English Education Policy in Saudi Arabia: English Language Education Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Current Trends, Issues and Challenges

Osman Z. Barnawi and Sajjadullah Al-Hawsawi

Abstract This article critically examines current issues and challenges in policy and practices of English education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It argues that although the current critical decisions on the language education policy being applied in the KSA are driven primarily by the forces of global changes, in order for this policy to be implemented successfully it is essential that a strategic plan to be designed, guided by local intellectual conditions and exigencies. Otherwise, it is likely that these policy changes will not only jeopardize the classical Arabic and national cultural identity, but also they may put Saudi national interests at risk. It further contends that it is crucial for the Saudi government to deeply understand the intersection of current English language policy and practices in both public and higher education, 'the internationalization of education and 'national cultural identity' in order successfully to promote mass literacy in English in the country and at the same time maintain national interests. It also suggests that an epistemic and cognitive shift needs to take place in the English education policy and practices of the KSA in order to effectively realize the intended outcomes of current Saudi education policy: i.e., promoting mass literacy in English, and meeting religious needs as well as the growing economic and social needs of the Saudi nation.

Keywords Internationalization • Mass literacy • Policy • National • Identity

O.Z. Barnawi (✉)
Royal Commission Colleges and Institutes, Yanbu, Saudi Arabia
e-mail: albarnawim@hotmail.com; barnawio@rcyci.edu.sa

S. Al-Hawsawi
King Saud Bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
e-mail: sajjad_6000@hotmail.com

R. Kirkpatrick (ed.), *English Language Education Policy in the Middle East and North Africa*, Language Policy 13, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-46778-8_12

1 Introduction

As a global language, English represents a social, cultural, intellectual, linguistic, political and economic capital. Today, the worldwide demand for competent English language users has resulted in a critical need for high-quality education for English language learners all over the world (Barnawi & Phan 2014). This continuing global demand for English education has led policy makers in different 'expanding circle' countries (Kachru 1986), including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), simultaneously to attempt to appropriate English in their national interests. In this context, the Ministry of Education in the KSA (*formerly it consisted of two separate entities: (i) Ministry of Education (MoE) which foresees all public education, and (ii) Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) which is in charge of higher education*), the largest country in the oil-rich Gulf States of the Middle East, has been making tremendous efforts to appropriate English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) instruction in the interests of the country.

The geopolitical reality of the globalization of English (Crystal 1997), the impacts of 9/11 on the Islamic countries' education systems, the 'Arab Spring' scenarios, the global financial crisis of 2008 and its impacts on global/local labor conditions, the birth of ISIS—'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria'—coupled with tumbling oil prices have "played major roles in accelerating English education policy reforms in the KSA". Specifically, the "past two decades [have] witnessed several major government initiatives to promote mass literacy in English" (Barnawi and Phan 2014, p. 6) across the country. Among other major acts, in 2004, the Saudi MoE allocated a budget worth millions of dollars, with Royal Decree No. 171 dated 14/08/2004 (corresponding to 27/6/1425 H), for the introduction of the English language as early as grade 6 of primary school. With Royal Decree No. 160 dated 02/05/2011 (corresponding to 28/5/1432 H), the MoE launched another project called English Education Development (i) to introduce English as a core subject in the 4th grade of primary school, and (ii) to enhance the quality of English education at secondary school level. Likewise, in 2005 the MoE endorsed preparatory-year intensive English programmes at all local higher education institutes, in order to help Saudi first-year college/university students to enhance their linguistic and communicative competencies together. In 2015, under direct supervision of Saudi Minister of Education Dr Azzam ibn Muhammad Al Dakhil, the MoE launched a program called '*Education for Career*' which puts great emphasis on English education within the country particularly English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic Purposes and English for Vocational/Occupational Purposes, to name a few.

The Saudi government has been spending billions of dollars and offering generous incentives to international institutes and/or training providers to internationalize its public as well as higher education system through various means—for example, by encouraging local higher education (HE) institutions to enter into partnerships with overseas universities, by positing English as a fundamental tool for academic knowledge production and dissemination, by adopting international curricula in

both public and HE sectors, by opening branch campuses, by offering joint programmes, and by franchising international programs to local people, to name a few (See Barnawi 2016; Phan and Barnawi 2015 for more accounts on these issues).

While this is happening, the implementation of successful policies for promoting mass literacy in English continues to remain a major concern for the Saudi government. Studies on the implementation of English education policies in the KSA constantly report that actors (e.g., teachers, employers, senior officials, and parents) are still apprehensive about the current English education policy and practices, on the grounds that such acts could form overindulgence of English Education, commercialization, Westernization, colonial remnants, and diminishes of local language and knowledge, to name a few (Almansour 2013; Al-mengash 2006; Kazmi 1997; Phan and Barnawi 2015). Paradoxically, while Islamic activists have been lobbying government officials in order to block moves to teach English to youngsters as well as adults (Morgan 2002), business friendly government, neoliberal universities, and corporate bodies, in collaboration with international institutes (Barnawi in press), have been aggressively projecting and imposing English as a 'global academic excellence' (Sapiro 2010) in order to shape public thinking about its supposed merits in local capacity building. Such discourse of tensions among different actors has created ongoing debates over English instruction in the KSA at various levels including cognitive, epistemic, policy, curricula, pedagogy and practices.

Taking the literature of language policy, Bakhtin's (1981) work of language and identity, and recent debates on internationalization and commercialization of education as point of departure, this article critically examines current issues and challenges in policy and practices of English education in the KSA. It argues that although the current critical decisions on the language education policy being applied in the KSA are driven primarily by the forces of global change and neoliberal free market doctrines in order for this policy to be implemented successfully it is essential that a strategic plan to be designed, guided by local intellectual conditions and exigencies. Otherwise, it is likely that these policy changes will not only jeopardize the classical Arabic and national cultural identity, but also they may put Saudi national interests at risk.

2 English Language Education Policies in the KSA: A Brief Historical Overview

English, as a global language, carries multiple meanings, memories, histories and experiences in different contexts around the world. While it carries memories of a painful colonial past for people in postcolonial countries, it has been seen as a language of advancement, development and empowerment in other contexts. It is also considered as a language of identity liberation and yet constraint in other places (See Phan 2013; Pennycook 2008 for more accounts on these issues). Hence, critical examination of a history of English education in a particular context could

always help in understanding its language ideologies, cultural identities and pedagogical practices, among other endeavors. In this account, social individuals are continually in the process of "ideological becoming"; i.e., "assimilating [their] consciousness to the ideological world" (Bakhtin 1981, p. 341), as they place themselves between the "authoritative discourses" and "internally persuasive discourses" in order to meaningfully interpret their own experiences.

