A Cultural-Historical Activity Theory Exploration into the use of social media in women’s English language education in Saudi Arabia: Possibilities and challenges

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2018

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List of Abbreviations

**ESL**: English as a second language

**EFL**: English as a foreign language

**CALL**: Computer-assisted language learning

**SLA**: Second Language Acquisition

**AT**: Activity theory

**CHAT**: Cultural-historical activity theory

**ZPD**: Zone of Proximal Development

Conventions for Extracts from Interviews

...: indicates pauses

[...]: indicates omitted material

[ ]: indicates additions or explanations inserted in an extract by the researcher
Abstract

**Thesis title:** A Cultural-Historical Activity Theory exploration into the use of social media in women’s English language education in Saudi Arabia: Possibilities and challenges

This research explores the possibilities and challenges of using social media as a tool in English language education in Saudi women’s higher education via teachers’ perceptions and practices. Research on social media in English language education in the Western context has demonstrated its benefits in language learning, yet limited research exists in the Saudi context. Among the scant research on social media in the EFL context, quantitative approaches through surveys have sought to elicit teachers’ and students’ perceptions of using social media in language education (Allam and Elyas 2016; Ahmed and Hassan 2017). However, such research has not investigated how social media is actually implemented and the factors and barriers that were observed from study in this area. This research examines implementation of social media by adopting case study design to understand in depth a particular community of teachers. The primary research methods used are interviews and classroom observations to understand teachers’ perspectives, practices and any potential for transformation. The study also investigates the contradictions that may occur as a result of introducing social media in Saudi women’s context. The participants are six female novice teachers who work together to implement technologies in their classrooms.

Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) is used in the study as an interpretative framework, to explore and investigate the entire activity system of implementing social media (Engeström 2001). Looking at the system as a whole contributes to our understanding of teachers’ belief within the activity system. It also helps to explain how the cultural history of the participants comes to the activity system and the significance of its role in achieving the object of the activity. A number of historically accumulated contradictions are evident from the research that frequently prevents teachers from using social media in their teaching. Nevertheless, the study also reveals different types of transformations that occur as a result of the use of social media. These are individual (e.g. changes in value belief), collective (e.g. sharing one object) and systemic transformations (e.g. changes in the University rules).

This research therefore makes a significant contribution to knowledge in three different areas. It enriches the literature on the use of CHAT to investigate the factors that support and hinder the implementation of social media in English language education, specifically in regard to women’s teaching practices. The study also reveals how teachers’ beliefs can take into account the broader sociocultural context by bringing cultural history into the activity system. The research similarly contributes methodologically by which an approach (abduction, deduction and induction) is used towards data analysis. A number of practical implications are addressed and limitations together with the potential for future research are identified.
Declaration

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Acknowledgements

Undertaking this PhD has been very challenging and rewarding experience for me. I have learnt a great deal of knowledge and gained valuable experience through this long journey of my PhD. Completing this thesis would not have been possible without the advice and support of the following people.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Gary Motteram for his mentoring and encouragement for my research and the support he offered throughout my studies. My gratitude to him is beyond words.

I would like to deeply thank Mrs. Diane Slaouti for her valuable feedback on my first draft of the thesis.

I cannot overstate my gratitude to my family for their endless love and support throughout this journey, my father, Khader Alkhader, my mother, Mariam Alkhader, my husband, Muhanned Alghamdi, my sisters Azzah, Hanan and Ashwag, my brothers Saeed, Abdullah, Adel and Khalid. I am especially thankful to my son, Basem for giving me happiness during my studies and being the ultimate reason for finishing this thesis.

