistake as she didn’t understand me! I say: “Go back to my office again, this is not what I want”. Maybe I can assign one of her friends to go and help her, go and help each other, find the ..., for example, the black marker.*

**Researcher:** *Ya.*

**Teacher:** *Yes, that’s very helpful.*

It can be seen that the teacher conducted a dialogue in English, asking her students to bring objects from her office. This shows the teacher’s desire to develop the students’ English oral speech by encouraging them to practise thinking and speaking in English in everyday conversations. She repeated her words and used some body language many times until the students understood her and achieved the target from this interaction, which explains the process of English speech development.

#### *7.4.2.2 An analysis of Case Example 2*

An analysis of the above activity indicates that there is an interaction between the ideal form (English developed speech of the teacher) and the present forms (immature English speech of the student) to support the process of English speech development. The teacher identified the immature function of English speech, as she recognised that the school child did not understand her English speech. She organised that interaction and created ZPD for English speech development by initiating a conversation with a student asking her to bring “a marker for the board” using a developed English speech and some body language to assist the school child to understand the meaning behind her speech when the student engaged in (teacher–student) pair dialogue. As a result, the teacher supports the process of English speech development of students.

According to Vygotsky (1987, p. 48), “speech combines the function of social interaction and the function of thinking ... [then] social interaction based on rational understanding, on the intentional transmission of experience and thought, requires some system of means”. Simply, meaningful communication in a social environment is essential to develop human speech. This is the beginning

of the English oral speech development of the school age children, as Vygotsky (1987, p. 172) claimed, “when the child first learns the meaning of a new word, the process of development has not been completed but has only begun”. Thus, the English teacher’s role is to make the English words clearer for the students by providing them with more explanations and clarifications of the new vocabulary until they understand and use them in their communication with their teacher and other peers. Teacher Eman used body language and movements to convey the meaning of her English speech to the student in a communicative way.

Based on Vygotsky’s perspective, when the school child did not understand the teacher’s English speech, she experienced a dramatic collision and started to think carefully until she finally achieved the required task. Teacher Eman created the conditions for English speech development when she engaged her student in a communicative situation and asked, “Can you go to my office, bring me the marker for the board?” Then, she assisted the student when she did not collect the correct item and teacher Eman said, “Go back to my office again, this’s not what I want”. In the first instance, the student did not understand the English speech of the teacher and experienced a dramatic collision; therefore, the next time the teacher used another English phrase and some body language to explicate her English speech. A certain development resulted through this contradictory event (Veresov, 2010). When the teacher used the language to mediate this social interaction with her student, the task was finally accomplished as the student understood the teacher’s developed English speech. Vygotsky (1997, p. 106) stated that:

social relations, real relations of people, stand behind all the higher functions and their relations. From this, one of the basic principles of our will is the principle of division of functions among people, the division into two of what is now merged into one, the experimental unfolding of higher mental process into the drama that occurs among people.

#### 7.4.3 Case Example 3: Student–student pair dialogue “Asking about objects”

Another case example is shown in the next extract. Several forms of dialogues reveal the interaction between the speech of the teacher and one of the students, as well as the students themselves, who use the English language while they are doing several learning tasks in the English classroom.

Extract of an Interview 1 with teacher Afnan in Al-Noor primary school:

**Researcher:** *Do you think learning English through interaction is helpful?*

**Teacher:** *Yes, it’s very helpful.*

**Researcher:** *How do you usually interact with your students?*

**Teacher:** *Usually, they have interactive activities in their books, like ask and answer, for example, they make school, classroom object with clay. For example, they made pencils, books, rubbers, chairs use clay to make them, and they ask each other what's this? It's a desk, or is that a chair? No, it isn't, it's a desk, like this.*

**Researcher:** *So, they collaborate while doing this?*

**Teacher:** *Yes, they share together, asking and answering about classroom objects using clay, and wh<sup>1</sup>- questions or Yes/No questions.*

**Researcher:** *So, they usually try to ask each other to finish the task or to find the answer for everything?*

**Teacher:** *Yes, because of their age ...*

**Researcher:** *Ya!*

**Teacher:** *They are ready and, they are ready to learn, and they are like a butterfly who likes to fly, butterflies who like to fly everywhere and to learn, they are eager to learn.*

Teacher Afnan is applying interactive activities that involve wh- questions as well as yes/no questions, which encourage the students to collaborate and build successful dialogues using different topics from the textbook (see Figure 7.3). She claimed that the students actively participate in such activities and enjoy sharing knowledge with their peers. This pair dialogue is considered a dramatic social event about a specific topic (e.g., school objects) that takes place between two students inside the classroom.

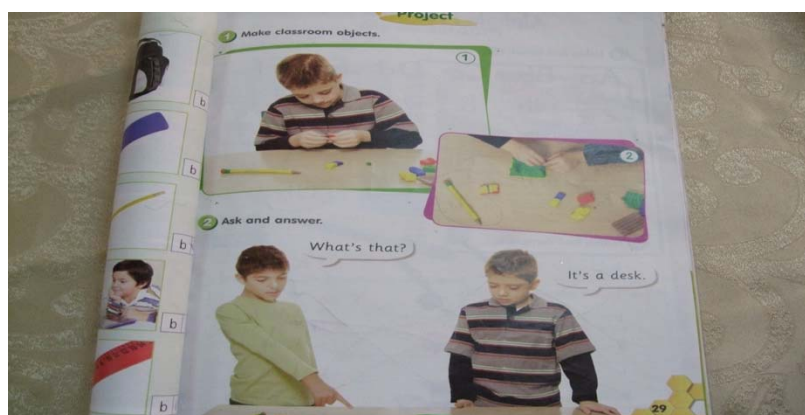


Figure 7.3 An example of interactive activity in the textbook of Grade 4

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<sup>1</sup> Wh-questions begin with *what, when, where, who, whom, which, whose, why* and *how*. We use them to ask for information.

#### 7.4.3.1 The analysis of Case Example 3

Through the analysis of this extract, we can conclude that the English textbook comprises a variety of interactive activities that support the process development of students' English speech. The teacher organises and controls every interaction between the ideal forms (developed form of English speech in the textbook) and present forms (the developing students' English speech) in her English classes. The examples mentioned above (e.g., pair dialogue asking about school objects) show that different conditions for English speech development are created to facilitate the interaction between a developed English speech and the students' speech. Further, teacher Afnan systematises the interaction between one student and another with a higher level of English speech, because through the interaction between the two students, one helps the other understand and then interact in English successfully. She provides them with assistance within their ZPD, as their English speech is still not matured and conditions are created to use their English speech with each other, such as group discussion and employing pair work using yes/no and wh- questions.

From the teachers' perspective, acting out, role play and dialogues are effective pedagogical practices to build interactions in English classes that lead to developing the English oral speech of the students in Grade 4 at Saudi primary schools. Teacher Afnan declared:

*I wish to achieve best outcomes of English speech development of my students, and their books help to achieve the best outcomes because it's full, the book is full of activities... in which they have speaking activities, listening activities, they have songs, they have reading stories, or my students have chance to practice or to act out dialogues in their books. They listen first, and they act out a dialogue. So, their books, their books help them to achieve best outcomes, Enshaa Allah (from Interview 2).*

Several interactive activities may help create conditions of English language acquisition and speech development for students, such as when the teacher organised a communicative activity that encouraged the students to use their improved English speech to ask about some school and classroom objects made of clay. Under the teacher's guidance, this social interaction led to English speech development of students. They practised the English knowledge they had learned in meaningful communication.



From the students' perspective, they are active and eager to interact using the English language, but once they are confronted with difficulties understanding and using it, they revert to using their mother tongue language instead. This was revealed by teacher Eman when she proclaimed: "For example, if one of the students says: 'Teacher, she *tektub*' like that, in Arabic, so I say: 'No, don't say *tektub*, say: She writes, and you read' Like this! You know, correcting them all the time, they need to be corrected" (Extract from Interview 1). Therefore, it is important for the teacher to monitor, supervise, guide and support their students in English classes through various pedagogical practices. The analysis of this extract shows that the developed English speech of teacher Eman is the ideal form with which the students' present form (immature English speech) interacts. The teacher guided her student to use the English speech for communication. ZPD is shown here as the function of English speech of the student is not matured because she used the Arabic word "tektub" instead of the English word "write". The teacher identified ZPD and directly helped the student to use English words instead of using Arabic, which led to English speech development.

I conclude that the interaction between different ideal forms and present forms is important to support the process of development of the English oral speech of students in Saudi Arabia. There are some conditions of English speech development created when the teacher presents the ideal forms in their English classes. For instance, teacher Eman presented her higher level of English speech in a dialogue with another student that was imitated and accomplished by other students. Moreover, teacher Eman again introduced her English speech in Case Example 2 as an ideal form, which was in interaction with the immature English speech (present form) of a student. In Case Example 3, teacher Afnan presented the English sentences (wh- and yes/no questions) and created social situations through engaging the students by asking about objects in the school and classroom. Consequently, when the students become able to initially communicate using the English language inside the class, they will be able to communicate internationally later, which achieves the Saudi MOE's most important objective of teaching/learning EFL. This was indicated by teacher Eman when she declared that: "That's what we want, this is the aim of teaching English in Saudi Arabia. So, they can practice the language anywhere, at hospitals, at restaurants. You know, nowadays, English is important" (Extract from Interview 1). In other words, teacher Eman highlights the need for developing the English speech of Saudi students, as they would need to use English in different life situations. It is worth mentioning that people from different nationalities need English when they travel worldwide to communicate with others in hospitals, airports, restaurants and hotels (Alasmi, 2016).



## 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented several case examples of EFL teaching strategies and their implemented English activities that were taken from the collected data which were analysed in order to answer Research Question 2 and its subsidiary questions:

2. What are the conditions that the English teachers create to support students' English speech development in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
  - a. What are the ideal forms that are presented by the English teachers in their English classes, and how do these ideal forms interact with the present forms?
  - b. What are zones of proximal development created in English classes in Saudi primary schools?

Hedegaard (2009, p. 65) claimed that “a person contributes to his own institutional conditions and the perspective of his society; therefore, institution and person both have to be conceptualised as contributing to practice in a theory of children’s development”. Therefore, it is important to consider different perspectives from a cultural-historical point of view in regard to children’s speech development. First, the English teachers’ perspective is built on the students’ need for their teacher’s help and assistance in English classes, as they have less English knowledge at this stage, making it difficult for them to understand every English instruction and any new information. The teachers use several interactive strategies and activities to support the EFL learning of students. Specifically, the teachers present English materials such as songs to construct interesting classes, because 9–10-year-old children enjoy singing, which makes acquiring a new language easier after listening and repeating many times. The students in Grade 4 (9–10 years old) have a strong memory, which helps them to memorise English letters and vocabulary. They are singing and copying the words through their memories. They listen to the song’s words and try to memorise and save a copy of them in their minds. For teacher Afnan, Saudi students:

need to listen to English all the time, they need to listen to model reading, even they listen to the teacher or to the audio CDs. They need to practice, they need help to practice reading, speaking, even imitating the new words by repeating them. They look to the word and they say the word that they see (from the final interview with teacher Afnan).

In other words, presenting the English knowledge through different techniques helps support the EFL students to learn a new language.

It can be seen that the students need to read, repeat and memorise to learn and acquire English. However, the English teacher should not only focus on this process but take a further step to support her students to use English to communicate. This will accomplish the main objective outlined by the Saudi MOE to have Saudi students who are able to communicate with others worldwide. From a societal perspective, it is significant that the general objectives of teaching English in Saudi Arabia aim to enable the students to acquire the English language skills that will allow them to communicate with English speakers (Elyas & Badawood, 2015). Therefore, Saudi students must be aware of the importance of English as a language of communication internationally, and the teachers should facilitate methods that enable the students to practise communicative activities that support English speech development.

Moreover, it is important to consider the students' perspective as they need their teacher's guidance and assistance (e.g., to learn the correct way of writing the English letters). For activities such as singing an English song, the students enjoy singing and watching the videos of the English songs while listening and repeating many times.

This chapter has deliberated results from the analysed data of some EFL teaching strategies revealed in some collaborative English activities that were implemented in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools. The data show that some of these strategies were extremely effective as a process of English language learning/acquisition, and others provide conditions for English oral speech development. The next chapter will present findings from the analysis that revealed which strategies introduce conditions for English written speech.

## Chapter 8

# EFL teaching strategies: Conditions for English written speech development

### 8.1 Introduction

In Chapter 7, findings revealed that some conditions for English oral speech development can be created in English classes. This chapter will present findings on how the strategies and activities teachers implement in their English lessons create conditions for the development of English written speech. According to Vygotsky (1987, p. 202), “written speech lacks intonation and expression. It lacks all the aspects of speech that are reflected in sound. Written speech is speech in thought, in representations. It lacks the most basic features of oral speech; it lacks material sound”. In other words, written speech does not require the expression of opinions and thoughts using sound and intonation (Vygotsky, 1987). The English written speech is revealed when thoughts are presented in English written words and sentences that are understood and accurately structured.

The following presents the findings as a result of the analysis of EFL teaching strategies where the Saudi teachers use some English activities in their classes. The theoretical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD were used as analytical tools, which was helpful in answering Research Question 2 and its subsidiary questions:

2. What are the conditions that the English teachers create to support students’ English speech development in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
  - a. What are the ideal forms that are presented by the English teachers in their English classes, and how do these ideal forms interact with the present forms?
  - b. What are zones of proximal development created in English classes in Saudi primary schools?

### 8.2 Interactive teaching in writing the English alphabet on the board

Writing the alphabet is a preliminary stage in which the students need the help of the teacher to improve their language skills of writing and then develop their English written speech. Students (9–10 years old) who participated in this study have started learning the right way to write the alphabet. I begin this section with an example of the EFL learner starting to learn to write the English alphabet.

### 8.2.1 Case Example 1: Writing the letter “V”

The Saudi teachers use the combined electronic textbooks on the smart board in their English classes for introducing a writing task. Teacher Afnan in Al-Noor primary school displayed the electronic copy of the lesson on the smart board, showing a page designed clearly to help with writing upper case (capital) and lower case (small) alphabetical letters.

Extract from Observation 4 of Class 4/1 in Al-Noor primary school:

*The teacher asks the students to open their student books. She asks them: “What do we have here?”. They answer: ‘V’. She says: “Yes, the letter ‘V’”. She completes the lesson by reading all letters (V, W, X, Y, and Z) written on the page of lesson 4 with different pronunciations and examples (Van, Whale, Fox, Yo-Yo, Zoo). The students repeat the heard letters after her. Then, she plays the CD showing the lesson that containing the English alphabet on the CD and asks them to listen and repeat the letters and pronunciations after the English native speaker. Then, she moves to ‘chanting’ activity by playing the alphabet letter song three times and asks the students to repeat with the native speaker while she is singing. She instructs them to listen carefully until the songs finishes and not to confuse themselves. The teacher moves around to check after all the students. The teacher chooses different students from different groups to stand and sing in groups while pointing to the letters on their books. Praising them saying: Mashaa Allah.*

In this part of the observed activity, the English teacher prepared the students to learn how to write new English letters by first orally revising the whole alphabet and reading some examples from the textbook. The students chanted the alphabet song together with the CD played on the smart board, then from their textbooks. After that, the teacher looked satisfied with the preparation as she praised them once they finished chanting and moved to the next step of “writing the alphabet” (the extract below from the same observation):

*After that, she asks the students to open their workbooks on the page of this lesson. She asks the students to focus their eyes on the board carefully. Teacher Afnan asks the students to*

*watch her and repeat and pronounce the written letter 'V' with its example (Van). Then, she starts showing them how to write the capital letter 'V' starting from left to right, up and down. She writes the letter on the whiteboard while she is orally showing them how to write the capital 'V' in three lines. She says and points: "Capital 'V' takes three lines". Then, she completes and shows the way of writing the small letter 'v' in two lines. She explains orally while she writes the letter 'v' on the whiteboard. The teacher asks them to write letter on the air using their hands and fingers. She asks one of the students to write the letter 'V' on the board (as seen in Figures 7.4 & 7.5). Students do very well expressing and showing their understanding of the way of writing the letter. The teacher then introduces the writing of letter 'W' and giving them some instructions, such as writing from left to right, up and down, capital letter take three lines, small letter take two lines. She asks one of the students to write the letter 'W, w' on the board and she assists her by saying: "Up and down". The teacher moves to show how to write the capital 'X' and she counts lines in the whiteboard and reminds them to write between three lines and to start from left to right. The teacher does the same thing with the rest of the letters 'Y-Z' and continuing showing them to start writing the letters from left to right then up and down. Finally, she asks them to see the arrows directions to know how to write letters correctly. The teacher introduces the right way of writing a letter by showing them how to write from left to right on the board first and then on the air.*

*After that, the students start playing a game. The teacher asks two students to come to the front of the class, one of the students writes a chosen letter on the back of another student and she has to guess the letter. They enjoy playing with each other in front of their teacher. The teacher usually says: "Excellent".*

A digital video observation (for the process of writing) was recorded for one session of this English activity (writing the letter "V"), which provided more detail and descriptions that showed the occurrence of interaction between the presented ideal form and the present form of the student (see Figures 8.1 and 8.2).



Firstly, one of the students comes to start writing the capital 'V' on the board.



Then, the student started writing from left to right, up and down ..



Once the student stopped writing, the written part of the letter 'V' was not in straight line.



Then, the teacher cleaned the written part of the letter 'V' and asked the student to start over again.



Next, the student tried to write from the right side! But the teacher guided her and said: No, write from left to right.



The student followed her teacher instruction and started writing from the left side



The student couldn't complete drawing the first line of the letter 'V' and stopped, then the teacher corrected her.



Then, the teacher cleaned the written part and asks the student to rewrite again.



The teacher pointed to start writing from the top left. The student followed her teacher's instruction.



The student did write the first line of the letter 'V' successfully.



The teacher watched the student then guided her and said: up again.



The student successfully finished writing the capital 'V'.

*Figure 8 1 Learning to write the capital 'V' at Al-Noor primary school*



The teacher pointed to the two lines in the middle on the board, and asked: What about the small 'v'?



So, the student recognised her teacher's point and started writing the small 'v' between the two lines in the middle. The teacher reminded the student to start from left to right.



The student followed the instruction and nearly finished the small 'v'.



The student finished writing the small 'v' successfully.



Finally, the student successfully finished writing the capital and the small 'V- v'. The teacher praised the student and said: Thank you Sana, and asked the class to clap for her.

*Figure 8 2 Learning to write the small letter 'v' at Al-Noor primary school*

### 8.2.2 An analysis of Case Example 1

The analysis of this English writing activity (see Figures 8.1 and 8.2) shows that with the theoretical concept of interaction between ideal and present forms, the written alphabetical letters (in our example "v") is a form of the English written language that is considered the ideal form (developed form of written language). The teacher presented this ideal form in the classroom through the smart board and the textbook, and then started teaching the students the way to write the new letter in two forms (capital and small). The present form in this example is the skill of the student's English writing that is not fully matured yet. This present form interacted with the ideal form, as the student tried three times to write the letters correctly.

As seen in Figures 8.1 and 8.2, the student was progressing to write the letter as the teacher gave her all the instructions to help her learn the correct way of writing. The process of learning how to write a letter was accomplished in two steps. First, the teacher started writing on the board practically. Next,

one of the students wrote the letter “v” on the board successfully with the help of the teacher. The student sought her teacher’s help to guide and correct her three times until she was able to do it. As a result, the student finally wrote the letter “v” (the presented ideal form) and completed this writing task successfully. In other words, at the beginning of this writing task, the student did not use the accurate way of writing the letter “v”. Then, with the help and guidance of her teacher, she achieved a higher level of development in writing the alphabet letter “v”. The present form of the student (immature English writing skill) interacted with that ideal form (developed form of English letter) until the student could write the letter correctly.