From these perspectives, the desire for EFL instruction in the KSA is considered to be fascinating and yet complex, owing to the ambiguity that surrounds the primary rationale and steps for introducing English in Saudi schools, as well as to the ongoing investment, that is worth billions of US dollars in order to promote mass literacy in English across the country. Below we will delineate these issues in chronological order in order to shed light on how the ambiguous rationale behind teaching EFL in the country has been shaped and reshaped, enacted, and the extent to which current desires have been satisfied. This in turn will lead us toward a better understanding of the future directions of English education policy across the country, when we critically examine the intersection between EFL teaching in the country, the internalization of HE systems and questions of "national cultural identity" (Phan 2013) in a later section of this article.

2.1 The Birth of Teaching EFL in the KSA (1937)

As guardian of Islam's two Holy Mosques—Makkah and Madinah—the KSA has worldwide commitments that entail spreading and maintaining the Islamic faith, in collaboration with other Muslim countries around the world. Thus, since the establishment of its education system in 1925, the formation of the General Directorate of Education was based on Islamic law and tradition. That is, religious courses are predominant components of its curricula, pedagogies and practices. Also, importantly, according to the specific Islamic law endorsed by the KSA, boys and girls are segregated in the education system from the early years of schooling up to postgraduate levels (Barnawi 2011). In the former education system, Saudi students would study for 3 years in a 'preparatory school' and then move to an 'elementary school' where they studied for 4 years. After 7 years of education, they would be qualified to work in a variety of government sectors (Al-Hajailan 2006).

Since its inception, the Saudi Ministry of Education (formerly General Directorate of Education) has declared in its education policy documents that Arabic is the medium of instruction in public education settings unless necessity dictates otherwise. Interestingly enough, the first Saudi education system "was a clone of the education system of Egypt" because at that time Egypt "was the more advanced country" (Habbash 2011, p. 33). The KSA has fully adopted the education system of Egypt with regard to its curricula, pedagogies and practices. It should be noted, however, that Egypt was a former French colony, and thus the education system of Egypt itself had been significantly influenced by the French education system. Also, historically, both English and French were taught in Saudi schools, before French

was officially removed from the curricula in 1970, with Royal Decree No. 774/2. The reasons for removing French from the public school curricula remain unknown.

English as a foreign language, however, was first offered in Saudi schools in 1937, and was taught four times a week (45 min each session) in grades 4, 5 and 6 (of elementary school) according to the old education system, as scholars like Al-Hajailan (1999) and Zafer (2002) point out. Owing to the shortage of qualified Saudi EFL teachers at that time, English was taught mainly by teachers from neighboring Arab countries, namely, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Jordan and Sudan (Zafer 2002). Although traditional Islamic beliefs constantly urge Muslims to learn other languages (not specifically English) for the purpose of disseminating the Islamic creed, the primary rationale for introducing English as a foreign language in the county remains ambiguous, as studies on the history of EFL education in Saudi Arabia report (e.g., Al-Seghayer 2005; Al-Hajailan 1999). We believe this ambiguity may have arisen owing to the fact that studies in language education policy often investigate the tensions or desires that exist in societies in different parts of the world with regard to which of one or two languages is dominant from the perspectives of the economy, politics and ideology (e.g., Appadurai 1990; Block 2008). There is, however, an acute shortage of studies on the desires of particular societies with regard to appropriating a particular language in the national interests from religious perspectives. Since its foundation, the KSA has enjoyed its strategic location on the economic map of the world as the biggest oil producer and destination for most Muslims all over the world. Hence, it is possible that the primary rationale for introducing English in the KSA might have been in order to disseminate the Islamic faith among non-Arabic speakers; i.e., in a similar way to other languages used in the Islamic Madrasah system—the traditional system of Islamic education in which Muslim scholars sit in a circle and construct Islamic knowledge—to teach Islamic studies. However, today's geopolitical globalization of English (as an official and the most powerful language of the world's army-NATO as well as economy) might have significantly changed the interests of the KSA with regard to English education; i.e., English has been perceived as a gatekeeper to national development, and it became more than a language for disseminating Islamic creed.

2.2 EFL Education in Saudi Intermediate and Secondary Schools (1942—to Present)

In 1942, the General Directorate of Education became the Ministry of Education (MoE), with full responsibility for setting the guidelines and policy of the educational system of the KSA. In this role, the MoE restructured the public education system by merging the 3-year preparatory school with the 4-year elementary school (forming 6 years of elementary school). It has also officially endorsed the 3-year intermediate and 3-year secondary school (which consists of science and art tracks) levels in its education policy. English as a subject has been removed from the old

education system (i.e., elementary school), and reintroduced at both intermediate and secondary school levels, with Royal Decree No. 2802 dated 11/07/1942 (corresponding to 1361/06/26 H) (Al-Hajailan 2006). In 1974, the Supreme Committee for Education Policy in the MoE endorsed six 45-min sessions per week of English education at both intermediate and secondary school levels. This policy, however, was modified in 1980, with Royal Decree No. 107, and the number of contact hours of English instruction become four 45-min sessions per week at both intermediate and secondary school levels. Since then, the number of contact hours and the divisions of English education at the above two levels have been not changed. It is also importing to note that the reasons for changing contact hours of EFL in Saudi public education system were not clear.

2.3 English Education for Saudi Youngsters (2004—to Present)

The 9/11 events, 'Arab Spring Scenario' and the birth of ISIS had a great impact on the Saudi education system. The Saudi government has experienced international pressures, particularly from the USA, calling for major reforms to be made in the Saudi education policy so as to foster "more liberalism, and counterbalance the extremist ideology allegedly encouraged by some components within the Saudi curriculum, especially religious education" (Habbash 2011 p. 34). In this account, more English education across the country is seen as a strategic response towards realizing healthy educational reforms. This asserts that English is not use to develop Saudi students' linguistic and communicative competencies but also to pass on a foreign culture to Saudi learners. In response to these pressures, in 2004, the Saudi MoE allocated a budget worth millions of Dollars, by Royal Decree, for the introduction of the English language as early as grade six of primary school. Additionally, in 2011, also by Royal Decree, the MoE launched another project called English Education Development (i) to introduce English as a core subject in the 4th grade of primary school, and (ii) to enhance the quality of English education at secondary school level. Various committees and bodies have been established by the government, in collaboration with the MoE, to design and develop a curriculum that suits the local intellectual conditions. The government has been "spending billions of dollars from time to time for English teachers' recruitment, language labs, curriculum development and teachers' training" (Rahman and Alhaisoni 2013, p. 114). It has also, for example, recently contracted a variety of international publishers (e.g., Macmillan, McGraw Hill, Oxford, Pearson Education, to name a few) to design English syllabi/curricula that are based on the communicative approach for public education.

These critical decisions regarding teaching English to youngsters were in fact primarily taken for the sake of inculcating in the minds of the Saudis the message of tolerating and accepting other religions, tradition and culture. Nevertheless, these

decisions have created great tensions between liberal Saudis and conservative wings. Many parents have become resentful of the idea of teaching English to youngsters on the grounds that their children should master proper Arabic in the early stages of their education in order to be able to read and understand Arabic; an important tool to access Islamic text such as the Holy Quran and the Holy *Hadeeth* (the sayings and heritage of the Prophet Mohamed peace be upon him). Others even claim that there is a conspiracy to destroy the Arabic language in the country and the Islamic heritage associated with it.