Last, but not least, I am extremely thankful to the Saudi Arabian government for giving me the opportunity to complete my studies in UK. I would also like to thank the Dean of the foundation-year college for his support and the participants in the research for sharing their experiences, and practices with me.
1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) is one of the most popular digital technologies nowadays and has become a widespread phenomenon and an essential part of our daily lives. The number of social media users around the world is increasing each year, from .97 billion in 2010 to 2.46 billion in 2017, and these figures are expected to grow and reach 2.95 billion by 2020 (Statista 2018). Social media enables people to create platforms to have their own communities and personal online world. Through the tools of social media, people can create their own information, share this with others, communicate with their friends or colleagues and collaborate with them in terms of designing materials (such as audio or visual material) or in writing an article. It is argued that social media can facilitate people’s lives and make the world less populous – ‘a global village’.

Social media has been used not only for people to communicate socially but also for varied purposes such as business marketing and education. In recent years, we have seen a trend for universities and their educators to use social media to spread knowledge, convey ideas and facilitate communication. A number of tools have been created for the purpose of education and communication among people in the academic world such as Researchgate, Academia.edu and Mendeley. Indeed, educational materials are increasingly accessed online and this has meant practices have begun to change. Social media and its positive potential in education has recently attracted scholars in different disciplines and much research has been conducted on its pedagogical benefits.

In the ESL/EFL field, several recent studies have shown that social media can have a positive impact on second and foreign language learning (Wang and Vasquez 2012; Luo 2013). Nonetheless, the research on using social media in language education in Saudi Arabia is scarce. In fact, the adoption of social media in education in the Arab world is at an early phase (Chaurasia 2011), although Saudi Arabia has been found to be one of the Arab countries most commonly acknowledging social media application in learning and teaching (ibid). In a study conducted on the use of social media in Saudi universities, it was found that Saudi universities are aware of and do utilise social media tools (Ahmad et al. 2013); however, there is limited research into
their uses as learning and teaching tools in Saudi Arabia in general and in language education in particular, and the majority of the literature and practice on the use of social media has been written so far about Western contexts. Among the very little research found in the area of social media in the EFL context, research is approached quantitatively by using surveys to elicit teachers’ and students’ perceptions of using social media in language education (Allam and Elyas 2016; Ahmed and Hassan 2017). That research did not investigate how social media is actually implemented and what factors and barriers were observed from conducting the research on this area.

There is also a need to investigate the sociocultural context of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia as the challenges EFL teachers face have their roots in the contextual framework of language education (Syed 2003), as well as broader issues in education and in society. Some, such as Alshahrani and Al-shehri (2012), claim that technology can address a number of the issues in language education in Saudi Arabia. Among these is the fact that traditional ways of teaching English are predominant in the Saudi education system. That means English language classrooms are still teacher-fronted classrooms where the teachers control the classrooms and the students are passive receivers of information. Other examples of traditional ways of teaching are drilling techniques, grammar translation methods and memorising information for exam preparation. Yet, there is no compelling evidence that technology can change the classroom. In fact, in many education systems around the world languages are still taught effectively without the use of technology, and certainly no social media. Where technology exists, claims are made for these technologies that they not only facilitate teaching but are also used to bolster more contemporary teaching methods, encouraging the use of problem solving, critical thinking and meaning making (Lawless and Pellegrino 2007). Claims are furthermore made that social media in particular can address some of the issues that are related to barriers to technology implementation (Thomas et al. 2013).

Therefore, this research explores whether social media use might bring about change in pedagogical thinking and practice. To bring about change through using social media, the study focuses on a group of teachers as the teacher’s role is not only an important element in the successful integration of technologies in classrooms (Egbert et al. 2009), but it is also viewed as being key to the change process of classroom
practice (Ertmer 1999). Besides the significant role of teachers, looking at the system as a whole will help to understand the factors that make social media implementation possible and also recognise the barriers to be able to eliminate them in the future.

### 1.2 Context of study

In 2007, the King Abdullah Project was approved by the Saudi cabinet, which was concerned about the development of public education in Saudi Arabia with expenditure of $US 3.1 billion. The King Abdullah Project addresses specifically the future of higher education in Saudi Arabia, which is known as ‘AAFAQ’ or ‘Horizon’ (Smith and Abouammoh 2013). This project defines the strategic plans to achieve the mission and the desired outcome by the public universities in the Kingdom. Among these reforms are the establishment of 16 public universities in the last decade and the funding of different initiatives such as professional development, curriculum review, and the existence of information technology for teaching and learning (ibid).

