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TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

A critical discourse analysis of the reasons underlying Arab student-teachers' inadequate English language proficiency

Ali S.M. Al-Issa[1]*, Ali Hussain Al-Bulushi[2] and Rima Mansoor Al-Zadjali[3]

Abstract: Despite the emphasis laid on demonstrating English language proficiency by Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs), research has shown that for various reasons English language teachers graduating from a state-owned university in an Arab country for the past 25 years or so have been found lacking communication skills due to reasons pertinent to their preparation. This Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) study combines data from two different sources and examines from an ideological perspective the reasons underlying those student-teachers' (STs) deficient English language proficiency. Results have revealed that there have been conflicting and contesting ideological among the various involved agents leading to manipulating the factors affecting those STs' English language proficiency. The findings have implications for shaping the STs' language proficiency.

*Corresponding author: Ali S.M. Al-Issa, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, P.O. Box 3058, Ruwi 112, Sultanate of Oman
E-mail: ali2465@squ.edu.om

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ali S.M. Al-Issa has a PhD in Education (TESOL) from University of Queensland, Australia. He is currently an associate professor of TESOL at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University. His research interests include foreign/s language education policy and planning and teacher training and education. The author is currently the best-cited Omani researcher.

Ali Hussain Al-Bulushi has a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Lancaster University, UK. He is currently an assistant professor of Applied Linguistics at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University. His research areas of interest include English language teacher professional development, language teacher education, task-based language teaching, computer-mediated communication, and reflective practice.

Rima Mansoor Al-Zadjali has a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Lancaster University, UK. She is the deputy director for Academic Programs in the Quality Assurance Office, Sultan Qaboos University. Her research areas of interest include language testing, integrated assessment of reading and writing, and academic program quality assurance.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

One of the main characteristics of a non-native English language speaking teachers is language proficiency. However, English teachers graduating from a government-owned Arab university have continued to show weaknesses in this side. Based upon data collected from four highly qualified and experienced English language teaching faculty members representing the College of Education, College of Arts and Social Science, and the Language Center, this study critically investigates the factors affecting those student-teachers' English language proficiency. It was found that the four participants had cognitive biases, which led them to manipulate the affecting factors. Clearly those biases and manipulation reflect negatively on preparing those linguistically inadequate prospective. Understanding such context can lead to understanding the ideological conflict and contest underlying the construction of English language teacher education in this part of the world.

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1. English and English language teaching at present

English emerged in the last six decades or so as the most recognized and preeminent global lingua franca and the language of globalization with millions of speakers worldwide. It established its authority and dominance as the world's most powerful linking and unifying language, which entails technological, economic, cultural, and linguistic dimensions (Sonntag, 2008). Macedo, Dendrinos, and Gounari (2003) considered this an "ideological trick" motivated by the establishment of political domination and imperialism, an "extension of an empire" (Stephenson, 2003), and the reordering of the "political map" (Ignatieff, 2003). In addition, authors like Phillipson (2008), for example, linked the spread and legitimization of English to the Anglo-American collaboration to achieve certain political, economic, and cultural agendas.

English today and through its multiple and significant uses and values not only cemented its place as the most widely dominant language of the intellectuals, but continued to gain more stature and grew stronger than ever, which has successfully made it the world's first international language, language of wider communication, official language, and the dominant and default language of international communication. English additionally became a necessity and a crucial tool through which economic and social development and gains are achieved, especially in the developing world (Casale & Posel, 2011).

A fundamental part of the ideologies driving the spread of English at present is English Language Teaching (ELT) (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 2008), which was considered as cementing the hegemony of English as the "capitalist neo-imperial language" (Phillipson, 2008, p. 33), consolidating the commercialization and marketization of ELT converting it into a corporate body (Phillipson, 2008; Templer, 2004), and contributing to the exercise of power by the Anglo-American partnership and its central and dominant role regarding culture, capital, and knowledge of English and ELT (Phillipson, 2008). One way of achieving this was believed to be through the highly ranking individuals as the "cheer-leaders" of global English legitimization and dominance (Phillipson, 2008).

Governments around the world thus invested heavily in reforming their ELT systems to help their people develop communicative competence to use English in order to achieve different purposes. Such reform took the shape of introducing the revolutionary, most popular, and widely used Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach today, which came in response to various traditional methods, which dominated the ELT scene for decades and were criticized for their several limitations in preparing successful language users.

2. English and ELT

The Arab country dealt with in this study was never colonized by any Western power. It has had very strong historical links with the UK since 1646, which developed due to economic and political benefits and reasons (Al-Busaidi, 1995; Bhacker, 1992). This country readily accepted English as the only official foreign and global lingua franca when the current ruler ascended to the throne in 1970 due to its centrality for the country's strategic plans and economic development (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). In addition, it is recognized that English has relevant qualities, important functional discourse practices, and language domains, allowing its users to achieve different social, personal, economic, cultural, and academic gains (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). Examples of those gains are pursuing higher education, acquiring science and technology, finding a white-collar job, conducting business, cultural analysis and understanding, and engaging in inter-lingual communication.

ELT took huge theoretical and practical strides and its spread and uses expanded and stretched beyond any geographical boundaries in all developing countries as a distinct form of the English language's "diffused symbolic power" (Bourdieu, 1991). The government reacted to this evolution and reformed its ELT education system in 1998 through the design and implementation of the CLT-based Basic Education System (BES), which cost millions of US dollars (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). New textbooks were written (*English For Me*—EFM), state-of-the-art educational technology was incorporated into the system, time allocated to ELT on the national curriculum was expanded, and teachers were trained to teach as per the new philosophy and guidelines. However, despite this reform, a weak but substantial link continued to exist and disturb policy implementation (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). This was the English teachers' poor command of English. Particular reference is made here to the hundreds of local teachers, who have been graduating from university since 1990 (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012).

3. English teachers' language proficiency

Teachers are faced with the challenge of being accurate and fluent in using the target language (Al-Mutawa & Kailani, 1989; Frazier & Fillabaum, 2011/2012). In addition, Cullen (1994) argued that CLT materials require teachers to be proficient enough in English to produce their own materials and select from a wide and diverse array of prepared materials to meet their learners' needs and interests. Skehan (1996), Nel and Muller (2010), and Richards (2010) maintained that linguistically incompetent Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) fail to enrich and diversify their students' language knowledge input through their adherence only to the mandated syllabus.

Proficiency in English for NNESTs was thus emphasized (Al-Mekhlafi, 2007; Cetinavci & Yavez, 2010; Fahmy & Bilton, 1992; Frazier & Fillabaum, 2011/2012; Low, Chong, & Ellis, 2014; Nakata, 2010; Richards, 2010; Shin, 2008), rated highest among the good NNEST's qualities (Lange, 1990), and problematized in the relevant literature (Lee, 2004; Richards, 2010). Teachers lacking such essential knowledge and competency were judged inefficient and unqualified (Richards, 2008). NNESTs were expected and required to possess a proficiency level to function confidently inside and outside the classroom (Al-Mekhlafi, 2007; Fahmy & Bilton, 1992; Murdoch, 1994; Nel & Muller, 2010; Shin, 2008) so that they can satisfy their students' learning needs, wants, and interests and positively impact their learning (Al-Darwish, 2006; Lee, 2004; Nel & Muller, 2010; Shin, 2008). This is a fundamental component of the NNEST's professionalism (Nakata, 2010; Richards, 2010) and has important implications for public accountability (Lee, 2004; Shin, 2008). However, the ELT pre-service education enterprise in general was criticized for failing to equip NNESTs with the necessary skills and tools to use the target language proficiency (Al-Mekhlafi, 2007; Cetinavci & Yavez, 2010; Coskun & Daloglu, 2010; de Lima, 2001; Komur, 2010; Pasternak & Bailey, 2004; Peacock, 2009; Salihoglu, 2012).