Senior officials in the MoE are insisting that English a national strategic choice. They regarded it as a great weapon for national survival in the twenty-first century, as well as being an urgent public requirement; since this is the case, opponents need to reconsider their reactions. Local and international media have also contributed to this ongoing debate from different perspectives (see Phan and Barnawi 2015; Morgan 2002, for more accounts on these issues). Frankly speaking, both parties hold valid points with regard to EFL instruction in the country; however, the fact that such debates are continuing is a result of the absence of a clear language education policy, guidelines and strategies across the country, as well as of the paucity of studies on English education policy in the KSA. We hope that the findings of our review presented in this article will contribute to the knowledge of English education policy in the KSA and open up more paths for further investigations.

2.4 English as a Language of Development in the Higher Education System (2005—Present)

Recently, English has been characterized as a "tyrannosaurus rex" (Swales 1997) and as a "gatekeeper to positions of prestige in society" (Pennycook 1995, p. 39). It has become an accepted fact that "English is integral to the globalization processes that characterize the contemporary post-Cold War phase of aggressive casino capitalism, economic restructuring, McDonaldization and militarization on all continents" (Phillipson 2001, p. 187; Phan 2013). Saudi policy regarding English language teaching in higher education is torn between the desire to preserve the Arabic language on the one hand and the pressure of globalization and the desire to move towards gaining more access to international communication, scientific information, trade, politics, commerce and so forth on the other. This can be observed in the policy statement of the MoE (formerly Ministry of Higher Education) centered on language policy:

> Arabic is the language of instruction in universities. Another language can be used if necessary; however, this should be made by a decision from the council of the university concerned (MHE 1999, p. 17).

Today, however, the forces of global change including financial crisis of 2008, Oil Prices Fall, and rapid internal developments in the KSA have significantly changed the status of English. Despite the attempts by or desire of the MoE to

preserve the Arabic language, the practice of institutions is to move towards a greater use of the English language, for several reasons. Employers in leading industries across the country constantly report that Saudi university graduates are good in specific subject knowledge but lacking in workplace skills such critical thinking, collaborative working and communication in English. Local communities and the media have been aggressively attacking the Saudi higher education system for producing manpower with poor English language proficiency for job markets that see English as an essential tool for national development. "This problem has led to KSA's heavy dependence on foreign workforce for its economy and other important matters" (Phan and Barnawi 2015, p. 6). It has been argued that the outcomes of the higher education system have had a negative impact on the local labour force (Bahgat 1999). That is, the population of the KSA is 22 million, and yet about six million foreign workers constitute the engine of the economy. Worse still, 25 % of Saudis are unemployed. "There are too many PhDs and too few mechanics" in Saudi, adds Looney (1994, p. 45).

In a strategic response to this gap, in 2005 the MoHE endorsed a policy, by Royal Decree, that requires English to be taught as a compulsory subject at all Saudi HE institutions (the implications of this policy for the Saudi higher education system and national cultural identity will be discussed in detail in a later section of this article). Importantly, like the King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM), as well as the Royal Commission Colleges and Institutes (RCCI) at Jubail and Yanbu that have been using English as a medium of instruction over the past decades, all Saudi private and government universities/colleges/institutions are now considering using English as a medium of instruction in their programmes, especially in areas like engineering, medicine, business and information technology.

Overall, from the above discussion it is clear that the original rationale behind the Saudi government's desire to teach English at different education levels was ambiguous (possibly for the purpose of disseminating Islamic creeds); it then shifted drastically to being for the purpose of gaining access to scientific knowledge and ensuring intellectual and economic capital for the development of the nation as well as softening the discourse of the '*othering*' the West and encouraging peaceful understanding of the non-Muslims West. English education has become a core business in public and higher education policy across the country. Nevertheless, language policy cannot be deeply examining how it is being translated into classroom practices. In the next section we attempt to capture how current policies are being put into practice.

3 EFL Teaching and Learning in the Saudi Context

3.1 Profile of Teaching and Learning in Saudi EFL Classrooms

Language policy in any EFL context cannot be analysed without critically examining how it has been put into classroom practices at different educational levels. Brief descriptions of the profile of EFL instruction across the KSA can be obtained in various published documents (e.g., British Council) (Shamim 2008), on official websites, and in unpublished works (e.g., AI-Ahaydib 1986). Although the Saudi educational policy was established in 1970 and the English education was officially published in 1993, the number of studies that evaluate English educational policy in the country is very limited (e.g., Al-mengash 2006; Al-Hamid 2002; Habbash 2011). Importantly, in the Saudi context there have been very few in-depth studies that specifically examine EFL teaching at classroom level in public schools across the country.

Zaid (1993) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the practices of EFL instruction in Saudi public schools in order to examine the efficacy of the system. Using questionnaires and several on-site classroom observations, he examined the EFL textbooks, teaching methods and teacher preparation at government schools. His questionnaire was distributed to officials at the MoE, language supervisors in major cities of the KSA (i.e., Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam), and EFL teachers. Classroom observations were also conducted in several sites across the KSA; the foci of his observations were primarily on the various pedagogical strategies employed by teachers in classrooms and students' reactions to these strategies. The findings of his study reveal that EFL classrooms are mainly teacher-centred and that the audio-lingual method is dominating teachers' practices, although some respondents believed that these methods need to be replaced with other methods that promote skills of communication in English. He also reports that

> English teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia were assessed as good programs but need various improvements in English teaching methods, and speaking English, decreasing [the number of] English literature courses. Students' achievement was viewed by the subjects of the study as less than what the Ministry of Education expects (p. vii).

In another in-depth study of EFL instruction in Saudi public education, Zafer (2002) surveyed public school teachers' as well as HE professors' perspectives on the topics and roles that should be emphasized in EFL teacher preparation courses. The findings of his study reveal that the audio-lingual and grammar translation methods are preferred and also used by the majority of Saudi teachers. He concludes that traditional methods of teaching are still extremely popular in public schools. As a result, Saudi students are having difficulties carrying on basic conversations in English, even on topics they are familiar with. He emphasizes the importance of incorporating more modern communicative methods that could achieve the purposes of our English education. Zafer (2002) also points out that there is no

constructive alignment between the contents of the EFL textbooks used in schools, the teaching methods used by teachers and the EFL programme goals defined by the MoE. He further remarks that the EFL teaching materials are dominated by topics such as 'desert life', 'keeping livestock' (e.g., camels and sheep) and 'stories of ancient Arabic heroes'. Such obsolete materials, as he believes, are unlikely to help Saudi EFL students to learn and use English in situations related to modern advanced technologies, travelling or airports, for example. He further concludes that

> …having national guidelines of what is expected from EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia should serve as a framework and not another burden on the teachers. It should aim at advancing the country to meet its needs and challenges and… (p. 143)

Although the findings of these few in-depth studies have revealed several crucial aspects related to teaching methods and the EFL textbooks in use in Saudi schools, they fail to address the sociopolitical and cultural aspects of the spread of English and its role in public education across the country. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) describes the scenario that is prevalent in many EFL contexts as follows: "there are too many debates about methodological microproblems while the house is on fire" (xxii). Also, importantly, these findings give rise to some serious questions such as: why are in-depth studies of EFL teaching at Saudi public schools so scarce? Should not the Saudi government operationalize regional research centres which evaluate the practices of EFL instruction across the country, instead of centralizing the entire English education process in the ministries? Should district schools be given more autonomy to operate their EFL programmes, and to evaluate and reflect on their own practices? Are our students' current levels of English language proficiency satisfactory in the eyes of the stakeholders/government? Below we attempt to unpack the learning of and achievements in English skills in the KSA.