Most of the new universities established in the past decade (including the one in this research context) are located in towns in various local provinces of Saudi Arabia, and have contributed to the development of those towns. Prior to the establishment of these universities, many families left their hometowns and moved to the cities to seek better jobs or better education for their children, but the recent reforms have provided opportunities for local residents to find jobs and for adolescents to take their bachelor degrees in their own towns.

The students of these new universities come from diverse parts of the towns in which they are located. Most of the students live in the town centre or suburbs while others come from distant villages. Because those villages have no universities, the students must commute a long distance to a university located in a town every day, which has prompted many students to stay in university accommodations. Thus, the new universities in these towns provide opportunities for students in rural areas (or villages) outside the towns as well as for local students. The families in the outlying towns can be described as more conservative than those in the cities.

As these universities have only recently been established, most of their buildings are rented from various organisations. Thus, the building are not designed for education or equipped with proper infrastructure. The buildings in my research setting,
however, were designed for the foundation-year college, but nevertheless they are not equipped with proper infrastructure, and, even if the infrastructure existed, regular maintenance is not performed. Because these universities are located in semi-urban areas, they are more affected by the conservative culture of the local communities.

The present study was conducted in a women’s foundation college at one of the new Saudi universities. The participants are six novice English language teachers who work in the English department of the foundation college. This department belongs to a private company that, besides operating at the university, offers English language courses around the country. This study focuses on a female college because of the gender segregation of the entire educational system in Saudi Arabia and because, by its nature, this study requires direct contact with participants. Hence, it was impossible for me as a woman to conduct a study in a male college.

Because this department has only recently been established, young Saudi staff members and teachers have been recruited to work in it. Moreover, most of the teachers who applied for the job of English language teaching (the study participants among them) were born and grew up in the town where this research was conducted. All of these Saudi teachers are in their twenties and they recently earned their bachelor degrees from the university in which they currently work. Five of the participants are novice teachers, this being their first year of teaching, while one participant had one year’s teaching experience in an English language school prior to working at the university.

1.3 Research design and theoretical framework
A qualitative paradigm was chosen because the study investigates teachers in their natural setting (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Case study was chosen as the research design because the focus is on one case and the aim of the research is to understand the different relationships concerning a certain phenomenon as well as the context and the variables within a particular bounded system (Yamagata-Lynch 2010). The research took place over about three months and started by interviewing the teachers and then giving sessions about the pedagogical approaches to social media implementation in language classrooms. Then, the teachers started their implementation and a number of classroom observations have
been conducted as well as meetings with the teachers to discuss any issues that they may have had regarding their implementation. The teachers and the Head of the English Department were interviewed at the end of the research project.

Studies in the area of language teaching and teacher development (Borg 2003; Johnson 2009) called for the necessity to study teacher’s practices as a whole, so it is important to investigate the sociocultural reality of the teacher and to look at their development from different angles (e.g., their beliefs, other actors in the system, teachers’ prior experiences) and all of these can help to fully understand teachers’ practices (Johnson 2009).

Therefore, the study uses cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) as an interpretative framework as it helps us in understanding teachers in their actual classroom settings, in the sense that it allows us to “construct a holistic view of human activities as well as human agency within these activities” (Johnson 2009: 78). CHAT is defined as “an interdisciplinary approach to studying human learning and development” (Cole 2010:360). So, having CHAT as an interpretative framework helped in focusing on the entire activity system (of the group of teachers implementing social media) as the unit of analysis (Engeström 2001).

This activity system is similar to the metaphor of a thread as used by Roth and Lee (2007), to show the dialectical relations within the unit of analysis whereby they suggested:

Any part that one might heuristically isolate within a unit presupposes all other parts; a unit can be analysed in terms of component parts, but none of these parts can be understood or theorised apart from the others that contribute to defining it (p. 196).