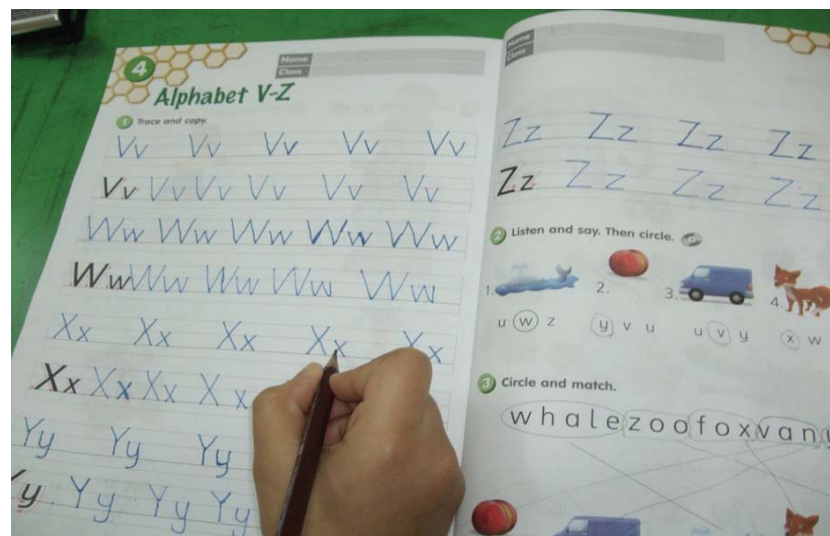
It can be seen that the written form of English letters (e.g., “v”) was presented by teacher Afnan on the whiteboard. There was an interaction between the teacher and the student while the teacher started writing the letter “V, v” on the whiteboard. However, this interaction is not for English speech development, it is an interaction for learning the English language related to writing skills. At this stage, the student needs to learn the correct way of writing the alphabet. The school child aged 9–10 years is exposed to English as a new subject in Grade 4 in Saudi primary schools, and is not capable of writing new letters in English as her mother tongue language is Arabic. Therefore, the presence of a teacher who introduces the cultural form of English letter “V, v” with instructions that show the correct way of writing the English letters, helped the student to learn and acquire the skill of writing the English alphabet.

Teacher Afnan assisted the student by correcting and guiding her while doing the activity of writing the alphabet. Then, the teacher accomplished the objectives of the lesson to learn, write and pronounce the letters, which are outlined in the teacher manual of the “Smart Class” curriculum taught in Grade 4 in Saudi primary schools (Mitchell & Malkogianni, 2017). Therefore, when the teacher applied a guessing game at the end of the lesson, the students successfully identified the written letters on their backs. This is because they finally learned the correct way of writing the letters. It can be said that the created condition in this activity is for acquiring the English writing skill, which is important for English language acquisition.

An analysis shows that teacher Afnan assisted and instructed the student to write and move from left to right, up and down, until the student achieved the writing task. The student acquired the skill of writing the new English letters with help from the teacher, who was there to assist the student until she was able to write the letter “v” independently. This was followed by doing the same exercise in the textbook without the help of the teacher (see Figure 8.3). The writing task was achieved in



collaboration on the board, then it was completed individually in the students' textbooks. However, is there any ZPD for English speech development in this activity?



*Figure 8 3 A student wrote the new letters “v, w, x, y, z” independently*

From the analysis of this writing activity, it can be argued that there is no ZPD created for English speech development, as the activity is about developing the specific skill of writing English letters. For Chaiklin (2003, p. 42), “zone of proximal development is not concerned with the development of the skill of any particular task but must be related to development”. There is no ZPD, but there is scaffolding used here when teacher Afnan provided the student with help and showed her how and where to write the English letter.

The analysis of this English writing activity reveals another important issue regarding English written speech development, as this activity is about teaching the EFL learners how to write the alphabet. Each English letter has no meaning if it is used by itself; however, each letter can be used with different letters to form a meaningful English word. The student in this activity did not learn how to write full words that show meanings or learn how to use them for communication purpose, which are necessary skills for speech development.

That is, we cannot say that word meaning is a phenomenon of either speech or thinking. The word without meaning is not a word but an empty sound ... This justifies the view that word meaning is a phenomenon of speech (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 244).

In conclusion, I argue that as explained previously, this writing activity is an important task to be accomplished to help the EFL learner acquire the English language. It is important to learn the correct way of writing English letters to learn how to write a whole English word and understand its meaning. As a result, this will lead to the development of the English written speech if certain conditions of speech development are created by the English teachers, such as practising the language in a social situation. In the case example of “writing the letter V”, there was no indication of written speech development, as the minimum unit of speech is a word. There were no written words presented during the class as ideal forms of English written speech.

### 8.3 Drawing and working in collaboration with show and tell activity

The teacher who uses this kind of activity in English classes tries to encourage the students to express their opinions in an interesting way. Drawing is an effective activity that encourages children to enjoy learning a new language. It eliminates the fear of learning a new language, as the learner can express their thoughts on paper.

#### 8.3.1 Case Example 1: Draw, show and tell

The following from the collected data shows drawing as a strategy of teaching English for children in Saudi primary schools.

Extract from Observation 1 for Class 4/1 in Al-Noor primary school:

*The teacher asks students to bring their drawings, then asks them to look at their friends' drawing and answers her question: “She or he?” Then, each student described her drawing and repeated the sentences aloud (e.g. He's thin). The teacher asks them to raise their voices while forming full sentences to describe the drawings. She asks the students to draw any picture that shows adjectives 'happy, sad, angry, etc.', she says: “Draw as what your friend did before”. The teacher distributes empty papers, saying: “Draw and tell”, and giving them some instructions (e.g. draw happy, sad, make it bigger, use your colours). The teacher moves around checking after them. Then, she asks one of the students who draws a 'bear' to describe her drawing in English. The student says: “It's fat”, and the other student describes her picture and says: “It's thin”. The teacher praises them for their drawings and the right sentences. She also asks other students to come to the front of the class and describe their drawings. Teacher says in English: “Look at this, look at this drawing, listen to your friend”. The student says: “It's small”. The teacher gives them 'stars' for their great works. One of*

*the students tries to describe the researcher, she says: “It’s happy teacher Walaa!” The teacher corrects her by pointing to the board to clarify (She’s or He’s). The teacher asks another student to come and describe her drawing. The student (Dalia) answers: “It’s happy”. The students look happy and enjoyed doing that task. Some students laugh and start kidding about the misunderstanding of the instructions. Some students discuss with each other about their pictures in their group and with other groups, asking: “Small or big?” The teacher asks them to go back to their seats. Other students try to show their drawings to the teacher and say the sentences correctly. The teacher says: “Look at Janat’s drawing”. ‘It’s happy’. Janat’s friends look at her and smile. The teacher praises her, saying: “Excellent, Mashaa Allah”.*

In this activity, teacher Afnan presented some model works of students’ drawings that were described in English sentences to prepare the class to do draw, show and tell. Then, she asked the whole class to start drawing and describing their works using some English words. After the students finished drawing, they enthusiastically participated in describing their pictures in front of the class as they fully understood the required task. However, some had to be corrected and assisted in constructing the right description. For example, one of the students tried to describe the researcher and said: “It’s happy teacher Walaa!”. Subsequently, the teacher corrected and guided her to use the suitable pronoun and said: “She’s happy”. The teacher tried to show some other examples of the students’ works and encouraged some students to share and present their own.

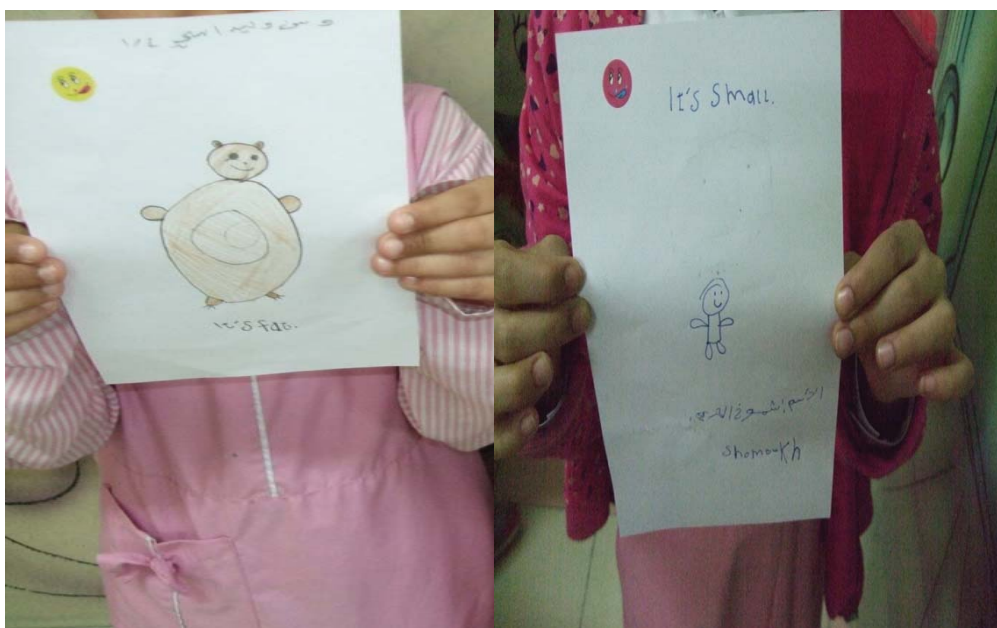
### 8.3.2 An analysis of Case Example 1

Analysis of the draw, show and tell activity reveals that there is an ideal form, which is the developed English speech of the peers and the teacher. However, the present form is the students’ immature English speech, which interacted with that ideal form. The peers with a higher level of English speech started to present their drawings and describe them in English. The teacher presented some excellent drawings of students with a higher level of English speech development (drawing pictures with written English descriptions) as ideal forms. These ideal forms consisted of some short sentences in English written by those students to describe their drawings. The students with a higher level of English speech introduced and orally described their works. Then, the teacher asked the other students to imitate and start drawing their own pictures and use some English expressions to describe their drawings. Next, she asked the rest of the class to draw their own pictures and imitate the more capable peers to prepare them to give a description of their picture. Several present forms were collaborating and interacting while doing the drawing task, which followed with a task of describing the drawing.

Although they started discussing their drawings, they could not finish the task and start describing their works without their teacher's guidance and assistance. Vygotsky (1994) generalised that the result of different present (rudimentary) forms interaction will be extremely limited in the case of absence of the adult's ideal form. He argued that the child will develop very slowly if there is no ideal form presented in his/her environment. The child will never attain the higher level of development if "his environment is made up of children of his own age who are at the lower, rudimentary form stage" (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 349). The teacher presented the ideal forms and organised the social interaction. Thus, this interaction between the ideal and present forms shown in this activity supports the process of English speech development.

Based on Vygotsky's concept of ZPD, the students in the draw, show and tell activity were at the level of potential development when they described their drawings with the help of their teacher, by imitating the peer with a higher level of developed written and oral English speech. It can be seen that the students developed their English written speech through the drawing activity, as they first drew pictures and then wrote a brief description (short sentences). Finally, they presented their work in front of the class, which means they were developing their English oral speech (see Figure 8.4). This level of development was achieved because of the instruction received from the teacher, as well as the students' imitation of the works of peers with higher levels of English speech development. For Vygotsky (1987, p. 211), "the child's instruction in speech, and in school instruction generally, is largely a function of imitation". Thus, the English written and oral speech of the students developed because of the developmental condition created within the students' ZPDs.

Teacher Afnan introduced the drawings of students with a higher level of English speech that included some English description using words in full sentences (written English speech). Then, she asked the students (with higher levels of English speech) to say their sentences in front of the other peers. Thus, through this social interaction and imitation of the students' works, the English speech of the other students developed.

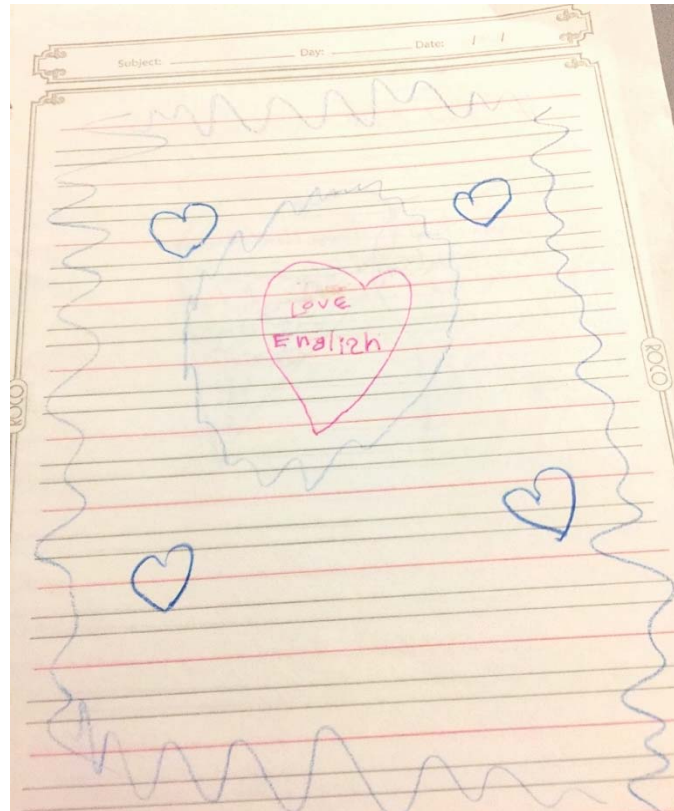


*Figure 8 4 Students' participating in the Draw, show and tell activity*

The development of English speech can be seen as children can express some of their thoughts in short sentences in the process of communication. The English speech of students developed once they participated in communicative English activities, after presenting them with some ideal forms (drawings and sentences of peers with higher levels of development of English speech). In line with Vygotsky's general law of development of HMFs, the students' English speech is at the embryonic stage of development. They collaborated to accomplish the English task, and could then draw and describe their own works independently.

The child higher psychological functions, his higher attributes which are specific to humans, originally manifest themselves as forms of the child's collective behaviour, as a form of co-operation with other people, and it is only afterwards that they become the internal individual functions of the child himself (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 352).

The students were presented with that kind of ideal form and started drawing and thinking how to form meaningful sentences that included words describing their pictures. According to Vygotsky (1987, p. 250), "the movement of thinking from thought to word is a developmental process. Thought is not expressed but completed in the word". This issue was evident in this case example and it was also recognised when the researcher visited the two schools for orientation and asked the students to express their feelings and opinions about the English subject (see Figure 8.5). The students drew images that including some short and full English sentences that expressed their opinion about the English subject.



*Figure 8 5 A student expresses her feeling towards the English subject in a few words*

Notably, through drawing followed by describing in English words or sentences, the teacher identified her student's level of development in English written speech, which then will be manifested in a form of English oral speech. The students think and draw, then gradually start expressing their thoughts in a few words, and later in full sentences. It is a:

development of the external aspect of speech in the child ... [which] begins with the initial single word utterance and moves to the coupling of two or three words, then to simple phrase and the coupling of phrases, and still later to the complex sentence and connected speech composed of a series of complex sentences (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 250).

In the example of the draw, show and tell (in relation to Figure 8.4), the teacher created conditions within the student's ZPD by presenting some ideal forms of peers' works (as models) and assisted them to imitate and produce full English sentences in written and oral forms. Imitation is used here because the English speech of the students as a psychological function is still maturing; therefore, the ZPD exists (Chaiklin, 2003). The student "can imitate only what lies within the zone of his intellectual potential" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 209). Imitation includes "everything that the child cannot do independently, but which he can be taught or which he can do with direction or cooperation or with the help of leading questions" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 202). Then, in collaboration with a teacher, the



school child develops from a lower level (few words) to a higher level of English speech, which is expected to develop (full sentences).

However, it was necessary to consider the objectives of the lesson indicated in the teacher manual, which aimed to enable students to “talk about physical appearance” (Mitchell & Malkogianni, 2017, p. 74). This was achieved after accomplishing the task of drawing pictures, followed by showing and telling about them. As has been noted, the EFL students in Saudi schools always need to be assisted and guided by the teacher, who encouraged them to participate in English activities. The students enjoyed this kind of activity and felt comfortable and happy, even when they misunderstood some instructions. Consequently, a friendly environment was built, which removed any fears of learning English, so the Saudi students could communicate using English according to the MOE expectation.

## 8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has continued presenting several case examples of EFL teaching strategies and English activities that were analysed to answer Research Question 2 and its subsidiary questions:

2. What are the conditions that the English teachers create to support students’ English speech development in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
  - a. What are the ideal forms that are presented by the English teachers in their English classes, and how do these ideal forms interact with the present forms?
  - b. What are zones of proximal development created in English classes in Saudi primary schools?

The chapter has examined the conditions for English written speech development that may be created through the interaction between the ideal and present forms of the students. The analysis of “writing the alphabet” with the teacher indicated that the whole activity shows the process of English language learning/acquisition. The teacher supports and guides the students to learn the correct way of writing the alphabet. However, case example “Drawing, show and tell” showed that the interaction between the ideal form (English written speech of a peer with higher level of development) and the present forms of students within the students’ ZPD led to English written speech development, as the students successfully wrote and described their drawn work. A condition for English oral and written speech was created in this English activity.

Table 8.1 outlines all interactions between the ideal forms and the present forms that occurred either for English speech development or not, as well as the ZPD, which are revealed in the analysed English activities throughout this chapter to answer Research Question 2.

*Table 8 1 Ideal and present forms and ZPD revealed in EFL teaching strategies*

| EFL teaching strategy  | English activity           | Case example  | Ideal form  | Present form                            | Interaction process   | ZPD  | Developing process                      |
|------------------------|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| Audio-lingual approach | Implementing English songs | <i>Hello, let's shake hands</i> song.                                     | No ideal form for speech development, only cultural form (the song's lyrics and the rhythm).    | The student's unmatured English speech. | Students repeat the song and act the commands.                      | No ZPD   | English language learning /acquisition. |
|                        |                            | <i>Sing the alphabet</i> song.  | No ideal form for speech development, only cultural form of English shown in lyrics and rhythm. | Unmatured English speech of students.   | Practising and repeating the song and imitating the English sounds. | No ZPD   | English language learning/ acquisition. |
| Interactive teaching   | Discussion                 | Questioning and answering followed showing <i>Sing the alphabet</i> song. | Developed English speech of teacher.  | Unmatured English speech of students.   | Understanding the teacher's questions and responding to her.        | Communicative situation created where children show the potential level of English speech. | English speech development.             |
|                        |                            | Preparing for acting out <i>Happy friends</i> story.                      | The developed English speech of the teacher.  | Unmatured English speech of students.   | Understanding the teacher's questions and responding to her.        | Communicative situation created where children show the potential level of English speech. | English speech development.             |
|                        | Drama activity             | "How old are you?" in   | Developed English speech of   | Unmatured English                       | The students imitate their teacher                                  | Communicative situation created where  | English speech development              |



|                        |                          |  |  |   |  |   |  |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|--|
|                        |                          | teacher–student pair dialogue.                     | the teacher and a student with higher level of English speech. | speech of the students.                   | developed English speech and the English speech of the peer.   | children show the potential level of English speech.  |  |
|                        |                          | Student–student pair dialogue in the textbook.     | Developed form of English speech in the textbook.              | The students’ unmatured English speech.   | Asking and answering using yes/no and wh-questions.  | The teacher guides the students when they speak to each other.  | English speech development.              |
|                        |                          | Teacher–student pair dialogue to bring ‘a marker’. | English speech of the teacher.                                 | The students’ unmatured English speech.   | The teacher speaks in English asking to bring something and the student tries to understand the speech of the teacher. | The teacher uses body language and movements to convey the meaning of her English speech to the student in communicative way. | English speech development.              |
|                        | Cooperative learning     | Acting out <i>Happy friends</i> story.             | The English phrases of the story.                              | Unmatured English speech of the students. | The students read to each other from the board.  | No ZPD  | English language learning / acquisition. |
| Collaborative learning | Writing on the board     | Writing the alphabet.                              | Developed form of written language e.g. ‘V’.                   | Student’s skill of English writing.       | The student tries many times to write the letters correctly under the guidance of the teacher.                         | No ZPD  | English language learning / acquisition. |
|                        | Working in collaboration | Draw, show, and tell.                              | Developed English speech of peers.                             | The students’ unmatured English speech.   | Through imitating other peers and starting to draw their own pictures and describing them using English words.         | Students describe their drawings with help of their teacher through imitating the peers with higher level of English speech.  | English speech development.              |

*EFL, English as a foreign language; ZPD, zone of proximal development*

To sum up, some results were revealed regarding the process of English learning in Saudi primary schools through analysis of the collected data. Techniques such as repeating, drilling and pronouncing are efficient ways to help the students learn and acquire the English language. It is important to improve the students’ language skills (reading, listening, writing and reading), as these are crucial for

EFL learning. Consequently, language learning/acquisition is important to develop English speech further. English speech is important to enable Saudi students to communicate internationally, as expected by the MOE of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, as shown through the discussion, some conditions of English speech development were created by the participating teachers in this study. It can be seen that the English teacher is the organiser of the English activities and consciously creates situations that engage the students in social interactions to support English speech development through communicative situations. It can be seen in Table 8.1 that English activities such as pair dialogue, draw, show and tell, and discussions about the shown song or story were effective in supporting the development of the English speech of the Saudi students.