3.2 Learning and Achievement in English Across the KSA

As far as the learning and achievements in English among Saudi public school learners are concerned, the findings of recent studies on the outcomes of English education in public schools are crucial in understanding the impact of the current policy and practices in the KSA. Although the Saudi MoE has conducted several evaluative studies to measure the effectiveness of its English education across the country, the results of most of these studies have astonished the Ministry, since students' English proficiency is decreasing (Alresheed 2008). Findings of several studies conducted to examine the achievement of English language among Saudi students report that most students are not able to write their names in English after studying English for over 6 years (see for example Alresheed 2008).

Such alarming findings have raised red flags across the country and also created great tensions among EFL educators. This is particularly the case with senior officials in the MoE who constantly express their worries about the poor public education outcomes in the country, despite the fact that 26 % of the country's oil revenues/

national income is spent on education. In its attempts to address this gap, the MoE has also conducted several regional conferences on EFL education in the KSA, and invited representatives from the MoE, the MHE, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Economic and Planning and the Ministry of Civil Service, in addition to representatives from large Saudi companies, chambers of commerce and industry, academics from all universities, and international speakers to discuss and find solutions to the unsatisfactory outcomes of English education programmes across the country. Disappointingly, the findings of presented papers, discussions of plenary sessions, and workshops have often centred on issues such as textbooks, teaching methods, the use of technology in EFL instruction, and language teacher preparation programmes. These aspects are indeed important in raising the awareness of language educators and keeping them abreast with up-to-date EFL pedagogies. However, crucial issues related to the spread of English and its role in shaping the country's English education policy as well as 'the geopolitical reality of the globalization of English' (Block 2008) are rarely discussed at these events (see, for example, the proceedings of the recent conference on English education in the KSA organized by Taibah University, in 2011, for more accounts of these issues). Researchers like Nunan (2003) consider such negligence a universal phenomenon; i.e., "despite the apparent widespread perception that English is a global language, relatively little systematic information has been gathered on its impact on educational policies and practices in educational systems around the world" (p. 589).

Another recent report released in late 2013 by Education First (EF), the world's largest educational company with branches in more than 54 countries around the globe, also questions the low English proficiency among Saudi learners. The EF calculates a 'country's average' learner's English skill level through the utilization of data from two different EF English tests taken every year by hundreds of thousands of English learners. The first test is a free online test accessible to users worldwide, whereas the second test is an online placement test administered by EF to determine students' proficiency in English before they start an English course. Both tests consist of 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'reading' and 'listening' components. Over a period of 6 years (2007–2012), the EF tested the English skills of about five million learners across the world. Findings on the latest national rankings as well as changes in worldwide English proficiency over 6 years reveal that Saudi Arabia occupies the lowest ranking in the English proficiency index of 2013, compared to other oil-rich Gulf States countries of the Middle East. Simply stated, Saudi Arabia was listed in the very low proficiency rank—59, one point before the last country on the list (i.e., Iraq/60) (a comprehensive report on these findings can be obtained at www.ef.com/epi). The EF report also stated that,

- "Some Asian countries, in particular Indonesia and Vietnam, have transformed their English proficiency over the 6-year period. China has also improved, although less dramatically. Japan and South Korea, despite enormous private investment, have declined slightly".

It is crucial to note that the contents of the aforementioned tests and their backwash effects on the Saudi context are questionable. Nevertheless, such findings

indicate that the overall achievement of English proficiency in the Saudi context is poor. Additionally, these findings suggest that development of English language among nations is not so much related to the wealth of the state but mostly related to how the policies of foreign language learning are designed and clearly articulated; and this will lead to successful implementation of policy and achievement of goals. On the other hand, once a country is not very certain about its needs to learn English, its policy reflects complete disorientation and lack of direction as the case in most of the Middle East and North African countries. The EF report captures this as follows:

- "The Middle East and North Africa are the weakest regions in English. These oil-rich nations have staked their futures on developing knowledge economies before their oil production peaks. An exception to the region's lack luster performance is the United Arab Emirates, which has improved significantly" (www.ef.com/epi, p. 5).

Notably, the high performance of English proficiency among UAE students in EF tests may be related to the fact that the country is clear about the purpose of English instruction in its educational policy and practices. Hence, a strategic collaboration between the UAE and KSA in areas centered on successful implementation of English education policy and practice might be beneficial. This is because both countries have the same cultural, linguistic, ideological and religious values.

With such lack of clear direction in Saudi English language policy, it is undisputable that today Saudi public school students' English literacy is very weak, to the extent that some high school graduates cannot even differentiate between different phonics of English, let alone accomplish the tasks of writing their names or conducting a basic conversation in English". Despite the findings of both "local and international" studies that question the low English proficiency levels among Saudi public school graduates, the MoE is striving to internationalize its higher education systems (by adopting English as a medium of instruction in post-secondary education, importing Western "training products and services, [franchising] international programmes, [and inviting] overseas institutions to establish branch campuses" (Phan and Barnawi 2015, p. 4), on the assumption that such endeavours will address the current gaps. In the next section we shed light on these issues.

4 English and the Internationalization of the Higher Education System in the KSA

English as a global language as well as a language of international communication "is an accepted understanding that internationalization of higher education is based upon and from which globalization of knowledge is generated [and disseminated]" (Phan 2013, p. 162). Internationalizing your higher education institutions in many non-English speaking contexts means adopting English as the medium of

instruction, and constructing knowledge through English language 'products' and 'services' (Phan and Barnawi 2015). It is "the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution" (Knight 1999, p. 16). Like other countries in the oil-rich Gulf States of the Middle East, Barnawi and Phan (2014) state that

> [the Saudi MHE has] been adopting top-down internationalization policies to promote national, institutional and individual competitiveness in response to the increasing globalization of English. [Saudi] universities and colleges are revising their mission statements to ensure a commitment to internationalization, franchising international [programmes] to their local people, cultivating partnerships with foreign institutions, launching joint [programmes, and] adopting international curricula, among other endeavours (Barnawi and Phan 2014, p. 6).