A survey of the literature revealed that certain ELT teacher educators around the world supported their NNESTs' English language competence in different ways. Examples of these ways were integrating activities and assignments into courses already taught to NNESTs to help give them more language training leading to improving their linguistic and pragmatic competences (Frazier & Fillabaum, 2011/2012; Nemtchinova, Mahboob, Eslami, & Seran, 2010; Shin, 2008), providing feedback on the grammar, coherence, and comprehensibility of NNESTs' writing assignments (Frazier & Fillabaum, 2011/2012), providing feedback on speaking in general and pronunciation in specific after the presentation is complete (Frazier & Fillabaum, 2011/2012); designing courses that specifically address NNESTs' writing and speaking needs (Frazier & Fillabaum, 2011/2012), and designing a criterion-references or performance-based as opposed to norm-referenced contextualized Classroom Language Assessment Benchmark sheet as a professional development tool to help NNESTs raise their awareness of and improve their classroom English language proficiency (Nakata, 2010).

Other findings came in the form of suggestions based upon the unsatisfactory existing status quo found in some programs. One of these was to train NNESTs to act as ethnographers and "tape-record talk-in-interaction and interview members of their students' families and communities—focusing on ways of learning and using language" (Shin, 2008, p. 63), encourage NNESTs to read a wide

variety of materials for pleasure in English and participate in local and national professional organizations by volunteering in conferences and delivering presentations (Shin, 2008), incorporate classroom language training into the teacher education program (Shin, 2008), create a website to help NNESTs interact, share, and discuss with their peers and instructors areas of commonality (Nel & Muller, 2010), integrate theory and relevant aspects of language teaching into the practical component to ensure effective language teaching (Nel & Muller, 2010), and design a short accredited course to serve as a bridge into the degree program to help NNESTs improve through developing action plans (Nel & Muller, 2010).

4. English language teachers

The university under investigation in this study was established over four decades ago as a leading national higher education academic institution and is a state-owned university in the country. It grew from five colleges then to nine colleges nowadays. One of the colleges established since its inception is the College of Education. In 1990, the first cohort of ELT graduates joined the teaching force on a full-time basis and more graduates have been joining the profession annually since then. Nonetheless, there have been repeated complaints ever since about the language proficiency demonstrated by these graduates from various officials occupying different positions in the Ministry of Education and consistent calls from the different employers to improve the quality of the graduates. This has negatively affected the BES implementation. This is particularly the case with those student-teachers (STs), who graduated with a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 2.0, which is insufficient for their language proficiency. It is important to mention here that this threshold is the same as for the academic probation level at the university. Equating it with graduating to be teachers, it does not serve the purpose of producing competent and proficient language teachers for the job market.

It is thus striking that very few studies examined to date the reasons underlying the Arab university ELT STs purported weaknesses in English despite the repeated nationwide public criticism pointed at those graduates for the past three decades or so and the important implications the problem has to ELT education policy implementation. In their ethnographic study, Fahmy and Bilton (1992) conducted a study on 74 first, second, and third-year ELT STs. The study consisted of ethnographic analysis of the sociocultural context for the program and a survey, which elicited information about student educational and language background, self-reported English language skills, attitudes toward the English language and culture, perceived role of English in the country, and design of the program.

Results indicated that most participants "… seemed to be studying English primarily to achieve pragmatic goals" (p. 114). Unlike a number of other studies conducted in similar contexts, the authors further found that the STs were "… secure in their identity" as locals and "… exhibited a very positive orientation towards the use and study of English … and did not seem to be worried about becoming Westernized" (p. 114). The two authors attributed this partly to the fact that the this Arab country never experienced any subordination to an English-speaking country. Fahmy and Bilton (1992) supported "… the promotion of an attitude of linguistic tolerance" (p. 115) and believed it could affect student learning in the region in general. Moreover, the participants regarded English as important for their academic studies, future employment, the country's modernization, and the target language cultural analysis and understanding.

The two authors additionally found that STs lacked confidence about communicating orally in English and were aware of the need to improve their English language skills, as this had important implications for their role in the classroom as language models and the decisions they made about materials and methodology. Most STs expressed a desire for more language training. Fahmy and Bilton (1992) suggested that such a study can help familiarize teacher educators and STs with "… the sociocultural dimension of their program" (p. 115). It can also "help sensitize TEFL professors to their students' level of English, sociolinguistic and educational backgrounds, expectations, concerns, and attitudes towards the learning situation and the prospect of teaching EFL" (p. 115). Fahmy and Bilton

stressed the importance of conducting this type of studies "… periodically as the program matures to help keep staff in tune with the attitudes, interests, and motivations of their students and the host community" and to take possible steps "to incorporate this information into the syllabus and in-structional materials" (p. 115). The authors recommended that the "… end result will be more prom-ising TEFL education programs that are culturally and linguistically relevant for the participants in their home environment" (p. 115).

Furthermore, Al-Issa (2005a) examined the importance of English language knowledge to the ELT NNESTs from an ideological perspective and the implications it had for ELT policy implementation in the country. Different professionals representing the Ministry of Education such as teachers, school principals, supervisors, and curriculum department officers were interviewed. Al-Issa (2005a) found that graduates in general lacked the requisite communication skills and experienced difficulties handling higher level classes. This had negative implications for ELT policy implementation. Such weaknesses were partially attributed to the university's failure to prepare linguistically competent teachers. Al-Issa (2005a) recommended conducting future empirical research to further understand this phenomenon.

This study hence seeks to fill this gap in the literature in which there is a need to understand how Foreign/Second Language (F/SL) teacher preparation program courses may contribute to the lan-guage proficiency of STs. This study intends to take a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach that unfolds the agents' ideologies as embedded in their multiple discursive constructed layers.

5. Defining ideologies

Ideologies are "mental frameworks … which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works" (Hall, 1996, p. 26). van Dijk (1998) elaborated on Hall's definition by adding that ideologies were "the basis of the social repre-sentations shared by members of a group" whereby those members of groups "organize the multi-tude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, *for them* and to act accordingly" (p. 8) [emphasis in original]. Ideologies, according to van Dijk (1998), "are not only limited to making sense of society, but that they also serve to regulate social practice" (p. 9). When certain beliefs are considered relevant for the group, ideologies shape those members' understand-ing of the world, influence the acceptance of "right" or "wrong" and in many cases serve "material" and "symbolic" interests of the group members. This ideological inconsistency generates dominance and control by one group over another and leads to power exercise, competition, struggle, conflict, and abuse between the different socially structured and positioned groups domestically and/or globally leading to inequality.

Furthermore, van Dijk (1998) explained that ideologies are socially produced and reproduced by the dominant and dominated groups and "positively serve to empower dominated groups, to create solidarity, to organize struggle and to sustain opposition" (p. 138). However, van Dijk (1998) sug-gested that "individual social actors may be members of various social groups, each of which may have its own ideology" (p. 150), which according to the author, could cause a conflict in "the decision 'how to speak or act' in a specific situation" whereby "depending on the situation, one identity and hence one ideology may be more relevant and more important" (p. 151).

Ideologies according to van Dijk (1998), "take many forms and occur in different situations" (p. 182) and feature "symbols, rituals and discourse" (p. 26) and highlight the contest and struggle over access to public discourse. He argued for the powerful and intricate relationship between ideology and discourse and held that discourse analysis should take into account the social and cognitive di-mensions of "language use and social practice" (p. 10) since ideologies are complex and have social and cognitive foundations. He stressed the centrality of "socio-cultural knowledge and other shared beliefs that provide the 'common ground' of all discourse and social interaction" (p. 10). Put differ-ently, van Dijk (1998) considered the powerful role of the mind in shaping and being "shaped by dis-course and other social practices in context" (p. 10) and highlighted the role of manipulation as used

by the dominant groups, who hold special authority over and access to knowledge to "manage or control the mind of the public ... to fabricate a consensus in the interests of those in power" (p. 274) and convince the dominated groups about the legitimacy of their ideologies, power, and dominance and through toning down "the obviously inconsistent parts of the ideology and emphasize those parts that may be more attractive" (p. 183). The dominant groups, who do not hold persuasive ideologies and their ideologies are inconsistent with the majority of the other elites also use manipulative discourse to prevent solidarity and create divisions among the non-dominant groups and "marginalize or discredit them among the population at large or even among their own groups" (p. 184).