In their metaphor, the thread can be seen as one form but in reality it is composed of two or more intertwined strands. If we take a closer look at the strands, we can see they are also composed of short fibres. Accordingly, the thread presupposes strands and the strand presuppose fibres and without the stands and the fibres, the thread would not exist (Roth and Lee 2007). Similarly, Cole (1996, 1999) used the metaphor of thread or rope to describe the meaning of context as “a process of weaving together” (Cole 1996: 135), which means “a qualitative relation between a minimum of two analytical entities (threads)” (ibid: 135).
We can therefore say that the unit of analysis in my research is like a thread that presupposes different parts that compose the activity system of social media introduction into the University, and without these different parts the activity would not exist or perhaps it would not be well explained. The implementation of social media includes the community of English teachers as the main actors and what beliefs and attitudes they bring to the activity. The activity also includes the researcher, the Head of the English Department, the students, and their roles within the activity. All these are surrounded by the bigger picture of Saudi society, the culture and the fact that the participants are all women.

Cole (1996) did extensive research on the cultural historical perspectives and activity theory and he preferred to refer to activity theory as cultural historical activity theory to reflect both the cultural history perspective and the practice of the activity. In my research, I am trying to accomplish what Michael Cole suggested previously in (1996), to look at how the cultural history comes into the activity system. According to Cole, “Culture [is] a system of artefacts and mind [is] a process of mediating behaviour through artefacts” (p. 143).

Therefore, I am looking at teachers’ beliefs through the lens of CHAT and consider it as a part of the cultural history of the subjects in the activity system. The teachers in the study were introduced to new artefacts (social media tools) that were designed and developed in a different culture and when they started collectively using these tools they brought to their practices their beliefs, which are mediated by cultural tools that were developed over time, as Cole suggested “Culture comes into being wherever people engage in joint activity over a period of time” (Cole 1996: 301). Those cultural tools can be either mediation or a constraint to human behaviour (ibid). To understand how the cultural tools existed and have their impact, it is important to focus on the entire activity system as the unit of analysis (ibid).

The concept of contradiction, which is considered one of the basic principles in CHAT, was useful in exploring historically accumulated contradictions that were brought by the use of social media in Saudi women’s context. Although these contradictions led to conflicts and disturbances during the study, they can be a motive for finding innovative solutions to modify and enhance the activity (Engeström 2009). It is believed that contradictions can act as a driving force for
change and development when the participants realised them in a specific activity (Roth and Lee 2007), which also lead to the transformation of the activity (Engeström & Sannino 2010).

The lens of expansive and transformative learning were drawn upon in this research to interpret teachers’ actions regarding social media implementation. This approach was developed from CHAT and proposed by Yrjö Engeström to differentiate learning from the traditional theories of learning that assumed “what needs to be learned is already fully known ahead of time by those who either manage or teach” (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016: 89). Expansive learning, on the other hand, suggests that “learning is inseparably intertwined with the generation of new realities, new activities, new forms of human life” (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016: 89). This aspect of learning works well with the nature of my project as an exploratory study to investigate the possibilities for transformations in the activity of social media implementation.

1.4 Role of the researcher

This research can be described as a formative intervention as Engeström stated in his interview that formative interventions are “interventions which do not have predetermined end results, but which are formative in the sense that also what is generated actually takes shape in the intervention” (Ploettner & Tresseras 2016: 90). Engeström used these terms to refer to his method of Change Laboratory (Engeström 2001). However, my aim in this research is not to bring attention to the problems and challenges in the context, as in the Change Laboratory method used by Engeström, Virkkunen, Helle, Pihlaja and Poikela (1996), but to encourage the implementation of new technology and explore how the participants learn to implement and to face the challenges that may encounter. In the Change Laboratory method, for instance, they present the problems to develop new practices that can overcome the current problems in an organisation.