For example, Technical and Vocational Training Cooperation (TVTC), the largest organization in the KSA which runs all the Technical Colleges (over 35 branches), Girls' Higher Training Institutes (17 branches) and Vocational Institutes (70 branches) across the country, is now adopting international curricula, syllabi, instructional strategies and assessment practices, and English is considered as the medium of instruction in most of its programmes. What is more, the TVTC has recently, in 2012–2013, contracted the Interlink Language Centers, the leading association of intensive English programmes in the USA, to provide intensive English programmes (two consecutive semesters and 30 h per week) for all TVTC alumni across the KSA. This intensive English programme, which is based on the communicative use of English, cultural orientation and academic preparation, is offered for over 4000 male and female Saudi alumni every year, on the assumption that it will help them enhance their overall literacy in English communication and function well in the job markets. The TVTC has posted several incentives on its website to attract its alumni to join this English programme: for instance, an accredited certificate upon successful completion of the programme, a monthly stipend of 1000 Saudi riyals (270$), and priority in obtaining a scholarship in the TVTC.

Other leading technical education institutions, namely, the Royal Commission Colleges and Institutes at Yanbu and Jubail, are also actively internationalizing their engineering and business programmes through introducing English as a medium of instruction in all their programmes, among other endeavours. Recently, both Yanbu Industrial College and Jubail Industrial College, which are schools under the umbrella of the Royal Commission Colleges and Institutes, introduced a joint EMBA programme in collaboration with Indianapolis University in the USA for Yanbu, and Troy University in the USA for Jubail. Moreover, Jubail Industrial College has contracted McGill University in Canada to run its entire intensive English programme in the foundation year.

Recently, the Saudi government has spent over billion of dollar and lunched a project called "*Colleges of Excellence*" in order to reform its entire technical and vocational education and training across the country. In this account, it invites international training providers to open branch campus across the country. Today, there are over 37 international institutes operating in the KSA. "These colleges are managed by either Western training companies/ agencies, by Western colleges and

universities, by a consortium of two or three Western colleges, or by a group of Western training companies and local Saudi organizations. Among these, 24 colleges are UK-affiliated and the rest are affiliated with colleges and training companies in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands" (Phan and Barnawi 2015, p. 8).

Furthermore, there is a dramatic race among all local universities (e.g., King Saud University, King Abdul Aziz University and Umm Al-Qura University) towards gaining ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc.) accreditation for their applied science, computing, engineering and engineering technology programmes. There is also a move towards obtaining ACBSP (Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs) accreditation for business programmes, and a race towards gaining American, British and Canadian boards' accreditation for medicine programmes across the country. If a particular Saudi university/college obtains such accreditations for its programmes, the news is usually publicized via several local media, and also recognition letters pour in to that respective university/college from senior officials at the MHE and within the university/college. Discourses of "accreditation, international partnerships, joint ventures, English as the medium of instruction, and the internationalization of higher education are highly regarded in Saudi university/college communities as well as at senior official talks" (Barnwi and Phan 2014, 6).

The regulations of these accreditation organizations require local Saudi HE institutions to use English as a medium of instruction throughout their academic programmes, which in turn creates great demands for English education across the country. To the best of our knowledge, there are no empirical studies that have specifically examined "classroom discourse and its effects on learning in subject classrooms" (Shamim 2008, p. 242), the cognitive and educational consequences of learning concepts in English, and the other pedagogical challenges of using English as the medium of instruction in the context of Saudi Arabia. Thus, several crucial questions related to current practices need to be answered. This is because, as Tollefson and Tsui (2004) articulate,

> Medium of instruction policy determines which social and linguistic groups have access to political and economic opportunities, and which groups are disenfranchised. It is therefore a key means of power (re) distribution and social (re) construction, as well as a key arena in which political conflicts among countries and ethnolinguistic, social and political groups are realized (p. 2).

We personally believe that the notion of having English as the medium of instruction is continuing to gain popularity in Saudi post-secondary education owing to the paucity of empirical research studies that deeply examine the pros and cons of such practices from classroom discourse perspectives. Moreover, Saudi universities/colleges will continue to spend more resources on getting the assistance of Centre experts for re-training their cadre. The government also exercises its right to endorse these practices by financially and logistically supporting local institutions to achieve these ends and by normalizing such discourses across the country. The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), established in 2009, is

one good example. The budget of the Saudi MHE has nearly tripled since 2004, more new universities have been opened, and King Abdullah himself has offered $10 billion of his own money to launch a graduate-level science-and-technology university called KAUST with international standards (Barnawi 2011). According to Corbyn (2009), KAUST has already embarked on collaborative ventures with 27 universities worldwide and created five international alliances of academic excellence. These international universities offer advice at various levels (e.g., equipment requirements, staff selection, and curricula in science and engineering) and have participated in several collaborative research studies with KAUST. Imperial College London, for example, will receive US$25 million over 5 years for taking part in a piece of collaborative research with KAUST (Corbyn 2009; Wilkins 2011).

It should be noted that Saudi Arabia is not alone in such ambitions. Over the last two decades, the mission to internationalize the higher education system has also been undertaken in other countries of the oil-rich Gulf States of the Middle East, namely, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. These countries are striving to internationalize their higher education systems through a variety of endeavours. According to Wilkins (2010), the United Arab Emirates "is by far the largest host of international branch campuses globally, having over 40 providers at the end of 2009. The UAE higher education market has become highly competitive and, in the private sector, supply currently exceeds demand" (p. 389). Elsewhere, Wilkins (2010) points out that,

> American, Australian and British universities have particularly benefited from the process of globalisation that has occurred in higher education, as the countries in which they are based have generally well-regarded systems of higher education and because English has become the *lingua franca* in international higher education (pp. 389–390).

The current practices involved in the internationalization of post-secondary education in the KSA as well as in other Arabian Gulf countries demonstrate that English no longer "belongs just to native English speakers from the English-speaking West" (Phan 2013, p. 163); instead, there are other users of English who are now striving to appropriate it in their national interests (Saudi Arabia, in the case of this article). There is clear evidence that Saudi universities/colleges are moving towards a policy/practice of international collaboration through various means, such as recruitment, accreditation, benchmarking academic programmes, and establishing partnerships with overseas universities. There are also strong beliefs among policy makers that English-medium education is the primary tool for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the KSA. However, this rapid internationalization of higher education scenarios gives rise to several important questions related to the national cultural identity of the country. What are the possible benefits that could be gained by Saudi students who have low English proficiency in their former education (i.e., public education)? Do Saudi students have the option of not studying English at all? Or are their choices limited by the 'constraints at both global and local levels'? (Shamim 2008; Wright 2004)? Will there be any concrete outcomes in the shape of intellectual and economic growth and increased competitiveness?

Below we critically analyse some of the major issues and consequences of the current English education policy in the KSA.

5 Current Issues and Challenges

This section presents some major issues and challenges arising from recent government initiatives concerning English education policy and practices across the KSA. It is argued that it is crucial to understand the intersections between current English language policy and practices in both public and higher education, and the internationalization of education and national cultural identity in order successfully to promote mass literacy in English in the KSA while at the same time maintaining the national interests (e.g., Arabic language, Islamic cultural and tradition, etc.). This is because the aforementioned aspects are interrelated and manifested in a complex way through recent government initiatives.