Manipulation is thus not confined to a certain group of elites (van Dijk, 1998) and is described as "... a communicative and interactional practice" (van Dijk, 2006, p. 360). It is best articulated through language, which "... gains power by the use of powerful people make of it," who "... are responsible for the existence of inequality and who also have the means and the opportunity to improve conditions" (Wodak, 2002, p. 9). Manipulation, which involves "... dominant and dominated groups, or institutions and their clients" (van Dijk, 2006, p. 372), has "negative associations," is "bad." Manipulation according to van Dijk (2006) "... violates social norms," and "... not only involves power, but specifically *abuse* of power ... and implies the exercise of a form of *illegitimate* influence by means of discourse—manipulators make others believe or do things that in the interest of the manipulator, and against the best interests of the manipulated" (p. 360) [emphasis in original]. As a social phenomenon manipulation is "wrong" and "... *illegitimate in a democratic society*," because it "... *(re)produces, or may produce, inequality*" (p. 363–364) [emphasis in original]. As a cognitive phenomenon manipulation involves manipulating people's "... knowledge, opinions and ideologies which in turn control their actions" (p. 365) "... to make sure that relevant and potentially critical knowledge is not acquired, or that only partial, misguided or biased knowledge is allowed distribution" (p. 371). As a discourse phenomenon manipulation "... typically occurs in public communication controlled by dominant ... elites" (p. 372). Manipulation within the context of this study has the power to direct ELT teacher training and education to impact policy and planning.

5.1. The colonialist/culturalist ideology
The colonialist/culturalist ideology, and as it is the case in this study, is a form of ideology that favors the powerful culture over the powerless culture. It is most evident in attitudes and discourse, which reinforce hegemony. Manipulation within this ideology is central whereby the minority dominant group takes the dominating center of the system and attempts to shape and force social institutions and members of the less powerful and/or powerless groups to correspond to or even promote its values. Power in this ideology is tied to social positions and cultural spaces occupied by the group members operating in a very important institution like the university under investigation, for example whereby the colonizing group relies on colonizing the colonized group through a process of acculturation. This type of ideology is best described as imperialism beyond political and economic exploitation and is a form of mind control and colonization, which are as effective as military conquest. Cultural imperialism recognizes, legitimizes, and promotes the interest of certain circles and forms of knowledge and traditions within the imperial power as it is the case within the ELT student teaching realm, while tries to oppress, suppress, marginalize, and delegitimize others. The concept of this ideology within this study insinuates that the Western cultures are superior to those of the developing world. It is noteworthy that Al-Issa (2006) was critical of the fact that the government is heavily dependant on North America, Britain, and Australia (NABA) to formulate its policies and help it implement them and made a series of recommendations pertinent to developing human and physical resources to help reduce this substantial dependency.

5.2. The economic/rationalism/neoliberalism ideology
The economic/rationalism/neoliberalism ideology is a social philosophy and a value-laden political ideology, which promotes individualist, competitive, and libertarian values, while conflicts with values of equality, and cooperation (Stokes, 2014). According to Stokes, it is more of "a form of critical political rhetoric, which points to a set of ideas embedded in practice" (p. 202).

The economic/rationalism/neoliberalism ideology opposes control and dominance of one certain powerful group over other groups. The members of this group who consider themselves elites in the sense that they are highly qualified and knowledgeable as it is the case in this study, thrive to liberate themselves from the power exercised over them by the dominant group, who are believed to generate inefficiencies and impede ELT STs' language proficiency development. Within the context of this study, members of the dominated group are specialists in their field and "generally motivated by self-interest" (Stokes, 2014, p. 207) to introduce change to help contribute to quality production and maintenance. They try to argue, question, negotiate, and contest their place on the knowledge and power hierarchy. They try to achieve this via providing scientific reasoning to try and sound rational agents and to explicitly and implicitly justify their epistemological merit, although Stokes argues that arguments provided by such group are "based upon a priori method, or deduction from abstract general principles or self-evident assumptions" rather than "drawn from empirical observations and testing" (p. 213).

Economic/rationalism/neoliberalism ideology holders view all members of their group as equally knowledgeable to be involved in formulating policies and introducing positive change to the system in a non-traditional manner. Moreover, they refuse and reject the supremacy, dominance, control, and power of their opponents; the colonialist/culturalist ideology holders, and consider them as aliens and external to the field and should be less involved in helping STs to develop their target language proficiency since their rigidity and distortions can disturb equilibrium.

Economic/rationalism/neoliberalism ideology holders also like to be assigned a more central and effective role in theorizing and practicing this crucial aspect of ELT STs' preparation and education, which creates tension at the micro and macro structure levels and struggle over power and cultural space.

6. Research question

The aforementioned discussion revealed the different ideologies underlying the complexity of achieving language proficiency by NNESTs, its significance for F/SL learning, and the different agents and agencies involved in supporting or reducing. This situation provoked asking the following research question:

1. What discourses and ideologies inform the views of the different university ELT senior academics about the factors affecting the STs' lack of English language proficiency?

7. Method

7.1. Design

This study explores the ideologies of different university senior faculty members about the factors affecting ELT STs' English language proficiency as embedded in the different layers of their discourses. Hegemonic ideologies as manifested in some of the agents' discourses in this study will *not* be viewed as neutral and will be questioned and challenged, because intellectuals, privileged, and a highly positioned class of elites like some of the ones selected to participate in this study, do not think alike due to their variable knowledge and experience, where the manipulated becomes "... more vulnerable and less resistant to manipulation" (van Dijk, 2006, p. 376) and hence becomes a victim of manipulation due to "... conditions of domination and inequality" (van Dijk, 2006, p. 376).

This type of research design was thus found appropriate given the ideologically driven nature of the existing ELT context (Al-Issa, 2015) since there is a paucity of research about this topic and the present study is the first investigation to address this issue from these perspectives. This aim is best achieved through adopting a problem-oriented, interpretive, and explanatory CDA approach, since CDA unmasks ideology, which is mediated by language "... in a variety of social institutions" (Wodak, 2002, p. 9) and since manipulation is one of the "crucial notions in Critical Discourse Analysis" (van Dijk, 2006, p. 359). CDA also has a clear social and political direction (van Dijk, 2001)

and according to Al-Issa (2015) is a powerful analytic tool for literacy praxis in language education to pursue sociolinguistic analyses to bring about "change" and "well-being" to the ELT STs.

Manipulation within the context of this study will be situated within cultural, economic, historical, and political perspectives to examine how all these complex and interrelated factors impact policy formulation and implementation to help transform classroom instruction and impact literacy empowerment of the STs, increase their learning and teaching efficacy, and humanize scholarship.

Al-Issa (2015) thus found that research in the country in general and at the university under investigation in particular seldom asked "… evocative research questions leading to unexpected answers" (p. 579), approached "… an old problem in a refreshingly new way, or propose a surprising angle of analysis on a difficult dilemma," which did not "… allow for the emergence of different critical investigation perspectives about ELT" (p. 579). Al-Issa (2015) additionally found that ELT research lacked studies which critically analyzed discourse as constructed by "… a certain vision of the world" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 30) and "… the broader space of social positions and processes" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 28). This is despite the important developments the social and political arenas witnessed in 2011, which came as a reaction to the social, cognitive, and discursive manipulation (van Dijk, 2006) exercised by the educational system and the deprivation of the citizens from their right to think critically and produce and question knowledge and innovate (Al-Issa, 2015, p. 562). Furthermore, the Arab Spring triggered in early 2011 "… helped the society find its voice and rid itself of a substantial part of their contextual and discursive passiveness and overcome any reservations and restrictions once imposed by the authorities over the critique of various top level officials and suggestions for change and reform" (p. 563).

There is a need thus to look at the factors affecting ELT STs' language proficiency from a macro-level perspective and beyond mere classroom practices to understand the impact of high-profile influential stakeholders like the ones selected for this study as a "non-conventional," "researching up," and "sensitive research" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) strategy to allow for additional theories within the country's ELT context to emerge.

7.2. Participants

Four highly qualified and experienced local ELT faculty members representing three different entities at the targeted university—the College of Education, College of Arts and Social Science—Department of English Language (DEL), and the Language Center (LC) were selected purposively and agreed to be interviewed, with each agent occupying different hierarchical positions and possessing a variable degree of power (van Dijk, 1998). Agent #1 is a Professor, high-profile decision-maker in the College of Education, a member of the university Academic Council and a top-level state official. Agent #2 is a holder of a Master of Arts in Education and supervises participants in their field-based student teaching. Agent #3 is a very experienced Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics who teaches different Linguistics courses to ELT STs in the College of Arts and Social Sciences and used to supervise STs during their field-based student teaching. Agent #4 is an Associate Professor of ELT at the College of Education, a high-profile decision-maker in the LC, a member of the university Academic Council and a top-level state official.