The Saudi EFL learners should learn how to communicate using English as required by the Saudi MOE. Notably, the students of Al-Salam and Al-Noor primary schools achieved a higher level of English speech development when they used the memorised words of the song for communicating with their teacher. They practised and used what they learned for answering their teacher's questions. An interaction was initiated between the teacher and her students, which enabled each student to respond to the teacher individually. Thus, to support the English speech development of students, it was essential in this research to observe and analyse every moment of interaction that occurred between the students and their teachers, and with other peers of a higher level of English speech development. Speech is the means of communication; therefore, the development of English speech is important to enable Saudi students to communicate worldwide, which is the main goal of the Saudi MOE.

Data analysis and theoretical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD were taken as a framework in constructing interpretations and justifications for discovering effective ways to apply the sociocultural approach to teaching English and supporting students' English speech development. It is notable that some interactive English strategies show the students' positive attitude to learn English and participate in English activities (e.g., pair dialogue, show and tell, etc.), which then leads to developing English speech through communication. A discussion the next chapter introduces some strategies, including English activities mostly focused on language learning/acquisition, that might be improved to provide conditions for English speech development.

## Chapter 9: Application of Theory

### Effective pedagogical strategies in teaching EFL

#### 9.1 Introduction

The Saudi teachers' most common EFL teaching strategies and incorporated activities were discussed in Chapter 6. Some English activities observed in two classes are analysed in Chapters 7 and 8 to answer Research Questions 1 and 2 of this study. The cultural-historical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD were used as tools for analysing the implemented pedagogical strategies that were revealed in English activities, which provides further discussion on effective ways for developing EFL teaching strategies that support students' English speech. In this chapter, I seek to answer the third research question:

3. How might teaching strategies be changed drawing upon the cultural-historical theoretical concepts to support the process of English speech development of primary school students in EFL classes?

The first part of the chapter shows how using cultural-historical concepts are effective to improve the pedagogical strategies in teaching EFL, specifically the observed English activities, to support English speech development. The second part of the chapter suggests solutions for some strategies that do not support English speech development discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, to determine effective strategies English teachers can apply in their English practices in terms of CHT. It was important to address the dynamic process of learning English in Saudi schools and how EFL teaching strategies might be improved to support the development of students' English speech.

#### 9.2 The effective use of cultural-historical perspectives to support speech development

In this research, two key concepts of CHT were used as analytical tools for investigating EFL teaching strategies that might support the English speech development of students. The first main concept is the interaction between the ideal and the present forms. Vygotsky (1994) explained that because of the presence of the ideal forms in the environment that the child's present form interacts with, a higher level of development will be achieved as a result of this social interaction. As discussed in Chapter 2, the ideal form is a model that the child's present form interacts with at the beginning of his/her development to ultimately achieve a higher level of development of any HMF (e.g., speech). These HMF are in the embryonic stage (not matured yet) and will develop later with the help of an adult or more intelligent peer. From this point of view, Vygotsky's powerful concept of ZPD was revealed in developmental and pedagogical research.

Vygotsky's concept of ZPD is the other analytical tool used in this research. Vygotsky (1987) determined the difference between the actual level of development and the potential level that occurs in collaboration with other capable persons. Child development originates in a social environment where there are social interactions and developmental conditions within the child's ZPD created to support the process of development. It is the general genetic law of cultural development that shows this process of development (e.g., speech), which transforms from appearing as an interpsychological function on a social plane to be individualised as an intrapsychological function (Vygotsky, 1997). This law explains the importance of social interaction as a source of development. For instance, the presence of the developed form of HMF of an adult or a smarter peer as an ideal form in the child's environment will lead to develop the mental function to a higher level.

In this research study, it can be seen that the school child imitates the matured form of functions (e.g., developed speech of the teacher or more intelligent peer) and demonstrates high proficiency in mastering these functions through using English words to express their thinking. This interaction of ideal and present forms is critical as the school child learns how to master their own speech (e.g., as a teacher masters their own speech). The present form of a school child in this research interacts with the teacher's developed English speech, which is available in the child's environment (inside the classroom). This form of developed English speech acts as a model and moving force for the school child's speech development. In several English activities discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, different ideal forms are presented, either for English language acquisition or English speech development. The next section discusses some pedagogical strategies that are used to support the students' English language acquisition, although they were not effective in supporting the development of English

speech. The following discussion shows how these practices could be improved to support this process of speech development of students.

## 9.3 Improving the pedagogical strategies to support the development of English speech

As indicated previously, this research aims to support the students' English speech development to meet the requirement of the Saudi MOE, which seeks to enable Saudi students to use English for communication. Drawing upon CHT, EFL teaching strategies were investigated to find the developmental conditions that support the students' English speech. In fact, using theoretical concepts of CHT (the interaction of ideal and present forms and ZPD) as lenses to explore these conditions was efficient, as will be shown in the next sections.

### 9.3.1 Audio-lingual approach to support English speech development in EFL classes

#### *9.3.1.1 Implementing English songs within the lesson*

As seen in Chapters 6 and 7, English songs are one of the interesting and popular activities that have been introduced in English classes in Saudi primary school. The data show that English songs help Saudi students acquire the language and pronounce the English vocabulary successfully. The two participating teachers confirm that English songs play an efficient role in acquiring the language, as the students keep listening and repeating the song with native speakers on the CD. For Murphey (1992), acquiring the correct pronunciation and learning new vocabulary are some reasons for using songs in English classes to develop skills for learning the English language. However, rote learning that depends on repeating and drilling is not efficient to help the EFL learner to think, express and practice the language with others. This reveals one of the challenges in teaching EFL in the Arab world, which is “the lack of emphasis on developing skills—emphasis is rather on rote learning” (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013, p. 115). Again, rote learning will not achieve the Saudi MOE demands to have Saudi students who are able to communicate in English worldwide. Therefore, the English teachers should not depend on rote learning if they want to support the development of their students' English speech. It is important for the students to understand the meaning of the English words to use them as speech to communicate with each other. “Meaning is only one of these zones of the sense that the word acquires in the context of speech” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 276). For Vygotsky (1987, p. 244), “the word without meaning is not a word but an empty sound”. Therefore, word meaning is

important for speech development. It is fundamental to use the language as a means of communication between the child and other people in his/her environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

In Chapter 7, two main examples were deliberated in detail for a deeper understanding of the real situation of implementing songs in English classes. It was essential to explore the effective conditions that were created within these practices to determine if they are created to support English speech development or English language acquisition.

#### 9.3.1.1.1 Case Example 1: *Hello, let's shake hands*

Teacher Afnan at Al-Noor primary school selected an English song called *Hello, let's shake hands* (see Chapter 7). The song is full of instructions and commands for doing actions, such as shaking hands and clapping three times. As explained in Chapter 7, the songs that contain common expressions, such as greetings, are better for use in English practices (Millington, 2011). Likewise, songs that are used to strengthen questioning are more efficient in EFL classes. Millington (2011) claimed that songs that are used to strengthen questions taught in the classroom will be more effective, as the students can sing English songs that practice wh- questions. Therefore, teacher Afnan needs to pay more attention to selecting songs that encourage the students to communicate using English words, which then supports them to develop their English speech. She can choose songs that practice wh- questions and create conditions that help them to use the language rather than just learning it. As a result, when the students are engaged in communicative activities as interlocutors who produce meaningful words and sounds, their English oral speech will develop through social interactions. Then, the policy of the General Director of Curriculum Department Centre for Development in Saudi Arabia “to prepare our children to use English” will be accomplished (Elyas & Badawood, 2015, p. 29).

From Vygotsky's point of view, oral speech is revealed as a dialogic form (Vygotsky, 1987). Thus, it can be said that singing and repeating any English song is not enough for English speech development. Instead, practising the words and the sentences of the song in a sociolinguistic situation, as in everyday life practice, will lead to English speech development. It is important to engage the EFL learner in a dialogic situation that encourages them to practice the learned knowledge of the English song to develop their English oral speech. In other words, the chosen song must be designed

in a dialogic way that contains more English words and sentences to be practised between interlocutors.

The selected song *Hello, let's shake hands* is a form of English knowledge that enriches the learners with more English expressions and instructions. Here, the EFL learners are in a position of learning more English words and expressing their meanings by doing the actions of the commands. Moreover, this selected song enriches the students' English knowledge, as it creates conditions that help the students memorise the English vocabulary through following the commands. Even though the teacher tried to practice the knowledge of words from this song with the students, such as saying: *Hello, let's shake hands*, the student would not show her competence to speak any English words, as the expressions of the songs rely on doing actions (e.g., jump, stomp, shake, etc.).

The cultural form of English songs is important for developing the students' English speech. The English teacher can choose an effective English song that gives students the opportunity to practice its knowledge as a communicative activity. She can determine her students' level of proficiency in English speech by engaging them in conversations that encourage them to use the memorised words and learned structure of the song in meaningful communication. Engaging the EFL learners in communicative tasks provides them with the skills to comprehend, produce, manipulate and interact in the target language, while they focus their attention on mobilising the learned knowledge to express meanings rather than copying forms (Nunan, 2004). The next section draws upon the cultural-historical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD to focus on the role of the teacher to improve this practice of singing *Hello, let's shake hands* to be effective for English speech development.

#### 9.3.1.1.1 Organising the interaction between ideal and present forms within the students' zones of proximal development

The social interaction should take its place between the ideal form (the song's words and sentences as cultural form) and the present form (the students' use of the song knowledge in communication) to achieve the goal of developing the students' English speech. Therefore, the students need to practice the memorised language in communicative activities. It was emphasised by Knop (2000, p. 20) that:

Communicative activities allow students to use memorized vocabulary and memorized structures for realistic personalized, meaningful exchanges ... Students' motivation in

memorizing basic structures and vocabulary will increase when they know that later on they will engage in conversation, actively using the language to communicate their own ideas and wishes to each other.

Ellis (2008) also declared that it is important to provide the English learners with the opportunities to use the language through communication. It is significant that the literature highlights the importance of communication in language classes. Similarly, from a cultural-historical perspective, Vygotsky (1994, p. 349) claimed that “the children develop this language in co-operation, in society”. This means children’s speech development appears from social communications and interactions, as “originally, for a child, speech represents a means of communication between people, it manifests itself as a social function, in its social role” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 353).

In this research, the English teacher’s role is to organise activities and create the conditions within the students’ ZPDs to encourage them to practise the language collaboratively with others in different social contexts. Teacher Afnan has to engage the students in communicative activities or social practices, such as conversations, to practise the language with each other. She might extend the phrases of the *Hello, let’s shake hands* song to be used in communicative tasks; for instance, making a conversation asking about the expressions and the actions of the song. She might ask the students one wh- question by initiating a conversation and saying, “Hello, what do we have now?”. She can do the action (Jumping, stomping, etc.) then ask, “What did I do?” “How many times did I jump?” Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p. 200) proposed that “children develop the capacity to regulate their own activity through linguistic means by participating in activities (mental and physical) in which their activity is initially subordinated, or regulated, by others”.

The teacher can use this song as a cultural sign to mediate the process of speech development by extending the words and phrases of the song to be practised in social interaction between the students as in everyday life situations. Consequently, the students can practice the knowledge of the song by answering her questions as a dialogic activity. For Hedegaard (2009, p. 72), the “child development takes place through a child’s initiating or entering into activities in societal institutions”. Thus, engaging the students to practise the English language in everyday life situations is useful to encourage the EFL learners to communicate, which supports English speech development. Al-Nasser (2015, p. 1613) argued that to overcome any challenge in teaching English in Saudi Arabia, the “students should be taught by creating real-life situations that provide opportunity for language use”.



As a result, the students would practice the memorised knowledge of the song and interact with the ideal form presented by the teacher. Through communication with the teacher, the students can develop their English speech and practise the cultural form of the song in meaningful communication. From this social interaction, the students' understanding of the English vocabulary will be shown and their English speech will develop to a higher level, as they are able to answer the questions and communicate with their teacher. Here, the teacher could organise another activity that reveals the interaction between ideal and present forms within the students' ZPD.

#### 9.3.1.1.2 Case Example 2: *Sing the alphabet*

It can be concluded that teacher Eman in Al-Salam primary school succeeded in selecting the *Sing the alphabet* song (see Chapter 7). The song is not about greeting or designed in a questioning style; however, it is full of English vocabulary and sounds that strengthen the student's listening and pronunciation. The students in Grade 4 understand the meaning of the English words through the animated cartoons in the accompanying video that teacher Eman presents on the board. The *Sing the alphabet* song is a good example of an English resource for English language acquisition, as it was introduced to enrich the students' knowledge with more English vocabulary and pronunciations as the students listen, repeat and memorise the words, which are pronounced by the native speaker in the song. Further, I have argued that teacher Eman consciously created a developmental condition that support her students' English speech development by using the cultural sign of the song to mediate her communication with the students. The next section shows this interesting finding and how it was effective for English speech development to engage the students in a communicative activity.

##### 9.3.1.1.2.1 Social interaction created as the source of English speech development

Teacher Eman created a development condition when she engaged her students in a communicative activity to practise the learned language of the song. She asked her students to identify some letters and pronounce them correctly. The students were required to give some examples that started with some letters. The students remembered the words of the song and used some examples from the song. In fact, teacher Eman successfully organised the interaction between the ideal form (the developed English speech of the teacher) and the present forms of the students (not matured English speech). She mediated this interaction by using the cultural signs of the song (vocabulary and the expressions

of the song) to conduct English questions that needed to be answered by the students. The students of Al-Salam primary school practised the knowledge of the song with the presence of the teacher. It was efficient in engaging the students in a discussion about the letters and words that were shown in the song.

Teacher Eman created a condition for English speech development within the students' ZPDs by asking them some questions and encouraging them to use the letters and vocabulary of the song in a meaningful discussion. For Vygotsky (1978), there are psychological functions within the child's ZPD that are not matured yet but will develop in the near future. Correspondingly, teacher Eman could help her students develop their English oral speech, as they initially understood her developed form of speech. The social interaction revealed in the discussion between the students and the teacher shows how the present form of the students (immature English speech) and the ideal form (the developed English speech of the teacher) interacted in a social environment. In this sense, a social interaction was created as the source of English speech development.

### 9.3.2 Cooperative learning strategies to support the development of English speech

#### 9.3.2.1 *The efficiency of drama activities in EFL classes*

Drama activities make the learning experience more interesting and memorable (Boudreault, 2010). A variety of dramatic activities have been used for teaching EFL in Saudi primary schools. Acting out a story, role playing and dialogue are the most common activities used by Saudi teachers in their English classes. I have divided the next section into two parts. First, I introduced some significant activities that might help to support the English speech development of the students. Next, I present another drama activity in which the teacher can create developmental conditions for English speech.

##### 9.3.2.1.1 Playing roles of the character when acting out a story

The students in Al-Noor primary school participated in an acting out a story activity, which was presented by teacher Afnan (see Chapter 7). In this activity, the teacher prepared the students to act out the *Happy friends* story and identified every concern to ensure the students' understood the context of the story. Notably, the students read the sentences of the story while holding the faces of the characters (elephant, crocodile and frog). While reading the English sentences is good for

language acquisition, the students need to practice the knowledge of the story by being engaged in a role-playing activity. It is suggested that teacher Afnan can create another activity that allows the students to use the sentences of the story and make their own conversations.

The students might benefit from interacting and role playing each character in different situations to show their understanding of what they are performing. Speech is a means of interaction in a social context that expresses our understanding (Vygotsky, 1987). For example, after two or three times practising the story, teacher Afnan might ask the students to act it out without looking at the story on the smart board, to see how the students can use what they have learned and practised in a meaningful communicative situation. As a result, the English speech of the students will develop because of the occurrence of the interaction between the ideal and present forms. In this case, role playing as a pedagogical tool supports the process of English oral speech development, because the students can act out the story and use the previous knowledge of the story to communicate with peers in an English environment. The ideal forms (such as thoughts and expressions) of the story are transformed through the role-playing activity. For Doff (1990), the students need to imagine the role they play, perform the conversation and develop the dialogue in a context that is usually identified from the scene. Once the students act out the English story on their own, their present forms of the English oral speech will develop to a higher level.

The dramatic event that might be created in the English class, experienced by two or three students to practise the English oral speech through acting out a story, will first appear on the social plane (as interpsychological category). It then later moves to become individual (as intrapsychological category) when the students think and speak to themselves to form their own version of that acted scenario. So, the mental function appears twice, as it was external before it becomes internal (Vygotsky, 1997). This HMF (e.g., English speech) is constructed in a social environment through dramatic interaction between people. The development is forced to move to a higher level as a result of a contradiction that occurs in dramatic social interaction (Veresov, 2016). In other words, this dramatic interaction will lead to English speech development.

Again, role playing would be effective if the students could live the drama of the story and engage in a real-life situation practice. "Role play is a way of bringing situations from real life into the classroom" (Doff, 1990, p. 232). As a result, they would live the situation and enthusiastically start to communicate and cooperate to make their decision to ask and answer according to the comprehended knowledge of the story. Boudreault (2010) claimed that in the ESL/EFL classes, role

playing is an efficient tool which helps the students to cooperate and to exchange knowledge. Then, the Saudi MOE objectives to develop the students' awareness "of the importance of English as a means of international communication", and "to develop positive attitude toward learning English" will be accomplished (Elyas & Badawood, 2015, p. 31).

It may be effective for English speech development if the teacher could build an actual English context by using role playing to interact and exchange that absorbed knowledge from the story. *Happy friends* is a story that includes a lot of English sentences that can be used in everyday life situations. For example, "I am happy, I am thirsty, I am hungry, etc." are expressions that can be used in a role-playing activity to show the student's own behaviour in asking and answering by using their own English speech. Here, the students need to show what they have learned and how to express and describe their situations (happy, hungry, thirsty, etc.). In this manner, the students' present form (immature English speech) interacts with the ideal form (the sentences and the adjectives in the story). The teacher then helps her students within their ZPDs by creating a condition that allows them to practise the language and form their own English sentences to express themselves.

### 9.3.3 Interactive teaching applying pair dialogue as an effective communicative activity

Vygotsky (1987) declared that speech consists of rejoinders which forms the dialogue. Pair dialogue was used effectively by the participating teacher at Al-Salam primary school. I present in the next subsidiary sections two examples that show how teacher Eman creates conditions to help her students develop their English speech.

#### 9.3.3.1 Pair dialogue inside the classroom

Teacher Eman introduced her students with an example of a dialogue that she conducted with one student of a higher level of English speech. As described in Chapter 7 in the case example, "How old are you? Teacher-student pair dialogue" (see Section 7.4), the teacher initiated a dialogue by asking one of the students to join her in a conversation about some personal information (e.g., name, age, etc.). This activity is an interesting example that shows how the teacher creates a developmental condition and presents her students with an ideal form to interact with their present forms. The developed English speech of the teacher and the student of a higher level of English speech are the ideal forms, which interact with the students' present form of English speech. This condition was created within the students' ZPDs, as other students imitate and practise the same dialogue. Thus, the

students' present form level of English speech will move to a higher level of development because of the students' engagement in communicative practices in a social context.