As stated above, historically, the primary rationale for teaching EFL in the KSA was ambiguous; however, in 1993 the government officially announced the English education policy of the country through its official documents. Since then, it has been found in several studies that the English education policy documents have several limitations, including vague terms, too general terminologies, and repetitions that constantly cause confusion in interpretation. Also, the structure and content of these education policy documents lack consistency and coherence (see Al-hamid 2002; Al-mengash 2006 for more accounts of these issues). Worse still, to date, there is no clear English language education framework that provides "a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, examinations and textbooks"(CoE 2001, 1) in the KSA. This has resulted in constant changes being made in English education curricula, policies and practices across the country. English has been taught in Saudi intermediate and secondary schools since 1974; however, the outcomes of English education have been below stakeholders' expectations. Consequently, in 2004 the Saudi government endorsed the idea that the English language should be taught as early as grade six of primary school, and later, in 2011, it introduced English as a core subject in the 4th grade of primary school. These initiatives, indeed, have caused the government to spend billions of Saudi riyals on contracting international publishers to prepare English curricula, on training teachers, and on buying different teaching and learning resources, among other things. Despite all these efforts, studies on EFL education in Saudi schools, as stated earlier, frequently report that the outcomes of English education are below expectations, which is also astonishing for the entire MoE community.

We strongly believe that the absence of a comprehensive framework that defines the target levels of English proficiency for Saudi learners at each stage of their learning and on a lifelong basis is one major issue that needs to be addressed by the government. This framework should include topics responsive to the local cultural and intellectual conditions, and also have an international correlation in terms of grades, levels, examinations and instruction times etc. It should also articulate

required knowledge, attributes, awareness and skills they have to develop in order to be able to act effectively. It is regrettable that because of the absence of a clearly defined language framework in the country, local universities and colleges are uncritically using '*The Common European Framework Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, and assessment*' (CEFR) to operate their intensive English language programmes. International publishers are also very quick to invade the Saudi markets with the so-called CEFR-based commercial materials (e.g., EFL textbooks, CDs, DVDs, portfolios, test banks, placement tests). It has been widely accepted that this European framework, with its political, ideological, socio-cultural, psychological and pedagogical issues, is not even relevant to Europe itself—the framework's main target (See Barnawi 2012; Bonnet 2007; Fulcher 2004; Alderson 2007, for comprehensive accounts of these issues). Surprisingly, however, education institutions in the KSA have been uncritically using it as a benchmark for their language programmes.

Using one of the Saudi universities as an example, Barnawi (2012) conducted a comprehensive study to examine the pedagogical effectiveness of the CEFR in the Saudi context. He reports that this framework has produced extremely loud reactions to almost every component of the prep-year intensive English programme (e.g., planning, curriculum, syllabus, teaching, assessment and materials) at that university, but its pedagogical effectiveness remains invisible. Worse still, students have become primary victims of a framework that openly condemns Confucianist approaches to teaching and learning, and forcibly transplants inappropriate Western pedagogies into the Saudi context. The current EFL teaching practices in both public and higher education settings reflect clearly what scholars like Shamim (2008) describes it 'disconnected' as well as 'fragmented implementation' endeavours at the various stage of education in the country. These practices have also not only demonstrated internal contradictions in the entire English education policies and practices, but also created self-doubt among policy makers who often believe that top-down policy changes coupled with internationalization practices would be the most effective approach for promoting mass literacy in English in the KSA.

Another critical issue to which we would like to draw the attention of policy makers in the KSA is centred on the practices of internationalization of the higher education system. It is clear that, in this era of the knowledge-based economy and emerging ELT pedagogies, English is seriously considered by the Saudi government to be a primary tool for human resources. Issues such as the unequal ownership of English, neocolonialism, commercialization, and discourses of Western hegemony are frequently embedded in today's 'educational policies', 'pedagogies' and 'practices' (Canagarajah 2005; Phan 2013; Phillipson 2009). Hence, the internationalization of higher education in the Saudi context is neither immune nor free from such troubles. Although there is a clear "celebration of the dominance of English in the internationalization"(Phan 2013, p. 164) of the Saudi HE system, the process of this internationalization is similar to Phan's (2013) description in her study: it "is still largely geared towards importing and exporting English language products and services from the English-speaking West" (p. 164). English medium education is directly linked to an increase in the quality of education across the country. Local

universities are constantly competing against each other to import pre-existing knowledge such as the CEFR, franchised programmes and accreditations, without taking the role of critical consumers and responsible producers into account. This tendency will inevitably shape policies and practices for internationalizing Saudi higher education system in such a way as to reinforce an English-only mentality, the use of Western pedagogies and a type of intellectual dependency (Singh 2011), and this in turn will create a widespread perception of 'Western is better'. This would further adversely affect the values, tradition and national cultural identity of the country (Phan 2013; Phan and Barnawi 2015).

The practice of internationalizing higher education through the use of English as a medium of instruction is often encumbered by the dominance of Western theoretical knowledge and the dominant role played by English, exercised through Western universities' moves towards commercialization and global ranking practices (Kim 2005; Singh 2011; Yang 2002). Using one of the Saudi governments' ambitious project called "Colleges of Excellence" as a case study, Phan and Barnawi (2015) explored how the 'intersection between English, the internationalization of HE, desire, and neoliberalism has played out' in the CoE project. The findings of their study demonstrated that while the Saudi government' CoE project is loaded with educational agendas, international training providers "tend to pay particular attention to opening new markets and how to multiply 'surpluses' in SA and how to market their training services more widely" (16). They further report that

> Market value of education is often expressed using vague and generic vocabularies, for example 'highest performing', 'global leader', 'outstanding', 'leading', 'success', 'rich tradition', and 'excellence' as in the case of all the three colleges presented above. Through the employment of these vocabularies and rhetorical flashes to promote their business overseas, these colleges hope to attract more international business and represent themselves as the-already-reputable global training providers (ibid)

In addition to the above issues, Saudi government efforts to internationalize the country's higher education and maintain its national cultural identity are actually being effectively realized across the country. Yet, these practices can always be interpreted differently, owing to the unrest and tensions between senior officials and conservative wings over English education policy in the country, as well as constant international pressures that have continued to question the Saudi education curricula since 9/11. On one level, to the Saudi government internationalization might be considered as one way of proactively engaging with the world in order to promote its identity through its English education policies, solidify Saudi culture and reject Western influences on Saudi society. On another level, these rather simplistic and highly problematic practices imply, particularly to those conservative wings, that the Saudi government, through the superficial appearance of having English-medium programmes in its university/college curricula, is unknowingly increasing academic capitalism and the hegemony of Western heritage in the country. This is because English has been adversely influencing the values and cultural identity of the KSA in much complex and deeper ways: i.e., it is creating a colonial mentality—the superior Western 'Self' and the inferior 'Other' (Saudis).