Admittedly, targeting such a class of elites/professionals, who belong to the same community (Kaiser, 2009), was a difficult challenge for us due to the critical sociocultural and sociopolitical nature of the topic (van Dijk, 2001). This situation required "debunking motif" (Berger, 1963) and critical distance, which was necessary for two reasons: First, to enhance the credibility and validity of the study (Applby, 2013; Saunders, 2007). Second, we wanted to look for "… levels of reality other than those given in the official interpretations of society" (Berger, 1963, p. 38) and go beyond superficial understanding of social reality and challenge conventional understandings about social reality and social institutions (Berger, 1963) as presented by the four agents. To achieve this target, we tried to be insiders and near enough to understand the four agents' viewpoints and experiences, while meantime distanced and detached ourselves from the situation at hand and acted like outsiders

and strangers (Anderson, Taylor, & Logio, 2008) to resist and challenge our biased ideas and beliefs, assumptions, and theoretical stances and hence view things with a critical mind (Applby, 2013; Drake & Heath, 2011). We did not want to get taken in by the agents' definition of the situation or necessarily share their assumptions and points of view (Anderson et al., 2008), because in sociology "… things are not what they seem" and there are always "shocking discoveries" (Berger, 1963, p. 23–24). This way we felt our imaginations were better inspired and hence we could better question the ideologies that shape the factors that affect the STs' English language proficiency.

7.3. Instrument
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant in the study. The interviews included three main questions, which were inspired by the pertinent literature about English language learning and acquisition (see Appendix A).

To improve the quality, reliability, and validity of the interview questions they were sent along with the study aims and research questions to a jury of experts in the field, who gave constructive feedback on some of the items, which were attended to where deemed necessary.

7.4. Procedures
We first briefed the four agents about the aims and approach of the study and took their verbal consent prior to conducting the interviews. All agents showed genuine interest in being interviewed and answered all questions. They all praised our efforts, emphasized the importance of the topic under investigation, welcomed being interviewed, and felt that their responses would enrich the findings of the study and contribute to the welfare of the field. This gave us the feeling that they were seeking recognition for their contribution and wanted to help others through publishing their data (Kaiser, 2009), which was derived from their long experience acquired from their respective places of work.

All interviews were conducted in English. The length of the interviews varied depending on the ideologies held by the different informants and the "fields of force" they occupied and "cultural properties" and "cultural capital" they controlled (Bourdieu, 1991). We electronically voice-recorded all the interviews and then transcribed them. Each interview was conducted on a separate day after fixing an appointment with the agents.

7.5. Analysis
This study triangulated two sources of data; the raw data collected by means of semi-structured interviews from four agents and the pertinent literature. Due to the ideologically driven nature of the context, and guided by Greckhamer and William (2014), we aimed at focusing on the hidden functions of the discourse through performing a systematic and rigorous yet transparent discourse analysis that would go beyond the descriptive analysis of the texts we have. We, therefore, adopted Greckhamer and Cilesiz's interrelated framework for systematic analysis of discourse building blocks, which constructs reality, to "capture … elements of social realities and functions of discourse while allowing for the emergent aspects of data analysis and for researchers' interpretations based on their individual values and interests" (p. 429).

We thus tabulated our data using a four-column table. In the first "Data Units in Context" column we included segments of the raw data. In the next "Data Unit" column we included "textual units" from the pertinent literature that supported the concept of the ideology we intended to discuss. In the third "Concept" column, and using the data from the previous two columns, we described the concept trying to highlight its main features. In the fourth and last "Building Block" column we wrote the name of the ideology the description in the previous three columns logically led to. We had two tables, which represented the two conflicting ideologies discussed above; the colonialist/culutralist ideology and the economic/rationalism/neoliberalism ideology (see Tables 1 and 2).

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Table 1. Tabulating the critical discourse analysis process of the colonialist/culturalist ideology			
Data unit in context	**Data UNIT**	**Concept**	**Building block**
Even though I know that the English curriculum has undergone a number of very strong changes and it's good, but its implementation is not. When you look at it as a piece of document, you say this is the best we could have, but the implementation of that curriculum is not what it should be. If we were implementing the curriculum as it is, then we should have fewer problems. We're talking about teachers and curriculum monitoring, because when you have the curriculum and you cannot monitor whether it's being implemented, then you have to do something about it. The attitudes of the teachers and professionalism of teaching are not there. The teaching of English is just as bad as any other subject (Agent #1)	"The Ministry did not provide enough resources or time for teachers to be able to adequately and efficiently do their job" (Sergon, 2011, p. 28–29)	Manipulation of school curriculum reality through using shaming technique and rhetoric comments to promote the College of Education culture and values over those of teachers'	Colonialist/culturalist ideology

Table 2. Tabulating the critical discourse analysis process of the economic/rationalism/neoliberalism ideology			
Data unit in context	**Data unit**	**Concept**	**Building block**
Change the curriculum. It must be implemented by professionals in ELT, in Applied Linguistics, by teachers now in schools, asking them what works and what does not, and what was a waste of time here at university and what was beneficial serving their professional needs (Agent #3)	Argument provided is "based upon a priori method, or deduction from abstract general principles or self-evident assumptions," rather than "drawn from empirical observations and testing" (Stokes, 2014, p. 213)	1. Conflict with values of equality, and cooperation 2. Try to liberate ELT professionals from the power exercised over them by the dominant group, who generate inefficiencies and impede STs' language proficiency development 3. Try to argue, question, negotiate and contest ELT professionals' place on the knowledge and power hierarchy 4. Try to justify ELT professionals' epistemological merit 5. View all ELT professionals as equally knowledgeable to participate in policies making leading to introduction of positive change to the system in a non-traditional manner	Economic/rationalism/neoliberalism ideology

It is noteworthy that the pertinent literature not only helped us substantiate our analysis, but also guided us to compare and contrast between the content of the raw data and those found in the different writers' statements. Looking for similarities and differences, presences and absences, and harmonies and conflicts between both sets of data helped us make logical connections, see beyond the visible meaning, unmask manipulation, and interpret the data to suit the aims of the study.

8. Findings and discussion

8.1. Colonialist/culturalist ideologies
In a series of blames directed to different agents and agencies, Agent #1 started by directing her blame to families. She used a guilt tripping techniques to suggest that they need to show more care towards their children's ELT education through creating appropriate English language environment for their children, which can have positive implications for schools' work.

Language requires immersion. It requires a lot of exposure. Our students don't have it. The only exposure to language is in the classroom. Once that's over, they go home and speak whatever language they speak at home. English language is not a part of that. You can see the difference between children who come from families where English is spoken and children who come from families where they don't hear an English word from the time they leave school or the classroom to the time they come back to the classroom. They don't see any English print. They don't hear any English. They don't read any English. What do you expect? How can the students improve? So, we have not tried to create the environment for English within the schools.

Agent #1 has cognitive biases about learning and using English and gives it legitimacy over Arabic and the other historical indigenous language in a multilingual and multicultural context. She is referring to "overt" and "explicit" micro-level family language policy and its "status," "acquisition," and "prestige" planning (King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008). King et al. (2008) highlighted the forceful role of language ideologies in language policy and language acquisition processes. Agent #1 is making a false assumption and committing a fundamental attribution error since many parents and families hold variable "impact beliefs," as labeled by King et al. (2008), and are powerful and crucible socialization agents and transmitters and preservers of ethnicity and cultural norms and traditions. King et al. (2008) state that "family patterns of language use and acquisition are both reflected in and reflective of societal patterns" (p. 913).