#### *9.3.3.2 Pair dialogue outside the classroom*

Another good example of an effective pair dialogue conducted by teacher Eman was cited in her first interview (see Chapter 7). She explained that she practises the English language with her students outside the classroom and engaged her students in several conversations and dialogues as everyday life practices. She believes that her students sometimes could not understand her speech, but she used body language to simplify any difficult word and clarify the meaning of English phrases. From a cultural-historical perspective, the school child experienced a dramatic collision when they could not understand their teacher's English speech. This collision might be a moving force of the child's speech development as finally the teacher's speech was understood and the task was accomplished. The social interaction that was revealed between the ideal form (teacher developed English speech) and the student's present form (immature English speech as she could not understand or respond yet) is, therefore, the source of development. For Vygotsky (1997), all social relations stand behind the development of HMF (e.g., speech).

When the teacher determines the students' level of development, she can assist and instruct them within their ZPDs when they take part in dialogues or other English tasks, to help them accomplish those tasks independently in the future:

What lies on the zone of proximal development at one stage is realised and moves to the level of actual development at a second. In other words, what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow. Instruction and development seem to be related in the same way that the zone of proximal development and the level of actual development are related. The only instruction which is useful in childhood is that which moves ahead of development, that which leads it (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 211).

#### *9.3.4 The collaborative learning in the drawing, show and tell activity enhancing the development of English oral and written speech*

In the activity of drawing, show and tell, teacher Afnan presented one good example of ideal forms, which is the developed written and oral speech of the intelligent students (see Chapter 8). The present

forms of the students interacted with these ideal forms and this interaction is revealed within their ZPDs. The students also received instructions within their potential level of development until they could write sentences to describe their drawings and speak in English in front of the class. Drawing on the CHT, the students could develop their English written and oral speech because there was an interaction between the ideal and the present forms. Moreover, there was ZPD where the students' potential level occurred through their interaction with an adult and a peer with a higher level of English speech development. They could imitate what lies within their own ZPDs.

To sum up, learning English in collaboration is effective to support students' English speech development. The EFL learners who engaged in communicative activities to practise the learned English knowledge with classmates through social interactions within the classroom, become able to communicate in English with others worldwide in the external world. It is important to address the main goals of teaching English in Saudi schools, which is to enable the students to “benefit from English-speaking nations, in order to enhance the concepts of international cooperation that develop understanding and respect of cultural differences among nations” (Elyas & Badawood, 2015, p. 31). This could be accomplished once the Saudi students can initially use the English language to communicate with each other in the classroom as a social environment where ideal forms are presented and conditions within the students' ZPDs are created by the teachers. Then, this social environment will expand to include school, family, community and so on, where the Saudi children will practise the English language in everyday activities.

Children develop through participating in everyday activities in societal institutions, but neither society nor its institutions (i.e. families, kindergarten, school, youth clubs, etc.) are static; rather, they change over time in a dynamic interaction between a person's activities, institutional practice, societal traditions and discourse, and material conditions. Several types of institutional practices in a child's social situation influence that child's life and development (Hedegaard, 2009, p. 72).

#### 9.3.5 Linguistic approach in learning the alphabet

Notably, EFL learners certainly need to acquire English knowledge, such as letters, to be able to form words and sentences. It was shown in Chapter 8 how 9–10-year-old students learn the correct way of writing the alphabet with the assistance of teacher Afnan. This section of the current chapter will

suggest an effective way to support the students' English speech development rather than focusing on the process of English language acquisition.

#### *9.3.5.1 Expanding English writing activity to support English written speech*

The introduced activity for writing the alphabet in Al-Noor primary school was interesting to discuss and has been analysed in Chapter 8. Teacher Afnan presented new letters to be learned and practised by the students. She began to show them the correct way of writing the letter “v”, which she repeated many times with her students on the board. The example discussed in Chapter 8 shows the presence of the teacher to help her students interact with this ideal form of the written letter “v”. The student was finally able to write the letter “v” independently in her textbook after she learned the right way with the guidance and help of her teacher. Then, by the end of the lesson, the teacher asked her students to play a game and guess the hidden written letters.

However, after doing deep analysis for this writing activity, critical arguments were revealed. First, it was argued that no ZPD exists here. The teacher guided her student to write the English letter and did not support her to develop any HMF (e.g., speech) as she helped her to improve her writing skill and learn more English letters. According to Chaiklin (2003), ZPD is not concerned with the development of a skill (here, writing skill). Second, there is no English written speech development as the student only learns how to write English letters. For Vygotsky (1987), the minimum unit of speech is a word that has meaning. Once the students learn how to write full words and gradually use these words to write complete sentences, their English written speech will develop. Third, that example is illustrative of one of the main concepts of Vygotsky's theory of child development, which is the interaction of ideal and present forms in English language learning, not English speech development. The “English learners receive little exposure to communicative situations which, in turn, leads to poor results of the overall teaching-learning activities” (Al-Seghayer, 2014, p. 19).

Therefore, applying cultural-historical concepts in EFL teaching activities is efficient to develop the English speech of Saudi students, which then enables them to practise the language in different life situations. The teacher might implement a new activity in relation to the introduced information about the alphabet to help the students practise using that knowledge in everyday activities. For example, the teacher might ask her students to write some words that start with some selected letters, then to use these words to write full English sentences on the board. Likewise, she might ask them to name

objects in the classroom by engaging them in groups to guess the word of an object that starts with letter “v”, for example. If this is implemented, the students would engage in communicative activity as they respond to their teacher’s questions and share their English knowledge with others.

Then, drawing upon the theoretical concepts of ZPD and interaction of the ideal and present forms, the teacher can create conditions that help to develop oral and written English speech of the children in Saudi primary schools. The students, in practising such English activities, develop their English speech, which moves from an interpsychological plane (social) to an intrapsychological plane (individual). That is, “every function in the cultural development of the child appears on the stage twice, in two planes, first, the social, then the psychological, first between people as an intermental category, then within the child as an intramental category” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 106).

## 9.4 Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter is to answer Research Question 3 by introducing the findings and showing effective ways to improve the pedagogical strategies for teaching/learning EFL. The findings of the study indicate that based on cultural-historical concepts, teaching/learning EFL would be improved to support the development of students’ English speech. Data analysis shows that the teacher could create developmental conditions to support the students’ English speech. However, some other English practices, such as writing the letter “v” and practising the *Hello, let’s shake hands* song, need the teacher’s attention. Suggestions to improve teacher Afnan practices in these two activities were to create some other conditions for development that support her students’ English speech. For example, engaging the EFL learners in a discussion that encourages them to use the memorised vocabulary of the song as a tool to communicate and respond to their teacher is one suggested solution. Moreover, engaging the student into a communicative activity, such as discussion about examples that indicate some English letters, is another suggested solution to improve the activity of writing the alphabet to support the students’ English speech.

To conclude, from the cultural-historical theoretical perspective, the social environment is the source of development. The interaction of ideal and present forms and the created conditions for the development of English speech within the students’ ZPD were discussed in detail through the analysed data in Chapters 7 and 8. It can be argued that some EFL teaching strategies and applied



activities that were analysed theoretically are crucial for English language acquisition; however, they need to be improved and changed to support English speech development.

This research shows that through applying CHT in investigating the pedagogical strategies of teaching English, the research findings support the teachers in achieving the aims of the Saudi MOE and support Saudi students to develop their English speech and communicate with others internationally. Specifically, it highlights the importance of developing English speech that encourages Saudi students to communicate with others worldwide using the English language. As a conclusion to the whole thesis, the next chapter will summarise the study and discuss some implications of the findings. It will introduce the contribution of this research to the field of teaching EFL, as well as the cultural-historical research context and the Saudi research community.

## Chapter 10: Conclusion

### Research conclusions, implications, and suggestions

Something which is only supposed to take shape at the very end of development, somehow influences the very first steps in this development (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 348).

#### 10.1 Introduction

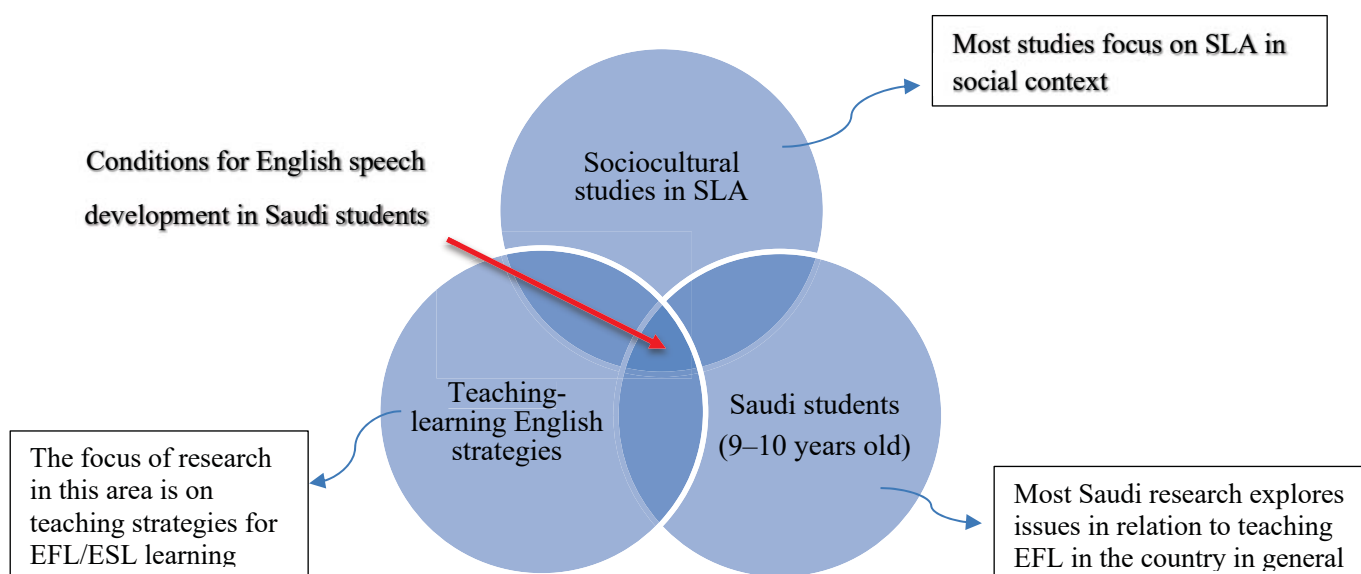
This chapter concludes this research study and reiterates the research questions that guided the study. It briefly reviews the research literature that explicates a model, which is the focus of this study. The literature played a crucial role in the development of this study, specifically, the EFL education in Saudi Arabia from theoretical perspectives. Drawing on CHT, this research provides new insights into EFL teaching strategies to support students' English speech development. Significantly, the interrelated cultural-historical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD were used as theoretical and analytical tools to find the best conditions for the development of the English speech of Saudi students.

Some integrated issues are discussed in this chapter, which brings together the major study findings by answering the research questions. It will be argued that some of these findings provide an important contribution to the field of EFL education, and particularly to the studies that explore the development of the English speech of students. Several significant implications will be revealed in this chapter that relate to prior research in the field of teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia, which are useful in supporting the development of the students' English speech. Moreover, obstacles and difficulties that confront English teachers in Saudi schools are stated in this chapter, which need the attention of the Saudi MOE. Finally, some challenges and limitations for conducting this research and the contributions of the study will be addressed by the end of this chapter.

#### 10.2 Context of the study

Drawing on CHT, this study explores the conditions for English speech development of students through investigating EFL teaching strategies that Saudi teachers implement in their English classes. The concepts of the interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD are used to analyse the current English teaching strategies to discover the conditions presented in Chapters 7 and 8. Moreover, in Chapter 9, the cultural-historical viewpoint is used to develop new ways of teaching English in Saudi Arabia that support the process of English speech development. It was suggested that the English teacher should present the ideal forms that encourage EFL learners to interact with each other using their learned English language. The teacher knows the students' level of English speech and can create conditions within the students' ZPD by engaging them in English communicative activities. For example, through implementing interactive teaching strategies in English classes, rather than focusing on showing a story on the board and letting the students listen, repeat and read the story words and sentences, the teacher could encourage the EFL learners to live the story and act it out using their own words through role playing the story characters and imitating the characters' speech. As a result, the students are able to practise their English speech to communicate with each other, which then leads to their English speech progressing to a higher level of development.

The focus of this study was identified by reviewing the literature. This research aims to examine the development of Saudi primary students' English speech by exploring the conditions for this development that were created when implementing EFL teaching strategies (see Figure 10.1).



*Figure 10 1 English speech development as the research focus*

### 10.2.1 Sociocultural studies in second language acquisition

Reviewing the literature showed that the majority of work on SLA, specifically ESL research that implements the sociocultural approach (e.g., Donato & McCormick, 1994; Katayama, 2013; Lantolf, 2000), indicated that the process of second language learning involves becoming a part of the culture of the learning community. It was claimed that the processes of the development of human beings take place through participating in social contexts (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Some cultural-historical concepts, such as ZPD in the process of learning, were enthusiastically researched (Brėdikytė, 2011; Chaiklin, 2003; Harvard, 1997; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Ohta, 1995; Walqui, 2006). Researchers who investigated ESL learning and teaching from a sociocultural perspective coincide with Vygotsky's statement that students need the assistance of other people to work properly within their ZPD (Dabarera et al., 2014). For Ohta (1995), ZPD is the difference between the level of development of independent language use of the second language learner, and the potential level of development that exists to use the language in collaboration with a more capable interlocutor. Notably, most of the SLA studies based on a sociocultural perspective mostly focus on the process of acquiring and learning a second language.

Studies that focus on speech development, specifically how the English speech of students develops through social interactions, are rare. Speech is an HMF that develops through interaction and collaboration with others in a social environment (Vygotsky, 1987). Language and speech are different, as explained in Chapter 2. Language in CHT is a complex cultural tool, whereas speech is a mental function, as it is a means of communication that is initiated in a social environment (Vygotsky, 1987). In other words, speech as an HMF develops through social interactions with others using the cultural tool of language to create meaningful communication. Therefore, conditions created for English language acquisition are important, but not always enough for supporting English speech development and, correspondingly, the process of English speech development needs to be supported by teachers using various teaching strategies and methods.

### 10.2.2 English as a foreign language teaching/learning strategy

This study was conducted in Saudi Arabia, in Saudi primary schools at a Grade 4 level. It was important to review the studies that explored English education in the country. Some studies introduced the history of English education and the main objectives of teaching EFL in Saudi schools (primarily Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Elyas & Badawood, 2016). Others investigated issues related to teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia, including teachers' beliefs, active learning strategies in EFL classes, constraints, problems and factors behind the low level of proficiency of Saudi EFL learners in high schools and universities (e.g., Al-Awidi & Ismail, 2014; Al-Nasser, 2015; Al-Otaibi, 2004; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Alwahibee, 2000; Asiri, 2017). There are a few studies that consider the English education in primary schools (primarily, Alasmi, 2016; Alotaibi, 2014). Therefore, this research is unique in the Saudi context as it examines the process of the development of English speech of students through investigating EFL teaching strategies and explores the conditions for English speech development.

A further discussion has been deliberated about the pedagogical approaches and strategies for learning and teaching ESL/EFL. For instance, cooperative learning for English learning (Essien, 2015) and collaborative language learning (Nunan, 1992) were discussed to show how this study is situated within the literature of ESL/EFL. This study sought to examine EFL teaching strategies to find the conditions created to support the development of students' English speech. Therefore, reviewing the ESL/EFL literature about EFL teaching strategies was helpful to show how students' English speech can develop within social settings while learning the English language. It can be seen that the phenomenon of English speech development was rarely revealed in the literature and no study considered the investigation of EFL teaching strategies to explore the conditions that support English speech development from a theoretical perspective (see Chapter 3).

Therefore, this study fills the gaps, and draws on the CHT in second language learning/acquisition and speech development to examine the development of Saudi students' English speech in Saudi primary school EFL classrooms. According to Vygotsky (1987), speech is a means of communication in a social environment, a means of conveying meanings. This point of view contributes to understanding the process of speech development of students through participation in various, specially designed communicative situations. Vygotsky's main theoretical concepts of ZPD and interaction between ideal and present forms were drawn on after examining the research problem of this study. These theoretical concepts, which have been discussed in Chapter 2, were used as the main analytical tools to answer the research questions.

The following are the research questions of the overall study:

1. What are the strategies that English teachers use in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
2. What are the conditions that the English teachers create to support students' English speech development in EFL classes in Saudi primary schools?
  - a. What are the ideal forms that are presented by the English teachers in their English classes, and how do these ideal forms interact with the present forms?
  - b. What are zones of proximal development created in English classes in Saudi primary schools?
3. How might teaching strategies be changed drawing upon the cultural-historical theoretical concepts to support the process of English speech development of primary school students in EFL classes?

Chapter 6 explains the findings that show EFL teaching strategies implemented by the Saudi teachers in their English classes to answer Research Question 1. Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the cultural-historical conceptual analysis of the data of the EFL strategies that are used through several English activities to answer Research Question 2. The analysis shows that teachers need to pay more attention to the students' English speech development when they implement EFL strategies. It was argued that focusing on the process of English language learning/acquisition is important; however, the process of English speech development should also be supported, as one of the Saudi MOE's main objectives is for Saudi children to be able to communicate in English worldwide. Consequently, the cultural-historical concepts orient the study to find effective ways to improve EFL teaching strategies to support the development of English speech of Saudi students, as shown in Chapter 9. In Chapter 9, it was argued that implementing EFL teaching strategies focusing on collaboration and interaction with others through organising the communicative English tasks, supports the process of developing students' English speech. It was shown that engaging the students in social situations to practise what they have learned with their teacher and other peers is effective, as the EFL learners will acquire the English language and develop their English speech through communication.

This study theorises EFL teaching strategies that support English speech development by drawing on the cultural-historical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD. It offers a contribution to the CHT and literature of EFL teaching and strategies that support English speech development. New insights into students' English speech development have been disclosed through the English practices in two Saudi primary schools to explore the conditions for English speech

development in EFL teaching strategies. The data of this cultural-historical study are constructed and analysed comprehensively to resolve the research problem, as will be shown in the next section.

### 10.3 The wholeness methodological approach of the study

Framed by CHT (see Chapter 2), this research argues that there are conditions for the development of students' English speech. This cultural-historical case study examines English speech development as an HMF. The wholeness methodological approach has been used for investigating EFL teaching strategies, which are used by Saudi teachers in their English classes to find the best ways to support students' English speech development. The wholeness methodological approach of the study means that the data were gathered and generated through observing several English activities and analysed comprehensively, as the Saudi MOE requires, with the teachers' and students' perspectives taken into consideration. Some English activities shown in Chapter 6 were analysed in Chapters 7 and 8 to show how EFL teaching strategies that depend on interaction and communication support the students' English speech development.

The methodological approach that has been used in this research "is based on the idea that research always implies some interaction and that every kind of interaction implies a kind of communication where meaning is created between the researcher and the researched persons in the social situation" (Hedegaard, 2008b, p. 49). The investigation of several EFL teaching strategies focuses on several interactions between participants (teacher–student and student–student), which occurred inside the classroom through doing English activities, to find conditions for English speech development. It was important to observe students' interaction with their teacher and other peers to find whether the implemented EFL teaching strategies support English speech development. Therefore, it was important to observe and interpret "the child as an individual person and see the child as a participant in a societal collective interacting with others in different settings" (Hedegaard, 2008e, p. 10). Consequently, the Saudi MOE's main goal of teaching EFL, teachers' perspective and students' perspective, were taken into consideration when conducting this research study.