This dominance of English in the Saudi higher education system further raises the question of whether local science, humanities, business and engineering faculty members are ready to catch up intellectually with advanced overseas universities in Europe and North America. University/college scholars are often pressurized to publish in top Western journals indexed in the Institute for Science Information (ISI) in order to obtain authentication and recognition of their intellectual capacity within their own disciplines. This, however, calls into question the extent to which the professional identities of Saudi scholars might be affected by their desires to be in an English-only environment in their own countries. Many studies have pointed out how representation and identity in Asia, including Middle Eastern countries, can be negatively affected by the massive promotion of English in knowledge construction and scholarship building (e.g., Ishikawa 2009; Phan 2013; Wilkins 2010, 2011). Ishikawa (2009) warns that the increasing numbers of publications in English across the world are "smothering the nascent scholarship at local, regional, and national levels, and thus this problem is surely not a matter of language alone, but of representation and identity" (p. 172). The history of English-medium instruction programmes at all Saudi universities, with the exception of KFUP and Royal Commission Colleges Institutes, is relatively new (i.e., it started in 2004–2005), and these programmes are underdeveloped. Such practice may lead to a loss of intellectual engagement and knowledge production in Arabic, which we consider a serious matter that should be taken into consideration. These accounts also mirror what Phan (2013) describes in her analysis of Japanese government projects designed to internationalize the country's higher education system through the use of English-medium instruction. In this regard, she believes that the internationalization practice

> tends to most powerfully (re) produce superficial engagement with scholarship under the banner of internationalization largely driven by commercialization, the overindulgence of English in the government policies as well as the nation building discourse that tends to take a shortcut to English while undermining local languages (pp. 171–172).

Indeed, a lack of understanding of the intersection between the above critical issues in the current English education policy and practices across the KSA will not only militate against successful policy implementation, but may also produce a society which is literate neither in Arabic nor in English.

6 Suggestions and Conclusion

In today's era of the 'newness'—'new economy', 'new knowledge', 'new vocationalism' (Dovey 2006), it is important for the Saudi government to have an implementation plan that is based on effective strategies for the acquisition of mass literacy in English (Cooper 1989; Shamim 2008). Through English, as a global language and a language of advancement, international communication, military links, commerce, trade and so forth, countless national borders and boundaries across the

world have also become porous. Additionally, competition for knowledge production becomes extremely fierce, owing to the intense focuses on innovation and capability building among nations (Canagarajah 2005; Crystal, 199; Pennycook 2008). This focus on innovation and capability building, as Dovey (2006) puts it, "has lead to a new focus on knowledge, making it a highly valued form of capital-hence the use of terms such as 'knowledge workers', 'the new knowledge economy', and 'the new capitalism" (p. 390). We are grateful to Gee et al. (1996, p. 5) who articulate that,

> Globally competitive businesses don't any longer really compete on the basis of their products or services per se. They compete, rather, on the basis of how much learning and knowledge they can leverage [i.e. capture and exploit in profitable ways] in order to expeditiously invent, produce, distribute and market their goods and services, as well as to innovatively vary and customize them. (p. 5)

These trends suggest that practices such as mastering pre-existing knowledge of language pedagogies, products and services, and obtaining accreditation from external agencies, training faculty members or students in stable and routinized competencies by the so-called Centre language education experts, adopting Western language learning frameworks at local universities, and inviting external agencies to design and assess EFL programmes, among other things, seem to be promoting the paradigm of 'knowledge about' (Mode 1 knowledge) rather than that of 'knowledge how' (Mode 2 knowledge) in English education. A detailed definition and description of Mode 1 knowledge and Mode 2 knowledge can be found in the very widely cited work of Gibbons et al. (1994): *The new production of knowledge: The dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*.

Notably, the practices of English education in the KSA are based mainly on top-down approaches which consist of importing Western 'products' and 'services', and this in turn continues to shape and reshape policies, research, pedagogies and practices of English instruction across the country. In a constantly changing world of knowledge, importing Western products and services means laboriously acting in a vicious cycle of dependency, self-doubt and tensions with regard to focusing on small problems (e.g., searching for the best methods of EFL teaching and piloting commercial international textbooks, etc.) while the whole house is on fire. Off-the-shelf standardized products of English education with generic contents that are developed in Centre applied linguistic circles are often irrelevant socio-culturally, ideologically, politically and linguistically to the Saudi contexts. Thus, we believe that, in this era of the knowledge-based economy, English education policy and practices in the KSA should be based on the Mode 2 knowledge paradigm: learning *how* to learn (Gee et al. 1996). A "major epistemic/cognitive shift" (Delanty 2001, p. 3) should be taking place in the English education policy guidelines, curricula and strategies of the country. The old term 'competence' in the goal and mission statements of the English curricula of the KSA should be replaced by the term 'capability'. The argument is that "capability is a forward looking notion that focuses on the ability to learn from and adapt to a diverse society", as Dovey (2006, p. 392) points out. Also, importantly,

> both the new capitalism and sociocultural theory alike disown the idea of knowledge and learning as locked into and 'owned' by private minds. They both—for different reasons—argue that knowledge and learning are social and distributed across people and technology—beyond individual minds and bodies. (Gee et al. 1996, p. 67)

Informed by Mode 2 knowledge epistemology, actors, authorities, stakeholders, the MoE should work together to map/link the language levels, knowledge, skills and attributes of public education curricula to the higher education curricula through a locally designed language education framework. This locally designed language education framework then should be proactively correlated to other international standards in order to enable Saudi citizens to think locally and act globally. In this way, we are not suggesting isolating the Saudi English language policy from the rest of the world nor advocating blind adoption of international frameworks. Instead, we are calling for development of national policies that put the interest of KSA first and negotiate the link with the international framework second. In this sense, the enactors of English education policy in the KSA would not so easily fall into the trap of knowledge consumers; instead, they would become responsible producers of knowledge in this era of new: new knowledge, new economy and new vocationalism (Dovey 2006). Such an epistemology in English education policy could also liberate language educators "from thinking that effective/efficient methods come from centers of research and expertise in the West" (Canagarajah 2002). It could also be help to ease tensions among senior officials, parents and conservative wings to re-imagine the geopolitical reality of the globalization of English, and negotiate the practices of English education in the KSA, and yet together proactively appropriate it in the interests of the country. This in turn would enable Saudi EFL learners to develop meta-knowledge about their own English learning processes (Dovey 2006). Thus, they would be able to pursue successful careers in a constantly evolving job market that sees English as an essential tool for national development, and they would also be able to respond to new and challenging circumstances.

References

AI-Ahaydib, M. (1986). *Teaching English as a foreign language in the intermediate and the secondary schools of Saudi Arabia*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Kansas, Kansas.

Alderson, J. (2007). The CEFR and the need for more research. *The Modern Language Journal, 91*(4), 659–663.

Al-Hajailan, T. (1999). *Evaluation of English as a foreign language textbook for third grade secondary boys' schools in Saudi Arabia*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Mississippi State University, Mississippi.