My role throughout this research is significant and can be described as a broker (Wenger 1998). Because I attempted to transfer new ideas (the educational use of social media) into a context in which these ideas are unfamiliar. I presented the idea of social media implementation and let the study participants take the lead and
control and manage the transformational process. Therefore, my role was more significant at the beginning of the process, but became minor towards the end of the research and it was mainly to maintain the transformation and offer help when it was needed.

1.5 Research questions

The objective of this research is to explore how social media can be integrated into women’s English language education in the Saudi context. Taking novice EFL teachers as its focus, the study seeks to investigate their perspectives and prospective development as well as how those teachers understand, function, engage in activities and develop their practices through using social media in their classroom.

Three main research questions have guided the study; the first question has a sub-question.

1) What role does the cultural history of the EFL teachers play in the activity system?
   a) In what way can teachers’ beliefs be described as a part of the cultural history?

2) What are the contradictions that emerged as a result of the use of social media in Saudi women’s English language education?

3) What kind of transformation occurs to the activity system as a result of using social media?

This project aims to fill the gap of the limited research on using social media in Saudi women’s context by exploring how the activity of the group of teachers has developed over a period of time, and how their cultural history fits within their activity system. Furthermore, it investigates the challenges and possibilities that may occur as a result of the introduction of social media in the Saudi context.

1.6 Overview of the study

This thesis is organised into eight chapters, including this introduction chapter. The following paragraphs provide an overview of each chapter in this thesis.
Chapter 1: The introduction chapter began by outlining the rationale and the motivation for the research. It provided the aims and the research questions of the study. The research design was outlined and the rationale behind using the qualitative paradigm was presented.

Chapter 2: The literature review chapter consists of three main parts. The first part establishes the gap in literature and language education in Saudi Arabia. The second part situates the research within the broader landscape of research into social media implementation and the factors for adopting them in education. The last part discusses the cultural history of teachers, which mainly concerns the research on teachers’ belief.

Chapter 3: The theoretical framework chapter establishes CHAT theory, which is used to interpret the data of the study. This chapter comprises two main parts. The first part provides the definition and historical overview of CHAT and its development throughout history. The second part discusses the perspectives within CHAT that were drawn upon in this research to interpret the data of the study, namely cultural history, contradictions, human agency, expansive learning, object and brokering.

Chapter 4: The methodology chapter expands the rationale for the choice of the research design, addressing the epistemological stance followed by a discussion of the context of the study and the participants. Then, the chapter provides discussion of the research methods used during the research process followed by a discussion of ethical considerations relevant to the study and addresses measures for establishing the trustworthiness of the research. This culminates in a reflection on some stages of the research process.

Chapter 5: The data analysis chapter addresses the analysis approach undertaken in this study. This chapter begins with a discussion of some aspects of CHAT used in the data analysis. The chapter then gives a detailed discussion and exemplification of the data analysis procedure.

Chapter 6: The findings chapter presents the findings of the study by first giving a rich description of the research context. Then, three themes are presented according to CHAT perspectives. These themes are the cultural history of the teachers,
contradictions, and the possibility for transformation. Each one of these themes has a number of subthemes.

Chapter 7: The discussion chapter addresses the research questions and discusses the findings of the research and relates them to the wider literature. This chapter began by giving an overview of the focal activity system in the study. Then, the chapter provides a discussion of the findings to address the research questions in three main themes, namely the role of cultural history in the activity system, contradictions, and the possibility for transformation.

Chapter 8: The conclusions chapter discusses the key findings and the contribution to knowledge followed by a discussion of the implications, limitations, and then gives suggestions for future research.
2 Situating the Research

The previous chapter provided an introduction to the thesis. It outlined the rationale and motivation for the study followed by a discussion of the research design, the interpretative framework and the research questions. In this chapter, I will discuss the history and issues associated with English language education in Saudi Arabia. I will then explore a range of issues related to the role of social media in language education by first giving the definition of social media followed by an overview of its history. Then, I will discuss the benefits of social media for language teaching and learning and the barriers to implementing such technology in the classroom. Lastly, I will examine the cultural history of EFL teachers by providing a historical overview of teacher’s belief and its relations to different aspects that has been discussed in literature. To conclude the chapter, I will provide a rationale for adopting CHAT as an interpretative framework.