As shown in Figure 10.2, the methodological process of this study was developed progressively, in a dynamic way. The data were collected through class observations, photography and teachers' interviews. Then, the collected data were analysed through the wholeness approach to theorise EFL teaching strategies and answer the research questions. They were organised so they could be

interpreted through Hedegaard's (2008b) three levels of interpretation, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

At the first level of interpretation, student–student interactions and teacher–student interactions that occurred during some English activities (e.g., pair dialogue, show and tell, and acting out a story) were interpreted with the common-sense understanding of the field notes and photos taken through the observed English classes and teachers' interviews. The interpretation at this level did not focus on theoretical concepts (i.e., the interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD) but shows my initial interpretations of several interactions that occurred in the observed setting. At this first level of interpretation, the researcher commented on her understanding of participants' interactions in the activity setting that did not require explicit concepts (Hedegaard, 2008b).

Second, the analytical process proceeded to the situated practice interpretation, where data were interpreted from different perspectives, such as the students', teachers' and MOE's perspectives. The dialectical-interactive approach of this cultural-historical study researches the conditions for English speech development and how students participate in English activities. "This allows the conditions and the child's development to be conceptualised as a whole. Thereby the research problem becomes connected to how well the researcher in his or her conceptualisation can handle the different perspectives" (Hedegaard, 2008a, p. 35). It was important to take into consideration different participants' perspectives (teachers' and students' perspectives) regarding the implemented EFL strategies and activities. I adopted Hedegaard's (2008b) four themes for interpretation at this second level of interpretation. First, the whole observations and interviews were read to highlight the researched participants' intentions. Second, different interaction patterns (teacher–student and student–student interaction) in English classes were identified. EFL teaching strategies implemented by the participating teachers in their English classes, and conditions that were created by the teachers to support the process of English learning were determined by the third theme. Finally, I determined EFL teaching strategies and the English activities in which students did or did not demonstrate competence in English speech development.

Third, at the thematic level of interpretation, I used theoretical concepts to analyse the situated interpretations (Hedegaard, 2008b). The theoretical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD are the lenses for interpreting the data. Then, the systematic analysis of each English activity and several interactions revealed within the implemented EFL strategy are used at the



thematic level to finally theorise EFL teaching strategies and answer the research questions to meet the research aims.

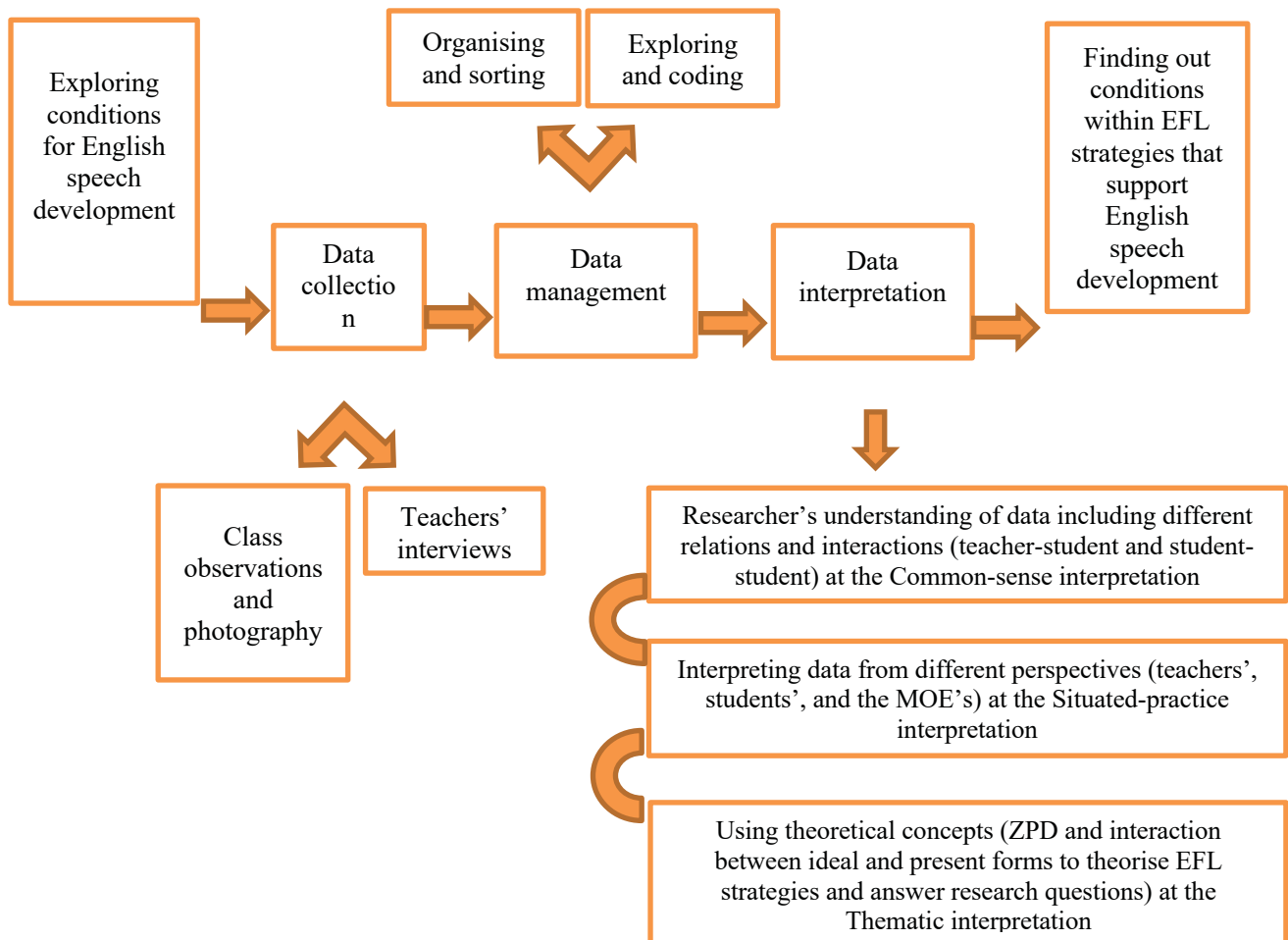


Figure 10 2 The methodological process of the study

*EFL, English as a foreign language; MOE, Ministry of Education; ZPD, zone of proximal development*

This research study focuses on “the real conditions that determine the development of speech, especially, speech interaction” (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 270). It aims to discover how students’ English speech develops through EFL teaching strategies that depend mostly on interaction and collaboration of the school child with the teacher and peers. Through the three levels of interpretations in analysing the collected data, some conditions for English speech development have been revealed and discussed comprehensively. The case examples that were discussed in Chapter 7 shows how the English teachers support the Saudi students’ English speech development by engaging the EFL learners in communicative tasks that allow them to use English for communication. The cultural-historical

concepts are used as theoretical and experimental instruments to investigate the process of mental development (Veresov, 2014). An analysis shows that implemented teaching strategies allow conditions for English speech development to be created through various implemented EFL teaching strategies (e.g., cooperative, collaborative and interactive learning) within several English activities (pair dialogue, playing games, acting out a story), as the interactions between the ideal and present forms were organised effectively. For instance, the developed English speech of the teacher as an ideal form interacted with the present forms of the students' speech as it is still at the embryonic stage, as it can be seen in the next case example.

In the case example 'Teacher–student pair dialogue to bring a marker' in Chapter 7, teacher Eman created conditions within the student's ZPD, and her developed English speech interacted with the embryonic function of the student's English speech when she requested the student bring her an object (marker) from her office. The 9–10-year-old student's English speech is not matured yet, as she could not understand the developed English speech of her teacher. Teacher Eman identified this immature function of the student's English speech and engaged the student in a dialogue to encourage her to think, speak and use her immature English speech for social interaction. The teacher recognised the importance of social interaction to use English knowledge to practise an everyday life conversation. Teacher Eman instructs her students to practise the English language inside the classroom and she consciously creates a meaningful communication with her students outside the classroom to support their English speech development. The school child in that case example was kindly instructed and motivated within her ZPD to understand the developed English form of the teacher's speech. It was a new experience for a school child of age 9–10 years to understand the developed English speech of the teacher. Teacher Eman organised a communicative activity with a school child by engaging her in a social situation to support the student's English speech development. This activity shows the English speech of the student as an HMF that is developing through interaction and communication, as it is at a lower level of development at the moment. This task was successfully accomplished when this HMF, the student's immature English speech, was mediated by the semiotic tool (English language). According to Moll (1990), language as a cultural sign is used by humans to mediate their interactions with each other. Then, the teachers are supposed to use the English language to mediate the students' activities and communication, not to control them. Veresov (2010, p. 86) stated that "mediation is essential: every higher mental function is a mediated function".

Moreover, the school child here was challenged as she could not understand the message of the speech of the teacher the first time. The school child experienced a dramatic collision as she failed to

understand the teacher's request and started to think carefully until she finally brought the right marker.

Such emotionally experienced collisions can bring radical changes to the individual's mind, and therefore can be a sort of act of development of mental functions—the individual becomes different, he becomes higher and above his own behaviour. Without internal drama, such mental changes are hardly possible (Veresov, 2010, p. 88).

The school child could identify and learn new English words from the dramatic event she experienced and then she could construct English sentences to respond to her teacher, which indicates the oral English speech development.

Thinking dialectically, the mentioned case example showed how different cultural-historical theoretical concepts are interrelated and used together to dialectically analyse the collected data. Thus, investigating EFL teaching strategies used in English classes opened the window for researching the conditions that were created by the Saudi teachers, as well as observing students while they participated in these English practices. The perspectives of the participating English teachers and the students were taken into consideration in the process of analysing the collected data. The data generated and analysed as part of this study provided another view on teaching EFL from a cultural-historical perspective, which supports the English speech development of students. Concerns were revealed through data analysis that show some significant dialectical relations regarding the process of English speech development as an HMF on one hand, and how English language learning/acquisition is related to English speech development on the other.

## 10.5 Dialectical research

Vygotsky (1993, p. 283) declared that “development, according to a well-known definition, is precisely the struggle of opposites. This view alone can support truly dialectical research on the process of children's development”. This research study comprises some major dialectical relations regarding students' English speech development.

### 10.5.1 English speech development from a social plane to an individual plane

Vygotsky (1994) declared that the child's higher psychological functions originally reveal as a form of collective behaviour in cooperation with others, which later become the child's internal individual functions. Speech as an HMF begins with the interpsychological plane and then becomes a function of the intrapsychological plane within the children themselves (Vygotsky, 1997). The students in this study moved in their English speech development from a social plane (teacher and student's communication) to an individual plane (the English speech of individual student). In other words, the child communicates with other people using speech that "manifests itself as a social function, in its social role" and gradually "a child learns how to use speech to serve himself" (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 352). Speech develops from being social as a means of communicating with others externally, and then it is represented as a means of an individual's inner thinking when children use speech to serve themselves.

The research findings emphasised that the student's social relations with the English teacher and peers with a higher level of English speech play an effective role in supporting the development of the students' English speech. English activities that were implemented by the two English teachers indicate that teacher–student social interaction acts as a source of students' English speech development. Interaction between the ideal and present forms and ZPD conceptualise the general idea of the social environment as a source of development and the interaction of the social and individual planes in development. The process of interaction of the ideal and present forms that the teacher creates, maintains and supports the process of English speech development as the HMF. The research investigation and analysis show that some conditions for the development of students' English speech were created.

Thus, as discussed in Chapter 7, teacher Eman practises different "teacher–student pair dialogues" and engages the students in communicative situations. In the case example "How old are you? in teacher–student pair dialogue", teacher Eman constructed a comprehensible English dialogue by practising the absorbed knowledge ("Hello, what is your name? How are you?") introduced in the previous lessons of the textbook. The teacher organised that activity and started a conversation with one student with a higher level of English speech development who speaks English very well to give the other students the chance to watch and repeat before practising themselves. Here, teacher–student interaction was initially revealed, followed by student–student interaction for pair dialogues; that is, social interaction that leads to speech development occurred within a social context (Vygotsky, 1994). This social interaction was first initiated by the teacher, then practised in pairs, which remarkably led to oral speech development through performing dialogues. The English speech of the students moved

to a higher level of development through communication with the developed English speech of the teacher in a social situation. Students with a rudimentary function of English speech constructed their own conversations, repeating the teacher–student pair dialogue presented in this English activity. They carefully watched the teacher when she spoke the dialogue and then used their English speech to practise what they learned with each other. Their English speech developed as they interacted with others in the classroom using the learned English knowledge.

A further important finding presented in Chapter 8 was shown in the activity of draw, show and tell. In this case example, teacher Afnan created the conditions to support her students' English oral speech development within their ZPDs. She intelligently assisted the students to develop their immature function of English speech by introducing some ideal forms of peers with a higher level of English speech and showing their drawings, which were described in written words and then orally. The students started to imitate their peers' works to accomplish the given task. They collaborated and helped each other and learned from each other; that is, the peer with a higher level of English speech assisted another peer in groups until the task was accomplished. Finally, the students were able to independently orally describe their thoughts on the pictures they drew, accompanied by English written sentences. It is an HMF that is manifested in collective behaviour, which then became an internalised behaviour (Vygotsky, 1994). Consequently, with the presence of the ideal forms in an organised social interaction with the present forms of the immature English written and oral speech, the English speech of students moved from a social plane (interpsychological) to an individual one (intrapsychological).

To summarise, it was confirmed that the students' HMF (English speech) moves from a social plane to an individual one. The interactions between the ideal and present forms support this development. The ideal form was introduced through the teacher's developed speech and peers with a higher level of English speech development. For this study, speech development was investigated through EFL teaching strategies, mainly the English activities that were implemented in English classes by the two Saudi teachers. The development of English speech occurs as HMF moves from social to individual. The school child's immature English speech interacted with the teacher's developed English speech or a peer with a higher level of English speech to complete an English task. Then, the students progressed to use their internal thinking to serve themselves using their immature English speech when they interacted with each other during pair dialogues and show and tell activities. It was significant to determine that some interactive teaching strategies that were used in the observed English activities (i.e., pair dialogue) support the development of the English speech process of

speech development. However, the analysis shows that other English activities enhance the process of English language acquisition (i.e., English songs) and can be improved to support the development of English speech.

### 10.5.2 The interrelated processes of English speech development and English language acquisition

The focus of this research study is to examine the development of English speech through investigating EFL teaching strategies in Saudi primary schools as was highlighted in Chapters 1 and 3. Throughout this thesis, it can be argued that the English speech development and the English language learning/acquisition are two interrelated, but different processes, which are important in learning English and using English as a tool for communication with others worldwide. English language acquisition is a process of learning the English language to communicate with others who speak this language. It is a tool that involves sounds, words and sentences used in social interactions in the form of speech (Egorova et al., 2016). Then, English speech development is a process where speech is an HMF that develops as a result of social interactions using the language as a tool of communication (Vygotsky, 1987).

The analysis of several EFL teaching strategies that include some English activities discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 clearly showed that the students need to learn and acquire the English knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciations and grammar to be able to construct correct English words and sentences to use in meaningful communication. As a result, the English speech of students develops as the students are able to use the learned English knowledge in communicative activities through using their English speech. Consequently, they learn new English words and vocabulary when they use their English speech as a means of communication. According to Vygotsky (1987, p. 180):

learning a new language does not begin with the acquisition of a new orientation to the object world. It is not a repetition of the developmental process that occurred in the acquisition of the native language. The process begins with a speech system that has already been learned, a system that stands between the newly learned language and the world of things.

In brief, students acquire the English language and learn vocabulary, grammar, syntax, intonations and other language skills that enable them to communicate with others in the world using this learned knowledge. Once the students use English in communicative situations, their English speech develops

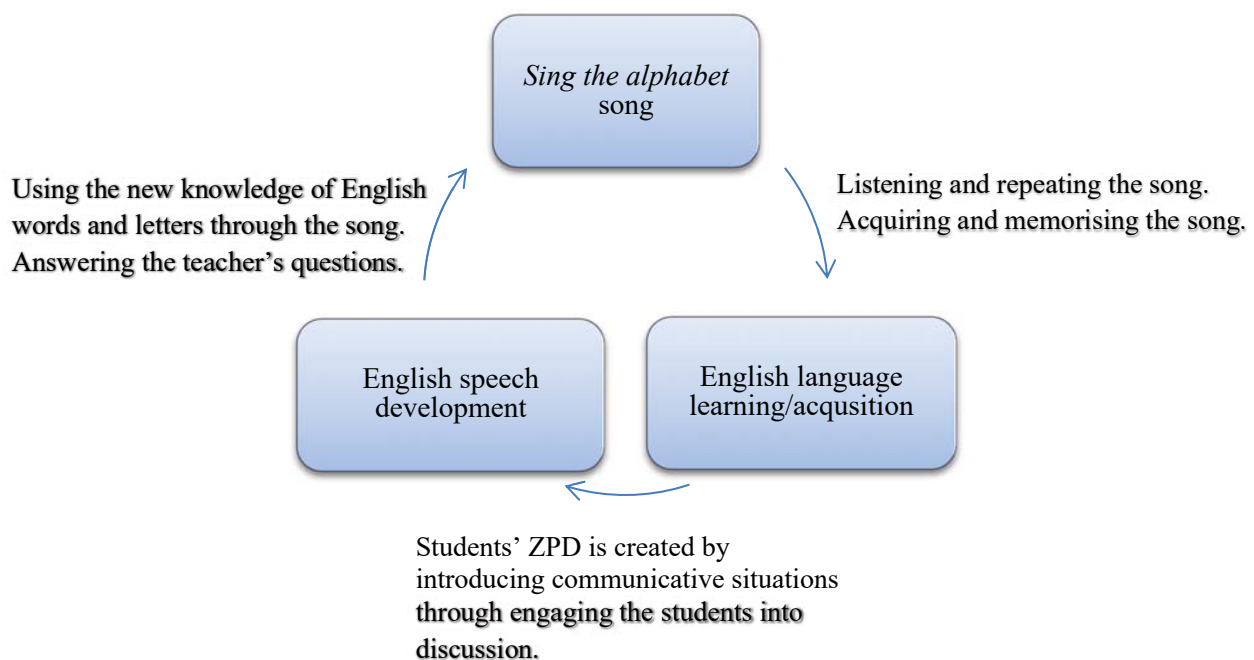
as a result of their interaction with others using the acquired language. Consequently, through this communication and interaction, they learn and acquire more English words and language skills needed for their development.

#### *10.5.2.1 The audio-lingual language approach of using English songs*

An audio-lingual language approach is used in teaching EFL when the learners are presented with the correct models of English sentences to be drilled and memorised (Krashen, 1982). As an example, in this research, English songs were implemented by the participating teachers to introduce the EFL learners to English words and sentences with their correct pronunciations to be repeated, memorised and acquired. One interesting discussion in this regard was revealed in the activity of implementing songs in English classes. It can be seen that using English songs in EFL classes is an excellent activity that builds a friendly environment to learn EFL. It was assumed by teacher Eman that English songs are effective in helping students acquire the English vocabulary through the music as well as the correct pronunciation of the words. Teacher Eman proclaimed that the students acquire the English vocabulary very quickly through the music; however, some English words are acquired without knowing their meaning. The students only learn some new English vocabulary and memorise the correct pronunciations of the song. Thus, the implemented song *Sing the alphabet* was an interesting song to learn new English letters and words and was an excellent form for presenting English knowledge in an enjoyable way to support the process of English language acquisition.

However, the students need to progress further to use this learned knowledge in meaningful communication. The students' understanding of the English words can be shown by engaging them in communicative activities. This was significantly achieved when teacher Eman created conditions to encourage the students to practise the words of the song in a communicative way in everyday life practice. Through the analysis of this case example, it can be seen that the teacher engaged the students in another activity helping them to connect the knowledge to their real lives. It is essential to build up the students' memory with more English vocabulary and create conditions that encourage them to be able to communicate with each other using this learned knowledge. Students of Al-Salam primary school were involved in a discussion about the English knowledge presented in the song. Teacher Eman asked some questions to identify English letters and give some examples of words starting with several letters. The students who engaged in answering the teacher's question were able to use their immature English speech to respond to their teacher. As a result, the main objective of teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia to prepare students to use the English language with others is supported (Elyas & Badawood, 2015). The Saudi students learned and practised new English letters and

vocabulary from the presented song *Sing the alphabet*, and then successfully used this knowledge to answer their teacher's questions (see Figure 10.3).