Al-Hajailan, T. (2006). *Teaching English in Saudi Arabia*. Al-Dar Al-Sawlatia.

Al-Hamid, M. (2002). *Education in Saudi Arabia: The present and the future (Arabic)*. Al-Riyadh: Al-Rasheed.

Almansour, M. (2013). *Is English really enough? Researching foreign language planning and policy in Saudi Arabia*. Paper presented at the Conference on Creativity and Innovation in Educational Research, Berlin, Germany

Al-Mengash, S. (2006). An analysis of the Saudi education policy and suggestions for its improvement. *Journal of Educational Sciences & Islamic Studies, 19*(1), 381–440.

Alresheed, S. (2008). EFL program of the secondary schools in Qassim region (Saudi Arabia): Problems, causes and solutions. *Newcastle University Journal*. Retrieved on September 14, 2013 from http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/public/uploads/1357382794.1003EFL%20P%20R%20Q%20

Al-Seghayer, K. (2005). Teaching English in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Slowly but steadily changing. In G. Braine (Ed.), *Teaching English to the world: History, curriculum, and practice* (pp. 125–134). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. In M. Featherstone (Ed.), *Global culture: Nationalism, globalization and modernity* (pp. 295–310). London: Sage.

Bahgat, G. (1999). Education in the Gulf monarchies. *International Review of Education, 2*(45), 27–136.

Barnawi, O. (2011). *Reading texts in an active and reflective manner: Examining critical literacy*. Paper presented at the 3rd Annual conference on higher education pedagogy, Center for Instructional Development and Educational Research. Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, USA.

Barnawi, O. (2012). *CEFR, one size, fits all*. Paper presented at the 18th Annual TESOL Arabia conference on achieving excellence through life skills education, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Barnawi, O. (2016). The effect of negotiating pedagogies in Saudi college EFL writing classrooms. *Language and Literacy, 18*(1), 1–28.

Block, D. (2008). Encyclopedia of language and education. In S. May & N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Language education and globalization* (pp. 31–42). New York: Springer.

Bonnet, G. (2007). The CEFR and education policies in Europe. *The Modern Language Journal, 91*(4), 669–672.

Canagarajah, A. S. (2002). Globalization, methods, and practice in periphery classrooms. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and language teaching* (pp. 134–150). London: Routledge.

Canagarajah, S. (2005). *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cooper, R. (1989). *Language planning and social change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Corbyn, Z. (2009). Saudi Arabia begins putting minds to challenges of future. *Times Higher Education*, September 24. Retrieved on October 10, 2013, from: http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/408293.article

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Delanty, G. (2001). *Challenging knowledge: The university in the knowledge society*. Buckingham: SRHE/Open University Press.

Dovey, T. (2006). What purposes, specifically? Re-thinking purposes and specificity in the context of the 'new vocationalism'. *English for Specific Purposes, 25*(4), 387–402.

Education First. (2013). *English proficiency index*. Retrieved on October 7, 2013 from www.ef.com/epi

Fulcher, G. (2004). Deluded by artifices? The common European framework and harmonization. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 1*(4), 253–266.

Gee, J. P., Hull, G., & Lankshear, C. (1996). *The new work order behind the language of the new capitalism*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., et al. (1994). *The new production of knowledge: The dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*. London: Sage.

Habbash, M. (2011). *Status change of English and its role in shaping public education language policy and practice in Saudi Arabia: A postmodernist critical perspective*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Exeter, Exeter.

Ishikawa, M. (2009). University rankings, global models, and emerging hegemony: Critical analysis from Japan. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 13*(2), 159–173.

Kazmi, Y. (1997). The hidden political agenda of teaching English as an international language. *Muslim Education Quarterly, 15*(1), 1–13.

Kim, T. (2005). Internationalisation of higher education in South Korea: Reality, rhetoric, and disparity in academic culture and identities. *Australian Journal of Education, 49*(1), 1–28.

Knight, J. (1999). Internationalization of higher education. In J. Knight & H. de Wit (Eds.), *Quality and internationalization in higher education* (pp. 13–23). Paris: OECD.

Looney, R. (1994). *Manpower policies and development in the Persian Gulf*. London: Praeger.

Ministry of Higher Education. (1999). *System of higher education*. Riyadh: Author.

Morgan, T. (2002). Religious lobby blocks moves to improve English. *TES Newspaper*, 4496, p. 11.

Nunan, D. (2003). The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region. *TESOL Quarterly, 37*(4), 589–613.

Pennycook, A. (1995). English in the world/the world in English. In J. W. Tollefson (Ed.), *Power and inequality in language education* (pp. 34–58). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pennycook, A. (2008). Multilithic English(es) and language ideologies. *Language in Society, 37*(3), 435–444.

Phan, L. H. (2013). Issues surrounding English, the internationalisation of higher education and national cultural identity in Asia: A focus on Japan. *Critical Studies in Education, 54*(2), 160–175.

Phan, L. H., & Barnawi, O. Z. (2015). Where English, neoliberalism, desire and internationalization are alive and kicking: Higher education in Saudi Arabia today. *Language and Education, 29*, 545. doi:10.1080/09500782.2015.1059436.

Phillipson, R. (2001). English for globalisation or for the world's people? *International Review of Education, 47*(3), 185–200.

Phillipson, R. (2009). *Linguistic imperialism continued*. New York: Routledge.

Rahman, M., & Alhaisoni, E. (2013). Teaching English in Saudi Arabia: Prospects and challenges. *Academic Research International, 4*(1), 112–118.

Shamim, F. (2008). Trends, issues and challenges in English language education in Pakistan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 28*(3), 235–249.

Singh, M. (2011). Learning from China to internationalise Australian research education: Pedagogies of intellectual equality, 'optimal ignorance' and the ERA journal rankings. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 48*(4), 395–405.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). *Linguistic genocide in education or worldwide diversity and human rights?* London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Swales, J. (1997). English as tyrannosaurus rex. *World Englishes, 16*(3), 373–382.

Tollefson, J., & Tsui, A. (2004). *Medium of instruction policies: Which agenda? Whose agenda?* London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wilkins, S. (2010). Higher education in the United Arab Emirates: An analysis of the outcomes of significant increases in supply and competition. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 32*(4), 389–400.

Wilkins, S. (2011). Who benefits from foreign universities in the Arab Gulf States? *Australian Universities Review, 53*(1), 73–83.

Wright, S. (2004). *Language policy and language planning: From nationalism to globalisation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yang, R. (2002). University internationalisation: Its meanings, rationales and implications. *Intercultural Education, 13*(1), 81–95.

Zafer, A. (2002). *A survey of Saudi schools teachers and college professors perspectives on topics and roles to emphasize in English as a foreign language in teacher preparation course*. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansa, Kansas.

Zaid, M. A. (1993). *Comprehensive analysis of the current system of teaching English as a foreign language in the Saudi Arabian intermediate schools*. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado, Colorado.