2.1 English language education in Saudi Arabia

In this main section, I provide the cultural history of the context of the study. To better understand the issues of English language education in higher education in Saudi Arabia; it is important to outline the history of English and English language teaching in the Saudi Arabian education system.

2.1.1 Historical overview

The very early history of English language education in Saudi Arabia originates in the 1930s. In order for the country to keep pace with the needs of the 20th century, the Scholarship Preparation School was established in Makkah, Saudi Arabia in 1936. The students of this school were provided with scholarships to study abroad in the USA and UK (Al-Ghamdi and Al-Saddat 2002). It is believed that the school was “the beginning of modern day high school education in the KSA” (Mahboob and Elyas 2014: 129) and English language teaching was first introduced there to prepare the students to study abroad.

Since the 1970s, English language has progressively attained higher status in education because of economic evolution, as there was a need for Saudi people to be able to communicate in English with workers from foreign companies. Thus, the high exchange value (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016) of English language in Saudi Arabia is probably due to the heavy reliance on such foreign companies (e.g., The
Arabian American Oil Company, ARAMCO) that contributed to the country’s economic development (Mahboob and Elyas 2014). As a result, demand grew for English to be taught as a core subject at secondary and higher education levels in both the public and private sectors during the period 1970 to 2001 (Mahboob and Elyas 2014). Initially, the students would begin to study English from grade 7 to grade 12 and during these six years the language was taught for 45 minutes four times a week, with the teachers given an identical syllabus that they were required to follow (ibid).

Soon after, English language in Saudi Arabia gained official status as the leading foreign language and the only one in the country with a significant role in the development of the country in terms of its international relations and scientific-technological advancement (Al-Seghayer 2014: 143). As a consequence, the exchange value of English language increased and it has more recently become a compulsory course both in primary schools and at the university level. Despite this, interest of the average student in learning English has not developed; the subject is unpopular and it is probably fair to say that in many cases it is not well taught. It is believed that the introduction of English language into the primary sector is due to political pressure from Western counties (US government) (Azuri 2006, cited in Mahboob and Elyas 2014). The possible underlying cause of this pressure is to educate the younger generation to be tolerant and live in harmony with the West (ibid). This might be evidenced by the recent changes to the English language curriculum to include western culture and habits compared to the early English curricula that focused only on local culture. Moreover, the changes not only focused on primary education but also university students in all majors are now required to study an introductory core course in English language and in most of the majors, such as engineering, science, medicine and information technology, English is nowadays used as the medium of instruction (ibid).

### 2.1.2 Issues of English language education in Saudi Arabia

#### 2.1.2.1 The curriculum and the classroom

Elyas and Picard (2010) argue that the English curriculum in Saudi Arabia brings about conditions that “facilitate the cultural and religious values of the society”
The most important condition they mentioned is the status of English language in Saudi Arabia and how there was hesitancy to use it throughout the early history of education due to the fear that English might have an impact on Islam. However, contrary to those fears, they claimed the introduction of teaching English language into the primary sector in 2003 did not affect the religious and the cultural conditions or teaching practices in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the English curriculum is still secondary to Arabic and religious instruction (ibid: 140). In a study conducted by Elyas (2008), teachers in the Saudi context reported that the content of the English schoolbooks is somewhat odd to their culture and the religion of Islam. However, the teachers also said that it is difficult to separate the English language from English culture and the language should be in fact taught along with its culture (ibid).