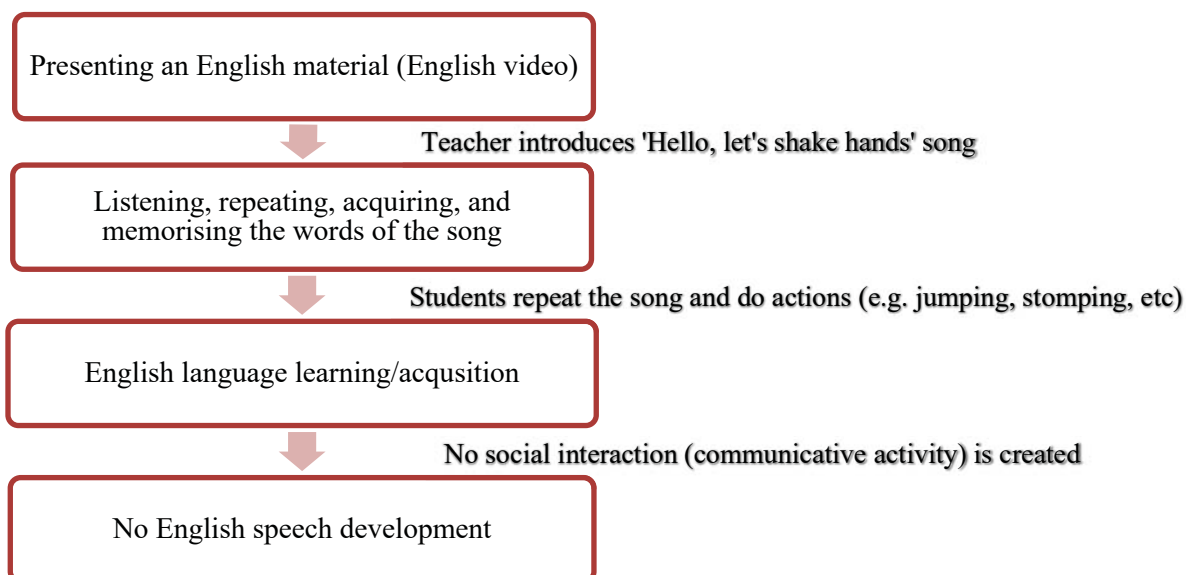


*Figure 10 3 English speech development through engaging the students in communicative activity*

*ZPD, zone of proximal development*

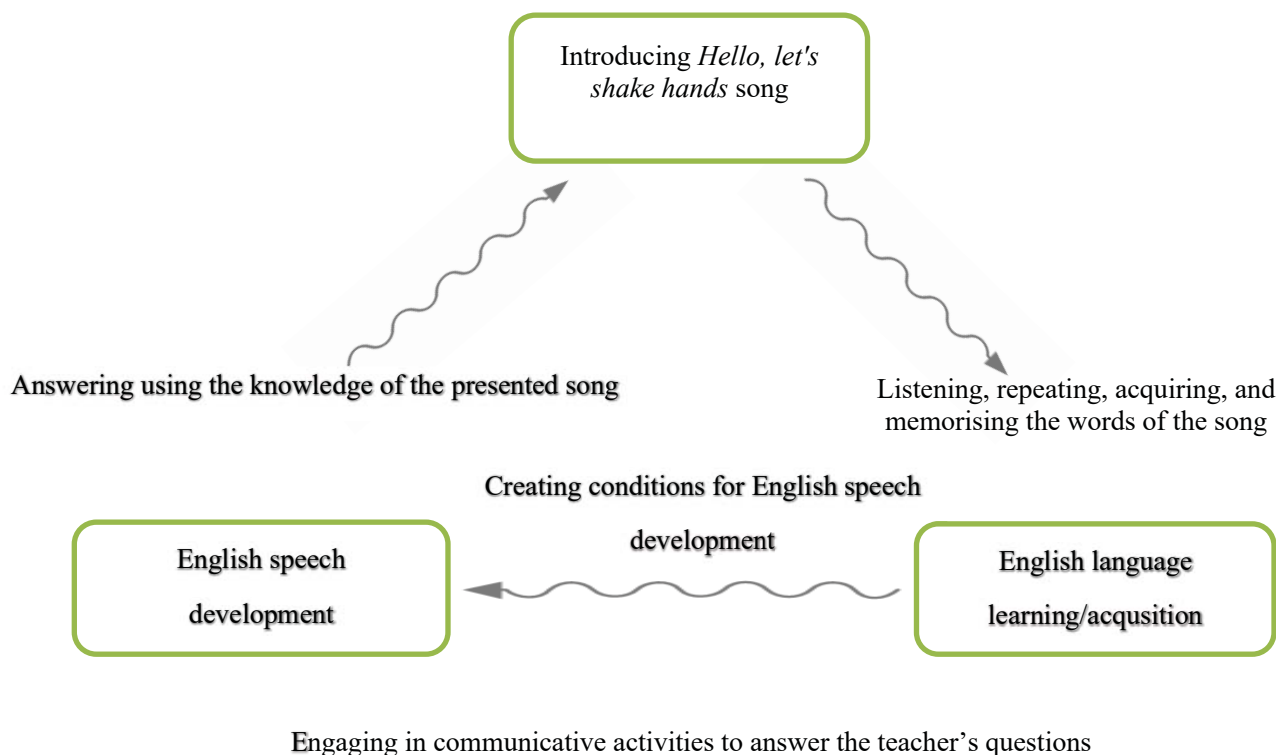
Another case example of implementing English songs as an audio-lingual language approach in teaching EFL is the English activity of the *Hello, let's shake hands* song used by teacher Afnan. The analysis of this example revealed that there is no indication of English speech development when using songs that include English words that prompt actions and commands, such as jump, clap, stomp and shake. The students of Al-Noor primary school did not practise more English words and sentences in a communicative way. This song is one good example of the English materials that are used in EFL classes to improve the students' listening skills and acquire the pronunciation of the English words (see Figure 10.4).





*Figure 10 4 The process of English language learning/ acquisition through implementing Hello, let's shake hands song*

In aligning with the Saudi MOE's general objectives of teaching and learning EFL in the country, Saudi students should be able to communicate with others internationally. Therefore, the teacher needs to pay attention to supporting the students' English speech development to allow them to use the knowledge of the song in everyday life situations. Thus, the EFL teacher has to be careful in choosing English songs that are effective for developing the students' English speech. The best-chosen songs in EFL classes are those that practice wh- questions (Millington, 2011). This is in line with Vygotsky's (1987) understanding that oral speech is dialogic. The social interaction in communicative situations must occur in the environment, as speech is a means of communication (Vygotsky, 1998). One suggested solution for improving this activity, as mentioned in Chapter 8, was for teacher Afnan to engage the students in discussion by asking some English questions about the actions she performs, to encourage the students to use their immature function (English speech) to respond to their teacher's questions using the learned vocabulary of the song. Then, the students who learned the English vocabulary through drilling and repetition will be able to communicate using what they have learned (see Figure 10.5).



*Figure 10 5 Engaging the students into communicative activities answering the teacher's questions*

Notably, the process of acquiring and learning English vocabulary through presenting English songs and using techniques such as listening, drilling, copying and repeating is an effective tool used for English language acquisition. However, for English speech development, the teachers need to create conditions within the students' ZPDs and engage the students in different communicative activities, such as participating in a discussion and answering the teacher's questions using the learned English knowledge of the song (as seen in Figure 10.5). Eventually, the English oral speech of students will develop because of the interactions between some ideal and present forms that occur in a social context to use the knowledge of the song in everyday life situations. Moreover, through communication, the EFL learners learn more new English words and construct new English sentences, which supports their English language acquisition. It can be seen that the two processes of English language learning/acquisition and English speech development are interrelated and complementary. The Saudi English teachers should not focus on English language learning/acquisition only; rather, they need to create conditions to support the English speech development process if they seek to achieve the Saudi MOE goals of teaching EFL in the country. Saudi students need to acquire several language skills and to communicate internationally with others.

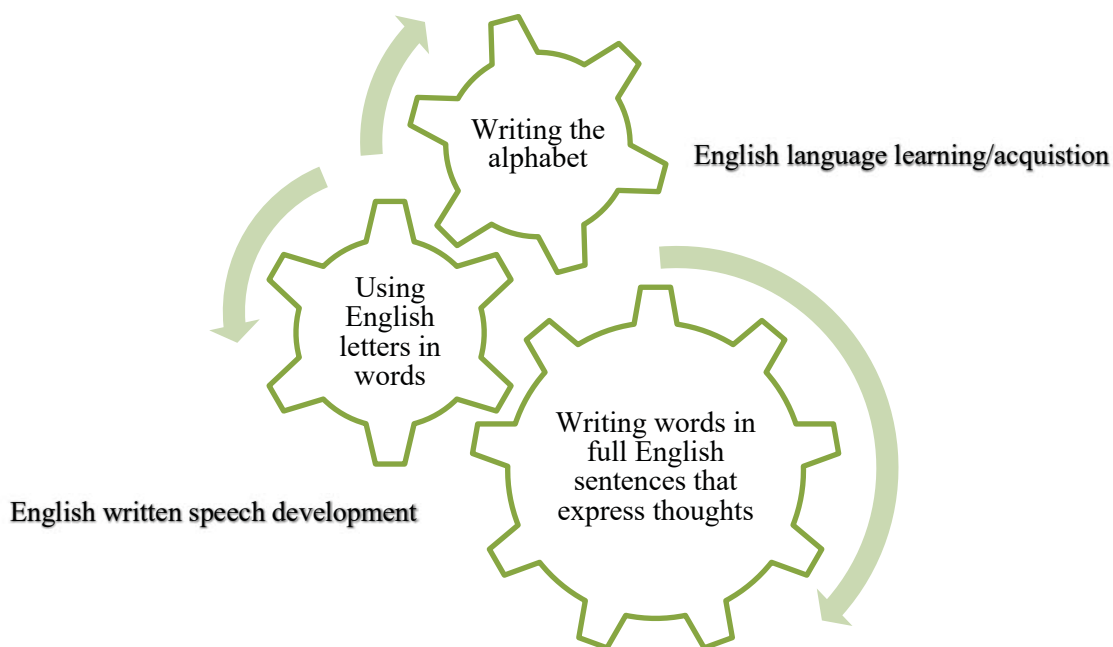
### *10.5.2.2 Working in collaboration to achieve a task of writing the alphabet*

As discussed in Chapter 3, in the recent learner-centred approach, the teacher and learner are effective members in the learning community as they collaborate towards a useful learning experience (Wang, 2008). Each student is part of the learning community in a collaborative learning classroom. The language learner now can give and receive feedback on their work, which improves their language skills (Storch, 2005). This was revealed remarkably in the English activity implemented by teacher Afnan for “writing the letter v” (see Chapter 8). The analysis of this activity at the common-sense interpretation level shows that the student accomplished the task of writing the letter “v” in collaboration with a more capable person (teacher). The teacher instructed and corrected her student to teach her the accurate way of writing that letter. Indeed, second language learners need to be corrected by the teacher, as this enables them to progress in the target language (Ellis, 1989). Krashen (1982) and Thomson (2012) also declared that error correction is a good teaching strategy that provides second language learners with the right feedback to help them improve their learning. However, based on the theoretical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD as the main analytical tools, it was notable that there is no speech development through implementing that activity at this stage.

In fact, learning a new English letter does not mean that the school child will be able to communicate with others via single letters. In this regard, Vygotsky (1987) claimed that the meaning of the word is the phenomenon of speech and the word is the minimum unit of speech. Clearly, letters have no meaning. Therefore, it was assumed in Chapter 9 that it would be better to add a complementary activity to ensure high proficiency of English written speech development. Learning English letters does not lead to English speech development as the minimum unit of speech is a word that has meaning (Vygotsky, 1987). Thus, the students acquire and learn the English alphabet; however, they need to learn how to use these letters in meaningful tasks. For instance, the teacher might ask the students to say or write some English words that include the letter “v”. Then, the students gradually form and write sentences using these words to express their thoughts or describe objects in their daily lives. As a result, the development of the English written speech of the students is better supported. Word meaning is important for speech development. The students need to learn new English words that disclose meanings to use these learned words in meaningful communication with the teacher and other peers, and then later with others in the external world. According to Vygotsky (1987, p. 28), “the characteristics of the word as a generalization or abstraction are a reflection of the child’s use of the word as a means of communication and social interaction, a reflection of its function in social

practice”. In other words, the words the students learn are used for communication and interaction with others.

In sum, speech is a means of communication, as declared by Vygotsky (1987). Therefore, the ability to write a letter does not show any indication of English written speech development, as this is only a preliminary stage in the process of learning English writing. The English teacher needs to extend further to encourage the students to write English words that include some learned letters. Afterwards, when the students are able to write several English words, they can gradually write completed English sentences that express their thoughts (see Figure 10.6). As a result, the English written speech of Saudi students will develop, and they will be able to communicate with others using learned English to express their thoughts in English writing.



*Figure 10 6 The process of development of English written speech through learning to write the alphabet*

#### *10.4.2.3 Cooperative learning in role-playing activity*

Role playing is a powerful tool in EFL classes as it encourages students to work in cooperation, make decisions, exchange knowledge and present empathy (Boudreault, 2010). The students are involved to participate in real-life situations to practise what they have learned in the role-playing activity (Momani et al., 2016). The case example of acting out the *Happy friends* story used by teacher Afnan in her English classes, shows the dialectical relationship between the processes of English language

acquisition and English speech development (see Chapter 7). The analysis of this case example indicated that the students need to learn the vocabulary and read the sentences of the story. They need to listen, repeat and read with the native speaker of the story until they acquire the correct pronunciation of the English words.

However, the teacher can better engage the students in a communicative activity to show their understanding of the English words, phrases and sentences of the story. This is a condition of development of English speech of the students, which shows the students' mastery of their English speech in a role-playing activity instead of reading sentences and playing with the characters to act out a story.

This study argues that there is a dialectical relationship between the two processes—English language learning/acquisition and English speech development. Throughout Chapters 7 and 8, it can be seen that the EFL learners need to learn and acquire the English language (words, grammar, sentences, etc.) when engaging in several English activities. The teachers encourage the students to improve the four skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading by using different interactive and collaborative learning strategies. It is clear that learning and acquiring the English language is essential to enable Saudi students to communicate with others in English. It is important to encourage the students to communicate using the learned English knowledge to develop their English speech by implementing several English activities that reflect learning through interaction and communication. The dialectical relationship is revealed as the EFL learners enrich their English knowledge and learn more new vocabulary through communication. This meaningful communication, which occurs through implementing EFL strategies and activities, leads to support the students' English speech development. As a result, the Saudi MOE objectives of Saudi students communicating internationally will be achieved as the students aged 9–10 years are able to use their learned English language to interact with others.

## 10.4 Findings: Conditions for English speech development from a cultural-historical viewpoint

The major findings of this research indicate that EFL teaching strategies can be changed to create efficient conditions for the English speech development of students. The students need to practise and use the learned English language in communicative activities created by the EFL teachers to support the students' English speech development. In this study, the English speech is the HMF that develops through social interaction, which is the source of development.

Notably, some conditions for students’ English speech development have been created through several English activities, as shown in the case examples discussed previously. The interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD that are created in English classes support the development of students’ English speech (see Figure 10.7). The immature function of the student’s English speech develops through communication with a teacher or other peers within the student’s ZPD. The student’s English speech moves to a higher level of development when participating in such communicative activities.

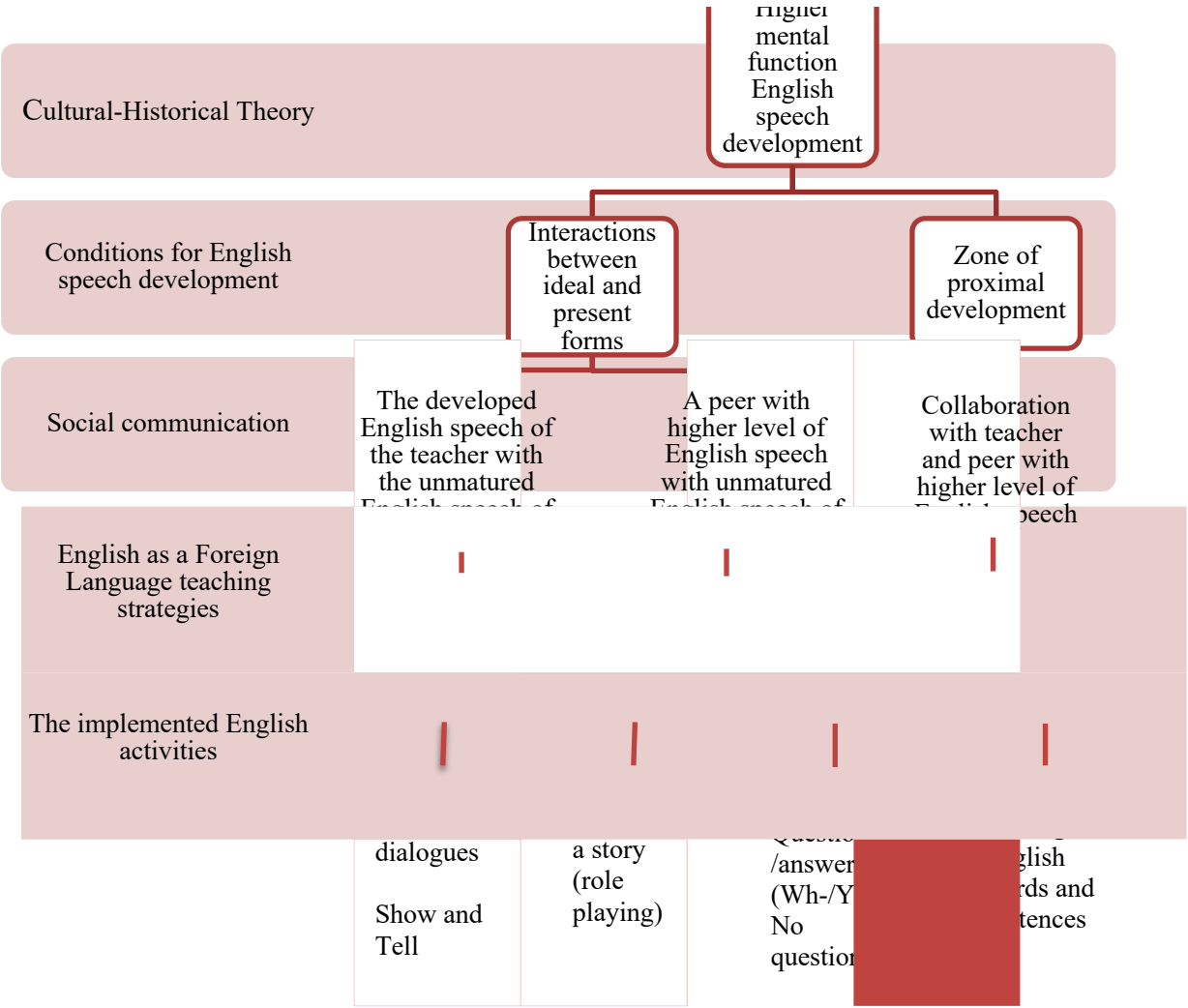


Figure 10.7 A model of the developmental process of students’ English speech that draws upon CHT

The previous section was an integrated discussion of the findings that emphasised the effectiveness of social interactions to create conditions for the development of students’ English speech. Table 10.1

briefly outlines the findings revealed in Chapters 7 and 8 in regard to the conditions for the development of students' English oral and written speech development in the implemented EFL teaching strategies. Table 10.1 only highlights EFL teaching strategies and implemented English activities with conditions for the development of students' English speech.