Unlike English, Arabic is the national and official language of the country as well as the language of the Holy Quran and Prophet Mohamed, and is connected to the great history of Islam. It is a sacred language and tongue in the wider context of the region and in the country specifically. It represents the official identity, nationhood, ethnicity, culture, and traditions of the people. It is a powerful uniting force for the multilingual and multicultural population of the country and the symbol of Arabness. Arabic has contributed greatly to melting down sociolinguistic and sociocultural differences and divisions in the country. Within the multilingual and multicultural context of the country, Arabic has no indigenous rivals. It is spoken, written, and understood by almost the entire population at varying degrees of proficiency. Arabic occupies certain functional domains that English does not and cannot, due to cultural and religious restraints. Soto, Smrekar, and Nekcovei (1999) thus asserted that "home languages and home cultures are at the heart of the communicative process for families" and that "a strong home base actually facilitates children's second language learning" (p. 3). King et al. (2008) stressed the role of parental ideologies "in parenting practices and developmental outcomes for children" (p. 910).

As far as contact with English is concerned research has shown that with the spread of the hundreds of free-to-air and encrypted satellite TV channels, Internet, smart mobile phones and social media, which have become a necessity rather than a luxury access and exposure to English has never been easier (Al-Issa, 2005b). This is particularly the case with the evolution of the net generation and digital natives.

Agent #1 then turned her attention to school teachers, or the victims, and showed more cognitive bias through blaming them for failing to implement the BES policy. She used shaming technique and rhetoric comments to make teachers feel unworthy of doing the job.

> One of them is weak teachers who taught them and never corrected their mistakes at school. So, the build-up or the demand for efficient language learning was not there. Things just get moved and the students just get moved with low performance until they reach their graduation and get these 90s and come to university. If I had policies in my hand, the ones who are not proficient when they reach Year Three, before they go to the practicum, I would tell them "find another profession. This is not for you!" It perpetuates a weak system. A weak system in the schools and a weak system here in our college because they end up coming here even though they get in the 90s, but they're weak and they don't have the right level to move along.

Sergon (2011) found that the Ministry of Education lacked knowledge about the enormous number of students who enrolled in the Foundation English Language Program at the different public and private colleges and universities due to a lack of coordination with the university. He further found that the Ministry of Education had exceptionally low expectations for the students for studying in university (IELTS Band 4 or 5). Sergon, hence, concluded that the problem is far too complex and attributed it to the Ministry of Education policy.

It is worth mentioning that the enrollment criteria for enrolling in the ELT Bachelors in Education program, which one of them is a minimum of 90% in core English language and which Agent #1 is

critical of, were set by the ELT unit in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the College of Education, endorsed by the Undergraduate Studies Committee at the College and the College Executive Committee, discussed and approved by the College Board, and finally approved by the Academic Council. She thus played the role of the chairperson of some of the committees indicated previously.

Agent #1 then addressed the BES curriculum and highlighted its strengths. However, she once again used shaming technique and rhetoric comments to blame teachers for playing a central role in causing the problem.

> Even though I know that the English curriculum has undergone a number of very strong changes and it's good, but its implementation is not. When you look at it as a piece of document, you say this is the best we could have, but the implementation of that curriculum is not what it should be. If we were implementing the curriculum as it is, then we should have fewer problems. We're talking about teachers and curriculum monitoring, because when you have the curriculum and you cannot monitor whether it's being implemented, then you have to do something about it. The attitudes of the teachers and professionalism of teaching are not there. The teaching of English is just as bad as any other subject.

Different authors found the BES syllabus suffering from various problematic aspects (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Sergon, 2011). Sergon (2011) thus held the Ministry of Education accountable for the production of an irrelevant, unrealistic, and boring syllabus. Sergon additionally found that teachers in the local ELT context did not have sufficient time, while meantime had end-less tasks "… to try and meet the constantly changing Ministry goals" (p. 28). Senior teachers and direct supervisors at schools could barely manage to follow up on the teachers' achievement of classroom-based responsibilities and would not have sufficient time to cross-check their fulfillment of all their job responsibilities with their learners.

In addition, Sergon (2011) found that teachers felt "ignored" and their diverse comments, opin-ions, and views about the creation of the curriculum were never considered in a rigidly and densely bureaucratic and strictly hierarchical system. He further found that "… the Ministry did not provide enough resources or time for teachers to be able to adequately and efficiently do their job" (pp. 28–29), which resulted in "… substantial frustration and discontent" (p. 30).

Agent #1 is once again creating cognitive biases and committing a fundamental attribution error and creating a false belief about teachers' attitudes and professionalism. Malle, Guglielmo, and Monroe (2014) thus stated that people with false beliefs are less justified in their assumptions than those with true beliefs and that false beliefs lead to significantly more blame than true beliefs.

Within the curriculum vein, Agent #1 then projected a different kind of cognitive bias and turned her attention to an experiential Service Learning Project, which was implemented some time back to enhance the curriculum beyond the college classroom and found effective in terms of improving STs' language proficiency.

> We had a project before—The Service Learning Project. It was a very good project funded by the U.S. Aid. We had six campuses and we were one of the campuses. It was to improve language proficiency through service learning. Instead of the students doing the Methods Course here, you take them to teach in the native speaker schools, where they use the language the whole day. Because they had a different curriculum from the one we teach, the way around it was to get them to teach the local culture. So, our students would research a topic every week, write it up, make proper presentation and lesson plans ready. It was fantastic! We tested them in the beginning; gave them a TOEFL test and an oral language test before the experiment started and then we had like six weeks of exposure to language and they were doing it at those schools and established themselves as teachers in those schools and the schools just loved them. So, that's the kind of thing we need to be doing to be able to give them incremental exposure to the language.

"The Service Learning Project," "native speakers," and the "TOEFL" are all fundamental aspects and features of the "symbolic capital" and "symbolic efficacy" (Bourdieu, 1991) of ELT today, which over-ly influenced countries like the one under investigation in this study has taken for granted, recog-nized, and accepted as powerful, distinctive, and legitimate products, which in turn secured the reproduction and imposition of the Anglo-American culture. Templer (2004) described the TOEFL as a tool for generating social inequality and socializing students into "neoliberal value systems," an instrument for class production and reproduction, a "condominium or cartel," a part of the commer-cialization, industrialization, and marketization of ELT represented in the published materials and coaching. He viewed it as a "corporate globalization" project that trades "a specific product" about the standardization of English language proficiency and promoted "Total Quality Management in the EFL steeplechase for credentials" (p. 202).

Agent #1 then turned her attention to the LC and College of Arts and Social Sciences and used denial and minimization techniques to stress that they should be held responsible for whatever weaknesses shown by the STs and blamed them for the STs' ill-preparation.

> Before they come to the teacher preparation program, they're at the Language Centre. What we offer them here are the pedagogical courses. We don't offer them language courses. So, the proficiency has to happen between the Language Centre and the College. They do the language and we do the content. It's the Language Centre and College of Arts! None of our courses! Our courses offer the students the application parts of the language, which is important, but then unless you have the language you can't apply it. I don't think we influence the proficiency of the language or the strength of the language. I think it solely depends on the College of Arts and the Language Centre and the two of them have to be talking to set standards and to understand how to move students to reach standards. By the time they come here we are receiving them and we are maintaining that standard and of course helping them to get better by exposure to different contexts and content areas and they use the language in writing essays and papers and so forth. I think the enhancement happens here, but it all starts from those two places.

Agent #1 created *us* versus *them* boundary to defend herself against responsibility. She is trying to create a division between the knowledge presented at the LC and College of Arts and Social Sciences on the one hand and that presented at the College of Education on the other hand in order to high-light the vulnerability and inferiority of those two entities in terms of knowledge and effort. Lack of knowledge and effort extended to cover the LC's and College of Arts and Social Sciences' planning of courses, which to her failed to reach the planning of the College of Education courses. Different au-thors (de Lima, 2001; Morain, 1990) thus argued for the important role of all courses offered on an ELT pre-service education program in helping STs to advance their English language proficiency.

During their four-year program at university, ELT STs thus take courses simultaneously from the LC, the Department of English Language (DEL) in the College of Arts and Social Sciences, and the College of Education. The LC provides English language foundational courses for students who do not have the appropriate proficiency level in all university programs. It also provides ELT STs with 6 language courses once they start their credit-based study plan. More than 70% of the courses are taught by DEL, covering courses such as linguistics, literature, second language acquisition, seman-tics, syntax, phonology, phonetics, and sociolinguistics. The rest are LC courses, university electives, and College of Education required courses. With the exception of university electives, all the other courses are taught in English.