English language classrooms in most of the Saudi context can be described as a traditional language learning setting (Al-Hazmi 2003) where the teacher is the dominant actor and the students do not have active roles in the classroom. Other subjects are taught in similar ways; English is not an exception here. In a typical English language classroom in high school, for example, the students are expected to memorise vocabulary and pre-written English essays and to pass exams without the development of communicative skills; thus the students will not be able to use the language to make meaning (Elyas and Picard 2010). It is not accepted by curriculum developers or English teachers that the nature of language learning is a skill and needs meaningful practice. In addition, very limited chance of practice outside the classroom walls exists and those settings (i.e. traditional language learning classrooms) have been criticised as “in class-only learning” (Alshahrani and Alshehri 2012: 22) where most of the students are exposed to teacher-fronted instruction (McMullen 2014).

2.1.2.2 Teacher education

English language teacher education programmes in Saudi Arabia are described as “unsystematic and inadequate” as they do not effectively prepare the students to be EFL teachers (Al-Hazmi 2003: 341). During the past five decades and before 2010, students who studied English language at a college of education or college of arts followed a four-year programme where they were taught courses in English language
skills, translation, applied linguistics and one course only in English language teaching. Besides English, they were taught courses that instruct using Arabic language such as educational psychology and school administration (ibid). The students were required to teach classes in the secondary and high schools during the last two semesters of their programme under the supervision of their advisors and tutors. Graduates of these programmes were awarded a bachelor’s degree in English language. Recently, new reforms have been made within the higher education system and these new reforms may resolve the issues of English language teacher education. English students in the college of arts now follow a four-year bachelor programme in which all the subjects are related to English language skills and literature. Whoever wants to be a teacher, she/he can study for a diploma in teaching in the college of education for one year after obtaining the bachelor’s degree. This course is taught in Arabic and is for all different majors such as Arabic and science education. Nonetheless, this course cannot fulfil the needs of the English language teachers because it does not focus on English language teaching and its pedagogical approaches.

Al-Hazmi (2003) and Al-Seghayer (2014) called for the necessity to make reforms in both pre- and in-service English teacher education and to make the English professional development programmes compulsory for in-service teachers to take. There is also a need to investigate the sociocultural context of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia as the challenges ESL teachers face have their roots in the contextual framework of language education (Syed 2003).

2.1.2.3 Saudi higher education system

Education in Saudi Arabia has been described as having four defining characteristics: “a focus on the teaching of Islam, a centralised system of control and educational support, state funding (thus education is free at all levels in Saudi Arabia) and a general policy of gender segregation” (Smith and Abouammoh 2013: 2). In 2007, the King Abdullah Project was approved by the Saudi cabinet, which was concerned about the development of public education in Saudi Arabia with expenditure of SUS 3.1 billion. The King Abdullah Project addresses specifically the future of higher education in Saudi Arabia, which is known as ‘AAFAQ’ or ‘Horizon’ (ibid). This project defines the strategic plans to achieve the mission and the desired outcome by
the public universities in the Kingdom. Among these reforms are the establishment of 16 public universities in the last decade and the funding of different initiatives such as professional development, curriculum review, and the existence of information technology for teaching and learning (ibid).

The success of the current reforms for higher education in Saudi Arabia will be based on the quality of the faculty members (Al-Ghamdi and Tight 2013:88). Additionally, the quality of the faculty will be attained when there is quality professional development that is meant for enhancing the academics’ knowledge and skills and improving their teaching methods (ibid). Faculty professional development was recognised as crucial for the success of the higher education. However, no efforts have been made to implement it in a systematic way (ibid).

Generally speaking, “University teaching is one of the only professions in the world that appoints people with no specific training to perform a complex task – the teaching of university students” (Al-Ghamdi and Tight 2013: 88). Yet, this can be a misunderstanding of what higher education is about. This is because universities are about research essentially and they hire people who are gifted in their subjects – whether they teach their subject well is less important. The teaching assistants in Saudi universities are appointed their posts according to their overall high grades in bachelor’s degrees, with the assumption that whoever attained high marks is able to teach in higher education (ibid). When recruiting academics, the focus is more on their knowledge of their specialised area or their research skills rather than their training in how to teach, assess students, or to develop lesson plans or academic courses (ibid). This was recognised as an issue by some universities and they started to establish developmental deanship, which is specialised in developing the practice of the faculty members.