*Table 10.1 Conditions for students' English speech development revealed in Chapters 7 and 8*

| EFL teaching strategies that support English speech development | English activities  | Conditions for English speech development   | CHT concepts   |
|---|---|---|--|
| Interactive teaching  | Discussion: Questioning and answering followed implementation of an English song. | Engaging the students in discussion to answer the teacher's questions using the knowledge of the song.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interaction between ideal and present forms (Vygotsky, 1998)</li> <li>ZPD (Vygotsky, 1987)</li> </ul>   |
|   | Teacher–student or student–student pair dialogue.                                 | The unmatured English speech of the student (present form) is in interaction with the developed form of speech of the teacher or other peer with a higher level of English speech (ideal form). The development of the student English speech was mediated through that social interaction. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interaction between ideal and present forms (Vygotsky, 1998)</li> <li>ZPD (Vygotsky, 1987)</li> <li>Mediation (Vygotsky, 1997)</li> <li>Collision (Vygotsky, 1994)</li> </ul> |
| Collaborative learning  | Draw, Show, and Tell activity in English classes.                                 | Organising the interaction between ideal and present forms through presenting ideal forms of peers with a higher level of English speech.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interaction between ideal and present forms (Vygotsky, 1998)</li> <li>ZPD (Vygotsky, 1987)</li> </ul>   |

*CHT, Cultural-Historical Theory; EFL, English as a Foreign Language; ZPD, zone of proximal development*

## 10.5 Contributions of the study

This study has revealed important rigorous possibilities to enrich the knowledge of learning a foreign or second language through a cultural-historical perspective. It will help educators and teachers of the English subject apply efficient strategies that lead to effective learning of the English language. As a result, it will contribute to the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages community. Moreover, the result of the study may be useful for further research on learning a foreign language

through communication, especially for children's speech development. In fact, after data collection and analysis, I determined that most of the research findings show the importance of communication and collaboration to develop the English speech of students.

Importantly, this study draws on CHT, which will contribute to cultural-historical research, particularly studies that explore the development of speech as an HMF. The cultural-historical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD were significantly used in conducting this research and its findings.

Specifically, in aligning with the Saudi MOE objectives of teaching EFL in the KSA, the results of this study indicated the demand to improve EFL teaching strategies and develop new ways to support the development of English speech. The discussion of the findings emphasised the importance of communication in a social context to develop speech. Thus, all suggestions adhering to the CHT will draw on a new vision in English education in the country. As a result, the education policy of teaching EFL in the KSA may be influenced positively. It was revealed that the use of communication and interaction in English classes in Saudi schools will increase Saudi students' English performance to use the English language as a tool for communication with the teacher and other peers, and later with others in the external world. The implemented EFL teaching strategies used by the participating teachers show that the Saudi learner plays an effective role in their English learning, as they participate in group discussions and work in pairs with the teacher and other peers. This makes the English teaching and learning processes easier without consuming too much time just feeding their knowledge. As a result, the use of traditional learning in Saudi schools would be decreased and the fears of learning EFL reduced, as the students enjoy learning English through singing and role playing. It is one of the ways to further develop the education system in KSA by developing new teaching methods and focusing on the learner being more confident and creative (MOE, 2017). The Saudi MOE expects to have better educational outcomes to achieve the objectives of the recent Saudi government plan of "Vision 2030" (MOE, 2017).

To sum up, the EFL education in Saudi Arabia will encounter a significant move from traditional learning or teaching to English learning through communication in social contexts that finally supports the process of English speech development. Some conditions in light of CHT concepts might be implemented to improve EFL teaching strategies, to support the process of development of English oral and written speech of students in Saudi primary schools. As a result, the education policy of teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia might be influenced positively, mainly in terms of teaching methods



that focus on the learner, as expected in the Saudi recent plan “Vision 2030” (MOE, 2017). It is worthy of future investigation, as it could reveal other dimensions about EFL teaching strategies that engage students in everyday life practices inside the educational institution.

## 10.6 Further suggestions for enhancing teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia

Based on my experience teaching EFL during the last 15 years, some challenges exist in teaching EFL for Saudi students, especially at intermediate and secondary grades. In fact, as I have experienced doing research in this field, I have clear insights into the teaching/learning EFL strategies and activities that are implemented in all Saudi schools. As outlined in Chapter 1, the literature on EFL education in Saudi Arabia shows there are certain challenges in teaching the English subject at schools. According to Shah, Hussain and Nasseef (2013), Saudi teachers have to follow the guidelines of the syllabus and choose various methods that have been generalised by the MOE to achieve the goals of teaching EFL and finish the curriculum on time. These restrictions and boundaries make the process of teaching EFL difficult and challenging, as the teachers perceive it to be an arduous task that is beyond their capability (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

This issue was revealed through the interviews with the participating teachers in this research study who identified several obstacles they have encountered in teaching EFL in the country. One issue worth mentioning is the length of the curriculum and syllabus to which they have to adhere. There is insufficient time to practise the English language with their students during the school day. According to Asiri (2017, p. 19), “teaching English requires a high level of understanding of its variety of pedagogy, methodology and values”. She declared that Saudi teachers are not allowed to select their own teaching strategies as they must adhere to a set syllabus and guidelines. As a result, Saudi teachers are required to cover the whole textbook and 45 minutes is not enough to further practise English with their students, as asserted by the two participating teachers in this study (see Chapter 5). Similarly, Shah et al. (2013) proclaimed that the English class time at primary school is not enough, as the students do not have the chance to practise the English they have learned.

It is recommended that the Saudi MOE update the English curricula to align with the goals of teaching EFL in the country and the general objectives to develop the education system that has been introduced to achieve “Vision 2030”. The Saudi MOE seeks to have students who can communicate internationally. Therefore, students should be provided with enough time to practise the English language in everyday life situations. Currently, English teachers believe there is insufficient time for teaching English to children in primary schools. The participating teachers in this study claim that

only two English classes a week are not enough to practise the English language with their students. They need extra time to teach the students the English words, pronunciations and grammar, and then apply this knowledge through various teaching methods, such as dialogues, group discussion and acting out.

It is important that the Saudi MOE balances the teachers' needs and the positive attitude that students have towards learning EFL. The data showed that children aged 9–10 years feel excited watching English videos, reading English stories and listening to English songs. For Alotaibi (2014, p. 35), “appropriate teaching methodologies for young children have to be implemented according to the current trends in teaching methods”. Therefore, providing Saudi schools with adequate EFL teaching materials and equipment (such as an English laboratory and library) will enhance the processes of teaching EFL and development of English speech, as the environment around the student is provided with a variety of semiotic tools and artefacts. Almutairi (2008) and Fareh (2010) confirmed that most Saudi schools and classrooms lack the required facilities that EFL teachers and learners need in English classes to facilitate successful language learning, such as tape recorders, educational films, computer laboratory, audio and visual aids, and e-learning resources. However, the new vision of Saudi Arabia is to create educational environments that are provided with all required materials to facilitate the process of learning (MOE, 2017).

This study revealed that students in Saudi primary schools are happy to learn and practice EFL. Thus, to achieve a higher level of development of English speech, the teachers need to have more time to practise the knowledge with the students through several activities involving everyday life situations. The teachers need time to introduce the students to English knowledge, including vocabulary, grammar and so on, through English songs, drama activities and visual materials. Then, the teachers need to create conditions to encourage interaction between ideal forms introduced in the English classes and the present forms of the immature English speech of the students to support the development of English speech. Further, large class sizes of more than 30 students is another obstacle facing English teachers in Saudi schools, as disclosed through the interviews that were conducted for this study.

Rahamn and Alhaisoni (2013) introduced another important issue to indicate the importance of the communicative tasks that allow Saudi students to practise English inside and outside the class. From this point of view, this study provides a new insight in teaching EFL in the country. Conditions for

the development of English speech involve engaging all the students in different communicative activities, which requires more time to practise using the English language in everyday life situations. Based on a cultural-historical point of view, English teachers need to take children's perspective and understand their interests and level of English speech development by implementing interactive EFL learning strategies and presenting the students with English activities that organise their interaction with ideal forms (e.g., developed English speech of the teacher) to support the development of this function (English speech). The teacher can create conditions for English speech development within the student's ZPD when engaging them in an English task that indicates their level of English speech development. Then, they can organise another activity to support the student's English speech development.

In conclusion, it is suggested to draw upon cultural-historical theoretical concepts when implementing EFL teaching strategies and practising English, as it will be useful in enhancing teaching EFL in Saudi Arabia. It is recommended to conduct training programs for English teachers to introduce them to the effective theoretical concepts and help them identify the level of English speech development of their students. I recommend designing training programs that will help the teachers create effective EFL strategies from a cultural-historical perspective. This will make significant changes in English education in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it would be valuable to examine the English speech development of students after applying cultural-historical perspectives in teaching EFL in Saudi schools. It may not be easy to implement theory into practise in the near future, as it will take a long time to introduce this knowledge.

## 10.7 Challenges encountered in this research

As the study was conducted in an Arabic country, it was difficult to find information in English about the history of the Saudi education system. There is no specific source that can be used as a reference except the original website of the Saudi MOE, which is currently being updated. Also, it was important to outline the general objectives of teaching EFL, as the aims of the study are associated with the Saudi MOE goals. These objectives were gathered from the same publications that were used to indicate the education system of Saudi Arabia. There are several papers, articles and journals that have been published by Saudi scholars about English education in Saudi Arabia (Al-Nasser, 2015; Alrashidi and Phan, 2015; Al-Seghayer, 2013, 2014; Alshahrani, 2016; Elyas & Badawood, 2015; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013).

The approval process for this study was longer than anticipated, which shortened the duration of my data collection. Originally, I had planned to collect my data over three months. However, permission to initiate the data collection was required to be authorised by several departments under the supervision of the MOE of Saudi Arabia. It was necessary to get the approval from the Saudi Cultural Mission in Australia, then from the MOE in Saudi Arabia, then from the director of education in the city of Makkah, and lastly from the northern Department of Education in Makkah. It also took a long time to arrange access for the chosen schools and receive permission from their principals. Additionally, there were mid-term holidays and examination periods for another three weeks. As a result, I had to observe and conduct interviews in less than two months, which was not enough time to verify every piece of data.

A further challenge to organise the observation sessions was there are only two periods of English every week throughout the semester. The teachers who participated in this study found the low number of English classes limiting and were looking to increase the number for students in Grade 4. They assumed that it would be better to have more time to cover the lessons of the textbook and practise more with the students.

## 10.8 Limitations of the study

This study was conducted in girls' primary schools, therefore the results cannot necessarily be generalised to other settings (e.g., boys' schools). Certainly, I could not access the boys' primary schools because it is not allowed due to religious and traditional rules. While observing, I could not record long videos that showed the students facial expressions and feelings, which may have been helpful to observe the progress of the students.

Moreover, a long period for collecting data is needed, as ten weeks to less than three months was not enough. In addition, a continuous study would be ideal, but was interrupted by mid-term holiday and examination periods in Saudi schools. More time would enable further observation and interviews and increase the amount of data to be analysed.

## 10.9 Conclusion

This final chapter summarised this study and presented the findings and subsequent implications for better teaching of EFL in Saudi schools. It outlined the conditions for the development of students' English speech in EFL teaching strategies that were used in Saudi primary schools. Applying cultural-historical methodology and theoretical concepts were useful to identify these conditions. Once the teachers create developmental conditions and organise interactions of ideal and present forms within the students' ZPDs, EFL teaching strategies will be implemented effectively to support the process of English speech development and English learning.

Further, it was significant to show the interrelationship between the processes of English language learning/acquisition and English speech development. To improve students' knowledge of English, the English teachers need to use different teaching strategies and the EFL learners need to repeat, memorise, read and practice the presented English words and vocabulary. These techniques are the preliminary steps for learning English, followed by engaging the students in communicative activities to practise the learned English knowledge that leads to English speech development.

Chapter 6 identified the common EFL teaching strategies to address the first research question. Moreover, the conditions for English speech development were determined through the analysis of chosen English activities, as shown in Chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 9 presented some solutions and suggestions to improve English activities by considering the CHT perspective, which answered the third research question. This study will contribute to improving the EFL education in Saudi Arabia as it highlights the importance of the student's interaction and collaboration with others in the classroom. Accordingly, EFL teaching strategies that draw on CHT concepts, such as the interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD to support English speech development, are more effective. This new vision on EFL teaching strategies may encourage the Saudi MOE to introduce a new English curriculum and syllabus to ease the process of teaching EFL in the country to support the development of English speech of the students, as well as help them learn and acquire the language. New training programs for English teachers might be introduced to show teachers how to apply EFL strategies from cultural-historical viewpoints.

I would like to conclude this thesis by proposing that this research study makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of the differences between English speech development and English language acquisition. I believe this study contributes significantly to the field of teaching a foreign or second language; specifically, teaching EFL/ESL from a cultural-historical perspective. As mentioned in

Chapter 3, this valuable work investigated ESL by adopting CHT. This study is unique in the field of EFL/ESL as it examined the English speech development of students through investigating EFL teaching strategies. Likewise, this study has an influence on English education in the Saudi context as it introduces a new insight for implementing EFL teaching strategies based on cultural-historical perspectives. The use of theoretical concepts of interaction between ideal and present forms and ZPD provides the conditions for English speech development that contribute to CHT research, which can benefit other researchers interested in this study area.

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## Appendix A: Explanatory and Consent forms for Parents (English)



### Explanatory Statement

(Explanatory letter for parents/guardians of school age children in Saudi primary schools)

**Project Title:** A cultural-Historical study on School children English speech development through investigating teaching EFL strategies in Saudi primary schools

**Chief Investigator's name:** Nikolai Veresov

Faculty of Education

Phone: + [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

**Co-investigator's name:** Liang Li

Faculty of Education

Phone: + [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

**Student's name:** Walaa Esmail H Mandili

Mobile: [REDACTED] OR [REDACTED]

Email : [REDACTED]

You are invited to take part in this study. Being in this study is voluntary and you are no under obligation to consent on your child participating in this research project. Please read the explanatory statement; then, if you are willing to give consent for your children, we ask you to sign and return the completed consent form before joining them in our research project. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

### What does the research project involve?

This research aims to investigate teaching strategies of English as a foreign language from a cultural-historical perspective. Precisely, it is going to study the development of speech of school-age children (9-10 years old) mainly in Saudi primary schools (Grade 4), and the effect of social and environmental contexts or relations. So, the purpose of this study is to investigate the conditions which English teachers create in English classes to develop the English speech of the school-age children in Saudi primary schools, and to find the best approaches to support this process of development.

For this project, we are seeking two English teachers and students at grade 4 from two girls' primary schools in Saudi Arabia mainly in western region in the city of Makkah. Therefore, we are seeking your permission:



- To observe your children at the English class while participating in English language learning activities that a teacher prepared (up to 8 weeks, one time per week for one hour each visit).
- To take observation notes of English learning activities, some audio recording and photographing of the children's interactions in the English class with their peers and the teacher.
- To access your children's portfolio to see their level of progression in English tasks.

#### **Why were your children chosen for this research?**

Your children were chosen to participate, because they are grade 4 students at 9-10 years old in Saudi primary school's English class. We expect to be in the school for observing the children's English speech development and their English language learning activities such as doing English exercises, interaction with other peers to accomplish a task, working in groups in English classes, and helping each other in reading, writing practices.

The researcher will be introduced to the school-age children in two classes through the English Class Teacher, and the aim of my research will be clarified to let the students understand why I repeatedly come to observe the class. It is important to create trusted relationship between the researcher and the participants (teachers and students). During these visits, the student researcher might be supported by a colleague (to be determined). I have provided contact details above, so you can contact me if you want any clarification.

#### **Source of funding**

This research has been funded by the Saudi Cultural Mission (SACM), Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, who is funded Walaa Esmail H Mandili as a PhD candidate at Monash university in Australia.

#### **Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research**

Please read the explanatory statement before joining your children in our research project. After doing this, if you are willing to give a consent on behalf of your children, we seek your consent through your close attention and signature on the attached consent form before joining them in our research project. Consent forms will be collected via the main office in the school (principle of the school). Participation in this project is voluntary. You can ask your child to withdraw at any time from the study without penalty or indicate withdrawal at any stage, however any data gathered prior, remains with the research project.

#### **Possible benefits and risks to participants**

We do not foresee any risks to participants beyond possible minor inconvenience of participating in observation with researchers. Possible benefits for you and English learning and teaching research would be having greater awareness of the impacts of English learning through communication in social contexts.

#### **Confidentiality**

When reporting the data generated by the study in publications such as journal articles, book chapters, the thesis, teaching materials, or at conferences, confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured by using pseudonyms. Features of data which might be identifiable (such as names of schools, institutions, places) will be changed. There will not be any provision for open public access to any recorded data. The researchers' use of this material will only be for the sake of developing knowledge and teaching and learning skills within the field of TESOL.

#### **Storage of data**

We will ensure that all the data that we gather is stored safely and securely in line with the University Code of Conduct for the Responsible practice of Research in relation to Data Storage and Retention. Only the researchers who are involved with this project will have authority to access the information. The data will be kept on chief investigator's office for about 10 years. After that, all digital records and any hard copies will be deleted securely.

## Results

It is possible that some of the photographic images may be selected for publication in doctoral thesis, a journal article, book chapters, at conferences, or as teaching materials for teachers and other professional involved in education, who are interested in research findings about English speech development.

At the end of research project, if you would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings please contact the student researcher over phone + [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

## Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact:

**In Australia:** The Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer  
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)  
Room 111, Building 3e  
Research Office  
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: + [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]

**In Saudi Arabia :** The directory of Education in Makkah

Phone: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

## Chief Investigator:

Assoc. Prof. Nikolai Veresov

[REDACTED]

Aug 2016

## Co-investigator's name:

Liang Li

Aug 2016

[REDACTED]

## Student investigator:

Walaa Esmail H Mandili

Aug 2016

[REDACTED]



## CONSENT FORM

(Informed consent form for parents/guardians of school age children in Saudi primary schools)

**Project title: A cultural-Historical study on School children English speech development through investigating teaching EFL strategies in Saudi primary schools**

**Chief Investigator:** Assoc. Professor Nikolai Veresov

**Co-investigator:** Dr. Liang Li

**Student researcher:** Wala Esmail H Mandili

I have been asked to let my child takes part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to let my child to participate in this project.

| I consent to the following:   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>my child will be observed through field notes, audio recording, and photographing in English activities and practices</li></ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I give my permission for the researchers to access and copy some relevant information of my child's portfolio.</li></ul>        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of Participant (child): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Translated Explanatory and Consent forms for Parents (Arabic)

### جامعة موناخ

#### بيان توضيحي

#### (بيان توضيحي لأولياء أمور الطالبات بالمدارس الابتدائية في المملكة العربية السعودية)

**عنوان المشروع:** دراسة بحثية تطبيق النظرية الثقافية التاريخية لبحث استراتيجيات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية التي تدعم تطوير أساليب التخاطب باللغة الإنجليزية للأطفال في سن الدراسة في المدارس الابتدائية السعودية.

رئيس فريق البحث العلمي: نيكولاي فيرسوف

كلية التعليم

هاتف

بريد الكتروني:

باحث مشارك: لينا لي

كلية التعليم

هاتف

بريد الكتروني:

طالبة الدكتوراة/ الباحثة: ولاء اسماعيل منديلي

جوال

او

بريد الكتروني:

أنت مدعو للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة حيث أن المشاركة في هذه الدراسة تطوعي ولا يلزمك الإقرار لمشاركة طفلك في هذا المشروع البحثي. لذا يرجى قراءة هذا البيان التوضيحي ومن ثم إعطاء الموافقة لطفلك وتوقيع استمارة الموافقة في حال الرغبة والموافقة قبل الانضمام في المشروع البحثي الخاص بنا. وعند الرغبة للحصول على المزيد من المعلومات حول أي جانب من جوانب هذا المشروع، يمكنك التواصل مع الباحثين من خلال أرقام الهواتف أو عناوين البريد الإلكتروني المذكورة أعلاه.