Agent #1 continued blaming the LC and College of Arts and Social Sciences for the STs' language incompetence. However, this time she included the College of Education too. She portrayed herself as a victim of those two entities' behavior to gain sympathy and get cooperation.

> The Language Centre, College of Arts and us; everybody's responsible. There's a committee, but it has been ineffective. I honestly don't know how to make it effective. The committee's responsibility is to coordinate the work. Now we're into accreditation. We simply cannot do

it without them. They're our partners and they have to work with us. We have standards to achieve. We want to achieve them together. We are creating a system. They have to understand the system. They have to see their place in the system. That's what we're working on right now.

In the new international, formal, competitive universities marketization age, the university under investigation has been pursuing accreditation for its different programs since the 1990s through working with different international academic agencies to help improve the quality of its programs, image and world rank. While most of the nine colleges have not applied for accreditation, the colleges of Engineering, Medicine, Education, and Arts and Social Sciences succeeded in being accredited. However, some programs in the College of Education (i.e. English Language Teaching, Early Childhood Education, Science Education, Math Education, and Instructional Technology) and the College of Arts (i.e. Tourism) have been internationally recognized by their specialized program associations.

The College of Education started the accreditation process in September 2012 by forming an accreditation steering committee together with different sub-committees and by holding various gatherings and recruiting consultants to facilitate all aspects of the accreditation process in order to meet the standards of the USA-founded National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The College of Education set a conceptual framework, which focuses on empowering its graduates with specialized knowledge and experience to help them make continuous use of research and modern technology as well as employ their reflective skills to develop their teaching performance. Different high ranking personnel, experts, and professional teams from NCATE were invited to meet with a variety of key personnel at the Arab university and other governmental institutions involved in the process, such as the Ministry of Education and the Authority for Academic Accreditation. Visits were also exchanged between members of NCATE and the university. The process leading to obtaining the final accreditation of all programs is now a few steps from reaching the finish line.

Agent #1 thus obtained the university's approvals to initiate the process of accreditation and created the first Accreditation Steering Committee that was entrusted to collaborate with all college departments and units in all the accreditation operations. She continued to be a member of the college's committee. She also participated in writing the narrative of one of the main standards of the NCATE institutional report. She has been a member of the ELT unit and participated like the other members in writing the Specialized Program Association report in the B.Ed. and M.Ed. levels to comply with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards. In the B.Ed. report, the College of Education had to seek some assistance from DEL as they are teaching the majority of the College's courses in the program. Thus, some representatives from DEL were invited to help with a few requirements in the report. The College of Education further met infrequently with the LC.

Luke (2008) maintained that having standards to achieve and create a system are thus characteristics of the "new corporate" university model. This model is dominated and governed by continuous faculty and council meetings to make decisions to advance the productivity of the institution with an aim to improve its reputation and world rank, and hence, compete internationally.

It is noteworthy that the local accreditation council has produced three different documents between 2008 and 2009. One deals with the academic standards for the General Foundation Program (GFP), the other one is about standard classification of education framework, and the third is a quality audit manual—institutional accreditation. The first document seeks to formally accredit GFPs on meeting certain standards in four areas of learning including English and pertinent to learning, teaching, and assessment. The second document provides a comprehensive standard classification education framework, which is used worldwide, to help refine the higher education system in the country. The framework is comprehensive with a strong theoretical underpinning since it is the result

of extensive international benchmarking of similar classification frameworks; customization to the local context; and local consultation. One of the broad field of study it includes is education and one of the narrow fields in includes is English as a Second Language Teaching. Different local organizations like the Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Manpower, higher education institutions, and the local quality network contributed to the preparation of this document, which makes it culture specific. The third document provides key elements of the national system, higher education institutions assurance framework, program quality assurance framework, quality audit overview, and quality audit scope. All three locally inscribed documents are carefully and systematically prepared by experts in the field and largely complement each other. However, when compared to NCATE and ACTFL, which were founded over five decades ago, the value and recognition of these three documents to Agent #1 is inferior, peripheral, and subordinate and is a reflection of cultural bias and dependency in favor of the foreign dominant group, knowledge, and tradition (Al-Issa, 2006).

Agent #1 this time played the servant role. She cloaked a self-serving agenda in guise of obtaining the accreditation approval from ACTFL. She described her obedient actions and services to satisfy an external authority.

> I think now we're in this accreditation process, we have to satisfy requirements of the professional association, which is ACTFL. ACTFL has got its own standards for world language teaching. Unless you satisfy the ACTFL standards, we cannot go for accreditation for this program. We just finished writing the study and found out that there's so many things we need to do and there's so much improvement that has to happen before ACTFL actually recognizes our work. We have to put our act together. We have to assess and collect data and see where our problems lie and see what kind of interventions are required and work on them properly. Once we show that we know where the problems are; this is where our students are and this is where we want them to be. These are the issues and this is what our plan is. If we can show what kind of interventions we can do to improve, I think we can get the approval of ACTFL and then they'll open the door for us to get the accreditation.

A selective tradition like the American-constructed and granted accreditation and its legislators, are believed to be the ultimate and most superior "selective tradition" (Williams, 1989) and "interested knowledge" (Pennycook, 1989) and one which validates and legitimizes all types of selective traditions and their legislators and provides a powerful motivation to the STs to develop their language proficiency.

Issues of quality and accreditation are aspects of the mechanism of symbolic domination imposed by a "structured censorship" (Bourdieu, 1991) led in this instance by the USA on a symbolic good (Bourdieu, 1991) like ELT to enable universities like the one targeted in this study to earn international recognition for their academic programs. It is worth noting that the budget allocated for the process of accreditation is substantial. Al-Issa (2006) was critical of this dependency and attribute it to the failure of the government to take independent decisions. Al-Issa (2006) viewed this as a sign of weakness of the language education system, which was confined to consuming the expertise and knowledge dispensed by USA.

The statement made by Agent #1 puts the university within a "social instrumental" and "neoliberal" university perspective (Luke, 2008). The university is now governed by the increasingly widely spreading "reformative" model of "indicators" and "markers" that represent the "secular state university," otherwise known as the "professional training university" and the "postcolonial national university," as opposed to a "scholastic university" (Luke, 2008, p. 307), in the new political economy age totally driven, controlled, and dominated by the USA. The university according to the statement of Agent #1, "... is designed according to the principles of corporate accountability, industrial efficiency, and quality assurance" (Luke, 2008, p. 307), which allows it to run smoothly like a machine that produces "... human capital and knowledge for use by the state and the corporation" in a "cost-effective" manner (Luke, 2008, p. 307).

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Richards (2008) problematized accountability and emphasizes the need for it in the post-internationalization and industrialization ELT era. He additionally problematized the concept of quality in ELT today and acknowledged that "there is no internationally recognized specification of English language teacher competencies" (p. 13), although different countries and professional organizations specified and produced certain "essential teacher competencies" (p. 13). Richards (2008) was critical of the program standards developed by NCATE and ACTFL and claimed that such standards "are largely based upon intuition and are not research based" (p. 13). He further stated that what is known as the "standards movement," as initiated in the USA a few decades ago, had brought its standards into education from fields like "business" and "organizational management," which reflected "a reductionist approach in which learning is reduced to the mastery of discrete skills that can easily be taught and assessed" (p. 13).

Furthermore, authors like Freeman, Katz, Garcia Gomez, and Burns (2015) for example, criticized the loosely defined demands of language use in the classroom by an agency like ACTFL, for example. The authors proposed an "English-for-Teaching" construct and described it as a "bounded form of English for Specific Purposes" (p. 129) that prepared teachers to teach English lessons in English in public sector schools to support their students' language development and the national curriculum implementation. Freeman et al. (2015) argued that the construct has important implications for designing and validating teacher education programs and aligning them with global set benchmarks. Al-Issa (2006) was critical of the educational/academic dependency this Arab country had been showing since 1970 on the USA and UK and attributed this to a shortage in qualified manpower and physical resources. Knowledge here has been manipulated by the USA to extrinsically drive the motivation of an agency like the university under investigation to accept to integrate into its cultural norms.

Unlike Agent #1, Agent #4 took a different manipulative approach to analyzing the problem. He believed that STs were likely to benefit from the ELT program by saying ... *Yes, to a large extent*. However, he then added that ... *Students would of course benefit from more English courses, but that would be difficult to do given the time constraints.*

Agent #4 ascribed to the College of Education, LC, and Academic Council, whereby each of these has its own functions and responsibilities. Holding this kind of multiple identities and ideologies resulted in a discursive conflict. He used three types of positive reinforcement to manipulate the situation. The first was about the largely acceptable efficiency of the ELT program. In the second he superficially sympathized with the STs. In the last he tried to be apologetic on behalf of the Academic Council regarding extending the existing time allocated for the language development courses. Being the most elite, prestigious, powerful, and influential out of all three aspects, Agent #4 subscribed most with the decision of the Academic Council.

It is noteworthy that the degree plan spans for 4 years only covering 12 credit hours of university requirements, 39 credit hours of College of Education requirements, 18 credit hours of LC requirements and 55 credit hours of major ELT requirements. One can read from this distribution of courses and hours a lack of balance, which can negatively affect STs' language proficiency (Peacock, 2009). Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012) found lack of time in an EFL context as a significant contributing factor to poor English language learning and acquisition.

There is an obvious awareness about the need of STs for more formal ELT time by Agent #4. To put it in Bourdieu's (1991) terms, while "demand" for optimal language exposure is visibly high, the "supply" is low due to "production monopoly" and "distribution restrictions" exercised by Agent #4 as a powerfully dominant figure taking control of and representing the powerless majority, but deciding to impose restrictions on the quantity of English language knowledge presented to STs. STs are being deprived of their right by Agent #4, who is legitimated to oversee a fundamental part of the plan implementation.

Agent #4 this time adopted a positive intermittent or partial reinforcement technique to encourage the College of Education to continue its pursuit of quality and accreditation, despite the difficulties created by the unaccredited LC. He stated that … *The program should set entry criteria based on English proficiency,* and that the LC program … *can build language proficiency measures in teaching and assessment so that both students and faculty pay attention to them.*

Once again, Agent #4 demonstrated his multiple identities as he belonged to more than one ELT entity, which was causing a conflict in his statement. However, the use of *should* in the first part of his statement as opposed to the use of *can* in the second part highlighted the responsibility of the College of Education in maintaining standards in its pursuit of accreditation.

Moreover, his second statement was more concerned with the LC as pursuing quality and accreditation. This was best achieved through controlling teaching and assessment, which were two fundamental aspects of the curriculum and which were highlighted by the Accreditation Council (AC) and which Agent #1 highlighted too as being fundamental parts of the problem. It is noteworthy that AC sets academic standards for the GFP implemented by the different public and private higher education academic institutions across this Arab country. Achieving such standards, according to Agent #4 not only entitles the LC, which hosts the GFP to be accredited, but also controls quality of ELT STs' intake at the College of Education.

8.2. Economic/rationalism/neoliberalism ideologies

Agent #2 implicitly questioned, negotiated, and contested her place on the knowledge and power hierarchy and would like to be assigned more central and effective role in the STs' language development process. She projected her blame in a subtle way through finding school teachers as scapegoats. She additionally used guilt tripping and shaming manipulation techniques through using rhetorical comments to put teachers, or the victims, in a self-doubting and submissive position. She blamed school teachers for failing to introduce change in students' language proficiency for the past four decades or so and for orienting students towards *studying for grades, not learning, and believing that high grades reflect adequate learning.*

Al-Issa (2015) argued against the authoritative, rigidly centralized, and controlled ELT system, which was mainly built around promoting official knowledge and transmitting selective traditions and interested knowledge as defined by the Ministry of Education. This to Al-Issa (2015) directed the implementation of the curriculum in a top-down manner, restricted teachers' use of innovative and creative teaching methods, encouraged teaching through memorization and for exam purposes, sanctioned exams as the only official yardstick for measuring academic success, and contributed to creating a gap between policy and practice.

Agent #2 then tried to sound rational by drawing a similarity between what she believed to be school teachers' underperformance and the university's instructors' teaching. She once again used the same guilt tripping and shaming manipulation techniques to project her blame to the university members of faculty. As a teacher trainer with special knowledge she would like to be given more space and power to train STs to help them improve their language proficiency.

> Many students deal with language, even in language skills classes, as a subject they need to know for the test rather than skills and competencies to be acquired. This is probably the result of how the pre-university educational system works and how instructors organize their courses and assessments. Many students are studying ELT with no genuine interest in it; it's just a future career to them.

This agent used her attribution biases to make a fundamental attribution error about STs' attitudes towards becoming English teachers. This agent's statement contradicted with what was found and reported by Fahmy and Bilton (1992) in terms of STs' attitudes about the English language and opting for ELT as a profession.

Agent #2 turned her attention this time to the quality of STs enrolled in the ELT program and the instructional methods used to teach them. As a teacher trainer with high specialized knowledge about her specialization, she quoted the "observations" of members of her teacher training group— "in-service teachers"—whom she considered equally qualified and knowledgeable to support her unsubstantiated case about the poor graduates of the BES system. The blame she projected to the faculty members had a self-serving agenda of participating in defining the selection criteria of students enrolling in the ELT program and the instructional methods selected for teaching them.

> In terms of study plan and courses, yes, but in reality many students have developed unsatisfying language proficiency levels and communication skills. So in terms of elements, I believe the program is good. The same program had prepared language teachers with appropriate proficiency levels in the past and is still doing so to some extent. Maybe we have a difference in the quality of the intake of the college in recent years as the Ministry of Education's graduates' levels haven't been as good as before. I do not have numbers to support this; only my own and in-service teachers' observations. The difference in quality requires adaptation from the course instructors, I believe. While the elements are good, taught on the practical level and what this involves and to what extent students are taking possible and provided learning opportunities in courses are issues of concern.

As a teacher trainer this agent was more concerned with the practical knowledge of the STs—a part which she would be like to be responsible for helping STs to develop. The blame projected to the faculty members and the implicit demand to take part in teaching the STs conceals a rejection of the authority, control, and dominance of those in power of theorizing and implementing teaching the STs. Such blame was abstract, general, and lacked empirical observations and testing.

Agent #2 then moved on to make a host of professional-based but priori and controversial suggestions about helping the STs to improve their language proficiency, which all centered round practicing English. She suggested that *inventing a drama-based course for the student-teachers could work, especially if instructors of pragmatics/sociolinguistics are involved in its teaching.* This was mainly to help STs *to write and produce in different forms of drama works!*

Vachova (2012) listed potential disadvantages of drama in ELT higher education. First, teachers were required to be trained in order to be able to exploit drama, as "drama is generally not a compulsory part of teacher-training syllabuses at universities" (p. 12). Second, not all materials focused on teaching English may be found appropriate for a particular group of students. Next, and as reported by Vachova (2012), drama-oriented activities can be considered as "mere play that is not justifiable in the process of learning English" and an activity that "reduces time for more serious work" (p. 13). This can be particularly the case in a formal exam-based context. Lastly, some students felt reluctant to participate in drama-oriented activities due to "introversion" or "shyness." Not all students will be willing to act in front of their classmates, which is particularly the case in a Muslim and Arab cultural setting where such an activity is not preferred.

Agent #2 then tried to sound rational. She suggested enrolling STs in thematically oriented workshops or courses, which would be designed to primarily help them develop their language skills and abilities to grow as professional language users and teachers.

> With an emerging explicit focus on professionalism, the program could have a number of workshops that stem from its various courses for students to attend and benefit from. The goals of those workshops or courses could provide opportunities for students to develop particular language skills/areas within the context of the workshop's topic. For example, a workshop could centre round educational games and involve attendants in forms of modifying speech or messages, reducing speech, giving short as opposed to extended instructions, etc. Such tasks allow students to use their already acquired language and challenge their conventional or routine language so as to learn more varied language that could be made passive because of avoidance strategies.

Through the use of the word "professionalism," which refers to teachers' service ethics and morality, commitment to special knowledge development and making judgments, and as a teacher trainer, Agent #2 created a cognitive bias and tried to highlight those faculty members' teaching lack of effort and incompetence and failure to equip the ELT STs with what it takes to transform them into proficient users of the target language.