#### ما يتضمنه المشروع البحثي؟

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحقيق أساليب أفضل لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية من منظور ثقافي وتاريخي وبالتحديد دراسة تطوير أساليب التخاطب للأطفال في سن المدرسة (٩-١٠ سنوات) في المدارس الابتدائية السعودية في الصف الرابع، ودراسة تأثير النطاق الاجتماعي والبيئي والعلاقات الإنسانية في ذلك. لذل فإن الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو دراسة الظروف والحالات التي ينشأها معلم اللغة الإنجليزية داخل الصف الدراسي لتطوير التخاطب باللغة الإنجليزية لدى الأطفال في سن الدراسة في المدارس الابتدائية السعودية، وإيجاد أفضل السبل لدعم وتطوير هذه العملية.

يستهدف هذا المشروع اثنين من معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية وطالبات الصف الرابع من مدرستين ابتدائيتين للبنات في المملكة العربية السعودية على وجه التحديد في المنطقة الغربية في مدينة مكة المكرمة. لذلك، نرجو موافقتك على:

- ملاحظة ابنتك أثناء مشاركتها في أنشطة تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية التي تعدها المعلمة (يصل طول المدة إلى 8 أسابيع، مرة واحدة في الأسبوع لمدة ساعة واحدة لكل زيارة).
- تدوين الملاحظات ومراقبة أنشطة تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، وتسجيل بعض الملفات الصوتية وتصوير أنشطة وتفاعلات الطالبات في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية مع أقرانهن والمعلم.
- الوصول إلى ملف الطالبة الخاص بالمادة لمعرفة مستوى التقدم في الأنشطة والتدريبات في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية.

#### لماذا تم اختيار طفلك للمشاركة في هذا البحث؟

تم اختيار طفلك للمشاركة حيث ان العينة المستهدفة للبحث هي المرحلة الابتدائية تحديداً الصف الرابع الابتدائي لعمر ٩-١٠ سنوات في مدارس المملكة العربية السعودية حيث من المتوقع تواجدها الباحثة في المدرسة لملاحظة تطور اساليب التخاطب باللغة الإنجليزية لدى الأطفال وملاحظة الأنشطة الصفية في مادة اللغة الانجليزية ، وتفاعل الطالبة مع أقرانها في انجاز المهام الصفية، والعمل في مجموعات في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية، ومساعدة بعضهم البعض في تدريبات القراءة والكتابة باللغة الانجليزية.

وسيم التعريف بالباحثة للأطفال في سن المدرسة بمساعدة معلمة اللغة الإنجليزية، وسيتم توضيح الهدف من البحث لكي تتمكن الطالبات من فهم الزيارات المتكررة للباحثة لملاحظتهن في حصص اللغة الانجليزية حيث انه من المهم توثيق العلاقة بين الباحث والمشاركين (المعلمين والطلاب). و من الممكن وجود من يساعد الباحثة في مهمتها البحثية خلال تلك الزيارات. لقد تم تزويدكم ببيانات الاتصال أعلاه في حال الرغبة في التواصل مع الباحثة لتوضيح بعض النقاط.

#### مصدر التمويل

قد تم تمويل هذا البحث من قبل الملحقيه السعودية الثقافية في استراليا، تحت اشراف وزارة التربية والتعليم في المملكة العربية السعودية التي تكفلت بتمويل طالبة الدكتوراة بجامعة موناخ في استراليا : ولاء إسماعيل حسين منديلي.

#### الموافقة على المشاركة أو الانسحاب من المشروع

يرجى قراءة البيان التوضيحي قبل الانضمام في المشروع البحثي الخاص بنا. حيث انه بعد الاطلاع على البيان التوضيحي سوف يتم منح ابنتك الموافقة من قبلكم للمشاركة في المشروع البحثي وعليه نرجو منك الموافقة والتوقيع على استمارة الموافقة المرفقة قبل الانضمام إلى مشروعنا. وسيتم جمع استمارات الموافقة عن طريق المكتب الرئيسي في المدرسة (مديرة المدرسة).

للعلم فإن المشاركة في هذا المشروع هي تطوعية حيث يمكنك الانسحاب في أي وقت اثناء الدراسة البحثية دون اي عقوبة ولكن نود الإشارة بأن البيانات التي تم جمعها سوف تبقى ضمن المشروع البحثي.

#### الفوائد والأضرار المحتملة للمشاركين

ليس من المتوقع وجود أي مخاطر على المشاركين خلال ملاحظتهم من قبل الباحثة حيث أن الفوائد المحتملة لك ولمجتمع تعليم اللغة الانجليزية سيكون لها الأثر الأكبر في تطوير أساليب التواصل باللغة الانجليزية في نطاق اجتماعي.

#### الخصوصية

عند نشر النتائج والمعلومات الخاصة بالبحث الحالي في مطبوعات مثل المقالات الصحفية أو فصول الكتب أو أطروحة أو مواد تعليمية أو في المؤتمرات، سيتم ضمان السرية وعدم الكشف عن هوية المشاركين وذلك باستخدام أسماء مستعارة. سيتم تغيير بعض البيانات التي قد تؤدي إلى الكشف عن الهوية الحقيقية للمشاركين (مثل أسماء المدارس والمؤسسات والأماكن). لن يتم السماح للعموم للوصول لأي بيانات تم تسجيلها من قبل الباحثين حيث ان الهدف من المعلومات المسجلة هو استخدامها من قبل الباحثين من أجل تطوير المعرفة و مهارات التعلم و أساليب تدريس اللغة الانجليزية كلفة ثانية.

#### تخزين البيانات

سوف يتم تخزين كافة البيانات التي تم جمعها بطريقة آمنة وذلك وفقاً لقانون الجامعة المسؤولة عن البحوث فيما يتعلق بتخزين البيانات والاحتفاظ بها. وعليه فإن الباحثون المشاركون في هذا المشروع لهم صلاحية الوصول إلى المعلومات. وسيتم الاحتفاظ بالبيانات والمعلومات في مكتب رئيس فريق البحث لنحو 10 أعوام. وسيتم حذف جميع السجلات الرقمية وأي نسخ مطبوعة بشكل آمن بعد ذلك.

#### النتائج

من الممكن استخدام بعض الصور الفوتوغرافية ونشرها في رسالة الدكتوراة او في مقالات دورية وبعض الكتب والمؤتمرات أو بعض المواد التعليمية التي يستخدمها أعضاء هيئة التدريس لأغراض علمية ومهنية ممن لديهم الرغبة في الحصول على معلومات عن تطوير لغة التخاطب باللغة الانجليزية.

عند الانتهاء من مشروع البحث يمكنك الإطلاع على نتائج البحث مباشرة بالتواصل مع الباحث عبر الهاتف 61404622855 + أو عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني [walaa.mandili@monash.edu](mailto:walaa.mandili@monash.edu)

#### الشكاوي

في حال وجود شكاوى حول طبيعة سير المشروع نرجو التواصل على:

#### في أستراليا:

الهيئة رسمية: جامعة موناخ / لجنة أخلاقيات البحوث الانسانيه (MUHREC)

غرفة 111، مبنى E3

مكتب البحوث

جامعة موناخ

فيكتوريا 3800

+ [REDACTED] 3 [REDACTED]

البريد الإلكتروني: [muhrec@monash.edu?gender=M](mailto:muhrec@monash.edu?gender=M)

[REDACTED]

في المملكة العربية السعودية: ادارة التربية والتعليم في مكة المكرمة

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

تفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام،

رئيس فريق البحث:

استاذ مشارك/ البروفيسور: نيكولاي فيرسوف

أغسطس 2016

باحث مشارك:

ليانق لي

أغسطس 2016

طالبة الدكتوراة /الباحثة:

ولاء إسماعيل حسين مندلي

أغسطس 2016

## إقرار موافقة

(نموذج موافقة مسبقة من الوالدين / أولياء أمور الأطفال في سن الدراسة في المدارس الابتدائية السعودية)

**عنوان المشروع:** دراسة بحثية تطبق النظرية الثقافية التاريخية لبحث استراتيجيات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية التي تدعم تطوير أساليب التخاطب باللغة الإنجليزية للأطفال في سن الدراسة في المدارس الابتدائية السعودية.

**رئيس فريق البحث:** أستاذ مشارك/ نيكولاي فيرسوف

**باحث مشارك:** الدكتور ليانق لي

**طالبة الدكتوراة/ الباحثة:** ولاء إسماعيل حسين منديلي

لقد طلب مني السماح لطفلي بالمشاركة في المشروع البحثي الخاص بالباحثين في جامعة موناخ المذكورين أعلاه. وبناء على ماتم قراءته وفهمه من البيان التوضيحي أعلاه تم الموافقة للسماح لابنتي بالمشاركة في هذا المشروع.

| أوافق على ما يلي:   |  | نعم | لا |
|---|--|-----|----|
| • سيتم ملاحظة طفلي في الصف الدراسي ويتطلب ذلك تسجيل صوتي وأخذ بعض الصور الفوتوغرافية للأنشطة الصفية أثناء حصص اللغة الانجليزية. |  |     |    |
| • أعطي الإذن للباحثين للإطلاع على ملف المادة الخاص بطفلي ونسخ بعض المعلومات والأنشطة ذات الصلة بموضوع البحث .                   |  |     |    |

اسم المشارك (الطفل): .....

توقيع ولي الأمر: ..... التاريخ: .....

## Appendix C: Explanatory and Consent forms for English teachers



### Explanatory Statement

(Explanatory letter for English teachers in Saudi primary schools)

**Project Title:** A cultural-Historical study on School children English speech development through investigating teaching EFL strategies in Saudi primary schools

**Chief Investigator's name:** Nikolai Veresov

Faculty of Education

Phone: + [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

**Co-investigator's name:** Liang Li

Faculty of Education

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

**Student's name:** Walaa Esmail H Mandili

Mobile: + [REDACTED] OR + [REDACTED]

Email : [REDACTED]

You are invited to take part in this study. Being in this study is voluntary and you are no under obligation to consent on your child participating in this research project. Please read the explanatory statement; then, if you are willing to give consent for your children, we ask you to sign and return the completed consent form before joining them in our research project. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

### What does the research project involve?

This research aims to investigate teaching strategies of English as a foreign language from a cultural-historical perspective. Precisely, it is going to study the development of speech of school-age children (9-10 years old) mainly in Saudi primary schools (Grade 4), and the effect of social and environmental contexts or relations. So, the purpose of this study is to investigate the conditions which English teachers create in English classes to develop the English speech of the school-age children in Saudi primary schools, and to find the best approaches to support this process of development.

For this project, we are seeking two English teachers and students at grade 4 from two girls' primary schools in Saudi Arabia mainly in western region in the city of Makkah. Therefore, we are seeking your permission:



- To observe school children at the English class while participating in English language learning activities that a teacher prepared (up to 8 weeks, one time per week for one hour each visit).
- To take observation notes of English learning activities, some audio recording and photographing of the children's interactions in the English class with their peers and the teacher.
- To access your children's portfolio to see their level of progression in English tasks.

#### **Why were your children chosen for this research?**

School children were chosen to participate, because they are grade 4 students at 9-10 years old in Saudi primary school's English class. We expect to be in the school for observing the children's English speech development and their English language learning activities such as doing English exercises, interaction with other peers to accomplish a task, working in groups in English classes, and helping each other in reading, writing practices.

The researcher will be introduced to the school-age children in two classes through the English Class Teacher, and the aim of my research will be clarified to let the students understand why I repeatedly come to observe the class. It is important to create trusted relationship between the researcher and the participants (teachers and students). During these visits, the student researcher might be supported by a colleague (to be determined). I have provided contact details above, so you can contact me if you want any clarification.

#### **Source of funding**

This research has been funded by the Saudi Cultural Mission (SACM), Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, who is funded Walaa Esmail H Mandili as a PhD candidate at Monash university in Australia.

#### **Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research**

Please read the explanatory statement before joining your children in our research project. After doing this, if you are willing to give a consent on behalf of your children, we seek your consent through your close attention and signature on the attached consent form before joining them in our research project. Consent forms will be collected via the main office in the school (principle of the school). Participation in this project is voluntary. You can ask your child to withdraw at any time from the study without penalty or indicate withdrawal at any stage, however any data gathered prior, remains with the research project.

#### **Possible benefits and risks to participants**

We do not foresee any risks to participants beyond possible minor inconvenience of participating in observation with researchers. Possible benefits for you and English learning and teaching research would be having greater awareness of the impacts of English learning through communication in social contexts.

#### **Confidentiality**

When reporting the data generated by the study in publications such as journal articles, book chapters, the thesis, teaching materials, or at conferences, confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured by using pseudonyms. Features of data which might be identifiable (such as names of schools, institutions, places) will be changed. There will not be any provision for open public access to any recorded data. The researchers' use of this material will only be for the sake of developing knowledge and teaching and learning skills within the field of TESOL.

#### **Storage of data**

We will ensure that all the data that we gather is stored safely and securely in line with the University Code of Conduct for the Responsible practice of Research in relation to Data Storage and Retention. Only the researchers who are involved with this project will have authority to access the information. The data will be kept on chief investigator's office for about 10 years. After that, all digital records and any hard copies will be deleted securely.

## Results

It is possible that some of the photographic images may be selected for publication in doctoral thesis, a journal article, book chapters, at conferences, or as teaching materials for teachers and other professional involved in education, who are interested in research findings about English speech development.

At the end of research project, if you would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings please contact the student researcher over phone + [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

## Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact:

**In Australia:** The Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer  
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)  
Room 111, Building 3e  
Research Office  
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]

**In Saudi Arabia :** The directory of Education in Makkah

Phone: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

## Chief Investigator:

Assoc. Prof. Nikolai Veresov

[REDACTED]

Aug 2016

## Co-investigator's name:

Liang Li

Aug 2016

[REDACTED]

## Student investigator:

Walaa Esmail H Mandili

Aug 2016

[REDACTED]

**CONSENT FORM**

(Informed consent form for English teachers in Saudi primary schools)

**Project title: A cultural-Historical study on School children English speech development through investigating teaching EFL strategies in Saudi primary schools**

**Chief Investigator:** Assoc. Professor Nikolai Veresov

**Co-investigator:** Dr. Liang Li

**Student researcher:** Wala Esmail H Mandili

I have been asked to take a part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

| I consent to the following:  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I will be observed through field notes, audio recording, and taking photographs of English activities and practices.</li></ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I give my permission for the researchers to access and copy some relevant information of my teacher's portfolio.</li></ul>     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of Participant (teacher):

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Class Observation form



| Observation– Period (    )   |                          |                 |                  |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Site/School:   |                          | Teacher's name: |                  |
| Class:   | Date:                    | Time:           | Start:      End: |
|  |                          |                 |                  |
|  | <b>Focus</b>             | <b>Comments</b> |                  |
|  | Interactions             |                 |                  |
|  | Children behaviors       |                 |                  |
|  | Motives                  |                 |                  |
|  | intentions               |                 |                  |
|  | Teaching approaches      |                 |                  |
|  | Collaboration            |                 |                  |
|  | Improvements             |                 |                  |
|  | Developmental conditions |                 |                  |
|  | Others                   |                 |                  |
| <b>Notes and comments:</b>   |                          |                 |                  |
|  |                          |                 |                  |
| <b>Points of discussion:</b>   |                          |                 |                  |
|  |                          |                 |                  |
| <b>Suggestions:</b>  |                          |                 |                  |
|  |                          |                 |                  |
| <b>Recommendations:</b>  |                          |                 |                  |
|  |                          |                 |                  |
| <b>Name of the researcher/ PhD candidate at Monash university : Walaa Esmail Mandili</b> |                          |                 |                  |
| <b>Supervisors:</b>  |                          |                 |                  |
| Ass. Professor Dr. Nikolai Veresov   |                          | Dr. Liang Li    |                  |
| <div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 20px;"></div>                  |                          |                 |                  |

## Appendix E: Teacher's 1<sup>st</sup> Interview Form



| Interview – Period ( 1 )  |       |                             |        |      |
|---|-------|-----------------------------|--------|------|
| Site/School:  |       | Interviewee/teacher's name: |        |      |
| Class:  | Date: | Time:                       | Start: | End: |
| <b>Questions:</b>   |       |                             |        |      |
| 1. What is your usual language of instruction in your English classes?<br>.....   |       |                             |        |      |
| 2. Do you think it is better to let the students speak only in English while doing tasks or they can use their mother tongue language (Arabic)?<br>.....<br>Could you please tell me how to encourage the students to do that?<br>..... |       |                             |        |      |
| 3. Do you think learning English through interaction is helpful?<br>.....<br>Give me some examples please?<br>.....   |       |                             |        |      |
| 4. How do you present your English lessons? What are the strategies and approaches that you apply in your way of teaching English?<br>.....   |       |                             |        |      |
| <b>Comments:</b>  |       |                             |        |      |
| <b>Recommendations:</b>   |       |                             |        |      |
| <b>Name of the researcher/ PhD candidate at Monash university : Walaa Esmail Mandili</b>  |       |                             |        |      |
| <b>Supervisors:</b><br>Ass. Professor Dr. Nikolai Veresov                      Dr. Liang Li<br><div style="background-color: black; width: 480px; height: 50px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>  |       |                             |        |      |

## Appendix F: Teacher's 2<sup>nd</sup> Interview Form



**MONASH** University

| Interview– after observations (Period 2)   |       |                             |        |      |
|--|-------|-----------------------------|--------|------|
| Site/School:   |       | Interviewee/teacher's name: |        |      |
| Class:   | Date: | Time:                       | Start: | End: |
| <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <p>1. Do you wish to achieve best outcomes of English speech development of your students?<br/> .....</p> <p>2. What is your opinion at this stage? At which level of development are they?<br/> .....</p> <p>3. How did the students learn to sing in English that videos you showed them?<br/> .....</p> <p>4. How long do they practicing the videos?<br/> .....</p> <p>5. What are their reactions at the first time when you asked them to learn singing in new language?<br/> .....<br/> Any difficulties?<br/> .....</p> <p>6. Did they enjoy those practices in English?<br/> .....</p> <p>7. What about you? How do you feel now and at the beginning of the practices?<br/> .....</p> |       |                             |        |      |
| <p><b>Other points of discussion:</b></p>  |       |                             |        |      |
| <p><b>Recommendations &amp; Suggestions:</b></p>   |       |                             |        |      |
| <p><b>Name e of the researcher/ PhD candidate at Monash university :</b> Walaa Esmail Mandili</p>  |       |                             |        |      |
| <p><b>Supervisors:</b></p> <p>Ass. Professor Dr. Nikolai Veresov                      Dr. Liang Li</p> <div style="background-color: black; height: 20px; width: 450px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>   |       |                             |        |      |

## Appendix G: Teacher's 3<sup>rd</sup> Interview Form:



| Final Interview – Period ( 3 )   |       |                             |                  |
|--|-------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Site/School:   |       | Interviewee/teacher's name: |                  |
| Class:   | Date: | Time:                       | Start:      End: |
| <b>Points of discussion:</b><br><b>Introducing CHT:</b><br><hr/> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you know about cultural-historical theory of Vygotsky?<br/>.....</li> <li>Do you think is it helpful to apply theoretical concepts in your language teaching? Any opinions?<br/>.....</li> <li>Have you heard about the zones of proximal development in learning process?<br/>.....<br/>If No let me explain!<br/>.....</li> <li>What ideal forms might be presented in English classes to support English speech development?<br/>.....</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was it helpful to apply theoretical concepts in you language teaching?<br/>.....<br/>Any opinions?<br/>.....</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are your plans for the future?<br/>.....</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are you going to tell other teachers and colleagues in other schools about your experience?<br/>.....</li> </ul> |       |                             |                  |
| <b>Comments:</b><br><br><br><br><br>   |       |                             |                  |
| <b>Name e of the researcher/ PhD candidate at Monash university :</b> Walaa Esmail Mandili   |       |                             |                  |
| <b>Supervisors:</b><br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;">           Ass. Professor Dr. Nikolai Veresov<br/> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 30px; margin-top: 10px;"></div> </div> <div style="width: 45%;">           Dr. Liang Li<br/> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 30px; margin-top: 10px;"></div> </div> </div>   |       |                             |                  |