It is noteworthy that the LC is equipped with adequate facilities, educational technology, and resources. Furthermore, the LC has a Tutorial Center where students can go to get assistance with improving their English language skills in areas such as reading, writing, speaking, presentation skills, study skills, vocabulary, and so on.

The LC also has a Student Support Unit which aims to encourage effective and autonomous learning among LC students. The unit aims "… to support students' language and academic development with professional learning assistance and individualized service" (Language Center, 2015, paragraph 1). This is intended to result in the effective use of resources and the successful development of language learning strategies by students.

Moreover, the LC has an Extra-Curricular Activities Center. This center aims to "promote students' and teachers' involvement in clubs outside of class, aiming at creative ways to interest and captivate students' talents in various activities that ultimately have specific aims and a timeline of achievement" (Language Center, 2015, paragraph 1). The center further supports building students' confidence and their abilities to express themselves as creative individuals.

Interestingly, Agent #3 used different manipulation techniques to put his idea across. He used guilt tripping manipulation technique to show that faculty members involved in theorizing and implementing the program cared about achieving personal financial aims only leading to power abuse. He further used subtle shaming tactic through making rhetorical comments about those faculty members' conflicting interests and power struggle. He also projected the blame in a subtle manner through using the staff of the colleges of Education and Arts and Social Sciences as scapegoats due to their lack of expertise.

> Policy makers, planners, curriculum designers, and College of Education authorities—The rest are implementers! It should never be left to department teaching staff of the colleges of Education and Arts. These are not a homogeneous teaching group. They are made of Theoretical Linguists who want to preserve their jobs by teaching areas of Linguistics that are of no practical values to their students. They are made of a Literature group, who wants as many hours as they can grab—again to preserve their jobs. They are made of Methodologists who teach History of Methodologies instead of using the little time they have to focus on their students' language needs and practical professional classroom day-to-day language use which requires both fluency and accuracy. They should be prohibited.

This agent created cognitive biases and committed a fundamental attribution error. As a relatively new university opened just over four decades ago it thus recruited faculty members from different parts of the world with variable academic qualifications, ranks, and expertise due to insufficiency of national qualified academic manpower. The university statistics released in December 2013 thus revealed that the expatriate faculty occupied 56.8% of the total teaching force. Their selection to participate in the different technical committees across the university was believed to enrich those committees and lead to significant outcomes about continually improving the status quo and achieving international recognition. In fairness to the expatriate faculty staff at the College of Education, College of Arts and Social Sciences, and LC, one has to admit that some of them have been serving the university since its opening, while others have been there for decades. They have served the university diligently and have made significant contributions to teaching, research, and service, which have been recognized by the university variably and which have helped the university improve in various aspects and departments.

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Agent #3 then tried to sound more rational and elaborated on what he meant by Theoretical Linguistics and considered it as irrelevant to STs' needs due to not being practical. He continued manipulating the factors that affected STs' language proficiency to claim control, dominance, and power over the program design and implementation. He projected blame through using rhetorical comments about the non-Applied Linguists for including English Language Literature to serve their personal needs and interests, which have come at the expense of the STs' needs.

> In my view the Theoretical Linguistics courses should not be in their syllabus. The students do not have time to waste. The same is true with Shakespeare and courses like that. The student teachers do not have the luxury to study subjects that contribute towards their profession. You can grab their course plan and based on my comments you can conclude which ones are those. The devil is in the details. The course outlines and the approach is not geared towards focusing on the practical needs of the student teachers. The courses must be checked and seen by competent authorities to focus on the students' needs.

Several researchers (Cruz, 2010; Khatib, Ranjbar, & Fat'hi, 2012; Van, 2009; Yidirim, 2012) emphasized the role of Literature in influencing foreign language proficiency. Literature according to these writers provided exposure to authentic materials, enriched students' cultural knowledge about the target language use, expanded students' linguistic repertoire, contributed to the students' communicative language proficiency (CLP), appeals to imagination, enhances creativity, and encouraged critical thinking.

Agent #3 then tried to sound even more rational and went on to highlight the lack of worth of the theoretical aspects included in the program, while stressing the importance of practical aspects such as reading and writing.

> They need more writing, more reading, and short stories. They need more reading in professional journals, which focus on practical aspects of learning, training, and teaching and not on aspects that deal with the theoretical aspects of the M.A. or Ph.D. levels or on controversial theories, which most students fail to understand.

Agent #3 compartmentalized the language here and gave two skills an edge over the other two, which was counter to the concept of CLP, which according to Pasternak and Bailey (2004), was associated with knowledge about the target language and demonstrating ability to do things using that knowledge in numerous contexts governed by different interactional conventions, functions, and rules (Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

This agent's statement additionally contradicted with the findings reported by Fahmy and Bilton (1992) about the ELT STs as lacking confidence about communicating orally in English, which had important implications for their role in the classroom as language models and the decisions they made about materials and methodology.

Interestingly, this time Agent #3 played the servant role. He cloaked a self-serving agenda in guise of serving the interests of the STs' language improvement. He talked about a different kind of curriculum and took a more radical approach to those discussed above. He suggested changing the ELT degree plan curriculum and involving different professionals and practitioners in ELT to help improve the status quo.

> Change the curriculum. It must be implemented by professionals in ELT, in Applied Linguistics, by teachers now in schools, asking them what works and what does not, and what was a waste of time here at university and what was beneficial serving their professional needs.

As an Applied Linguist with specialized knowledge, Agent #3 was more concerned with the application part of the language. He would like to have a larger share in the ELT program planning and implementation. His argument was not drawn from empirical observations and testing as he wanted

to introduce change in a non-traditional manner and via involving teachers, or ELT practitioners in the schools. Although the pertinent literature (Fandino, 2013) showed that the design of ELT programs worldwide is complex and involves more than one entity to guarantee providing as a comprehensive professional knowledge base as possible to STs, this agent is simplifying this framework and knowledge base and confining the categories to practical bases. He totally rejected any roles that are played by any faculty members outside the Applied Linguistics domain.

9. Conclusion

This CDA driven study investigated and documented the different discourses embedded in the different university ELT senior academics' ideologies about the factors that affected the STs' English language proficiency. Findings showed that there was an ideological contest and conflict between those holding the colonialist/culturalist ideology and their opposing group holding the economic/rationalism/neoliberalism ideology due to struggle over space and the production, reproduction, legitimacy, and monopoly of academic, cultural, economic, linguistic, and political capital, which has negative implications for shaping ELT STs' language proficiency. All agents constructed manipulative discourses and created cognitive biases and subjective social realities leading to blaming different agents and agencies to distant themselves from responsibility. Manipulation and blame were found to have several paradigms and sub-paradigms, which represented of the complexity of the ideologically governed and contested context and which echoed the findings reported by Al-Issa (2005a) over a decade ago. Manipulation and blame within the context of this study confirmed the impact of ELT teacher training and education on ELT policy and planning.

Regardless of the methodological limitations of this study, as found in the small number of participants, which does not allow for generalisability, we consider the study to be an important addition to the literature dealing with the factors effecting F/SL STs' language proficiency and the impact of teacher education on language policy and planning. A broad quantitative study, therefore, has the potential to assist in understanding the phenomenon more. However, the discourses documented in this study need to receive attention to assist the STs' development as proficient language users.

Author details
Ali S.M. Al-Issa[1]
E-mail: ali2465@squ.edu.om
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4687-5657
Ali Hussain Al-Bulushi[2]
E-mail: aha109@squ.edu.om
Rima Mansoor Al-Zadjali[3]
E-mail: rima@squ.edu.om
[1] Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, P.O. Box 3058, Ruwi 112, Sultanate of Oman.
[2] Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, P.O. Box 50, Al-Khodh 123, Sultanate of Oman.
[3] Quality Assurance Office for Academic Affairs, Sultan Qaboos University, P.O. Box 50, Al-Khodh 123, Sultanate of Oman.

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Appendix A

1. Do you think the university English language teacher education program adequately equips the student-teachers with the necessary language proficiency to be English language teachers?

2. Who do you think is responsible in the teacher education program for improving the language proficiency level of the student-teachers? How?

3. In your opinion, what can the English language program at the College of Education, the College of Arts and Social Sciences, and the LC do to improve the graduates' language ability?

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