2.1.3 Summary
As English language has gained its current status as the lingua franca of the world, it has become necessary for Saudi students to learn the language to able to satisfactorily communicate in English with non-Arabic speakers, to obtain work, and thus contribute to the development of the country. However, students may not receive adequate learning due to the issues of English language education. Having discussed the issues of English language education in Saudi Arabia (in the previous
sections), it is believed that technology can address a number of these issues (Alshahrani and Al-shehri 2012). For example, it can minimise the predominant teacher-centred instruction by engaging students in the learning process and encouraging the use of problem solving, critical thinking and meaning making (Lawless and Pellegrino 2007). Among the different forms of technology is social media, which may have benefits for students’ language learning such as motivating them to learn and opening the doors for the students to use English language in real-life situations in order to access much-needed practice. Those technologies are accessible, portable, and the students can have access to them via computers or tablets, or simply their smartphones. Through using social media, the teachers can find authentic materials and increase their exposure to real language, giving them the opportunity to adapt practice to meet the students’ and local needs. Finally, Alshahrani and Al-shehri suggest that social media may help to reduce the student-teacher cultural barriers that are often found in EFL contexts, making the relationship between the students and the teachers stronger and therefore potentially breaking down the distance between them (Alshahrani and Al-shehri 2012).

2.2 Social media as a mediating artefact

2.2.1 The definition of social media (Web 2.0)

Over the course of the past 19 years, there has been a remarkable shift from Web 1.0 “read-only” or “first generation Web” to the second generation of the Web “Web 2.0” (Wang and Vasquez 2012). Millions of people nowadays use Web 2.0 or social media in their everyday lives (Warschauer and Grimes 2007; Selwyn and Stirling 2016) and are thus provided with opportunities to share digital content and interact with each other (Bennett et al. 2012). These new innovations are characterised by four key features: "participatory, authentic, immediate and it engages the community" (Antenos-Conforti 2009: 59).

The concept of Web 2.0 emerged in the course of a discussion between O’Reilly and other Web pioneers about the future of the Web at a conference brainstorming session in 2004 (O’Reilly 2005). Since then, this concept has been widely used although there are disagreements about the real meaning of Web 2.0 (ibid). Various definitions of Web 2.0 have been put forward by different researchers and scholars (Wang and Vasquez 2012). Halvorsen (2009: 239) defines Web 2.0 as "a new series
of applications all designed to take advantage of the Internet's potential to allow individuals to participate in new ways in the online experience”. Yuen, Yaoyuneyong and Yuen (2011: 109-110) refer to Web 2.0 as “a platform where content is created, shared, remixed, repurposed and exchanged”. On the other hand, some educators such as Poore (2013; 2016) prefer the term ‘social media’ instead of Web 2.0 to describe the applications, tools and services. Warschauer and Grimes (2007) give in brief a clear explanation of the functions of these tools. They explain that people can now “interact through blogs, collaborate through wikis, play multiplayer games, publish podcasts and video, build relationships through social network sites and evaluate all the above forms of communication through feedback and ranking mechanisms” (p: 2). For all that, the difficulty lies with giving a specific definition for social media as it is in a state of perpetual change (Tess 2013; Manca and Ranieri 2016a). These technologies are mostly used by young people who are labelled by Prensky (2001:1) as “digital natives”, because, as it has been argued by many, they “have grown up using technology and the Internet, and therefore feel more at home in the online world” (Hockly 2011: 322). This label has been used by researchers to describe the next generations as well (Kaplan and Haenlein 2016). However, there are arguments against that claim as it has been described as a weak evidence claim and needs more theoretically informed research (Bennett et al. 2008).

Therefore, social media can be defined as emergent technology that social interaction between people is considered as its main feature. Examples of social media tools include blogs, mini blogs (e.g., Twitter), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), visual tools (e.g., YouTube) and audio tools (e.g., Podcast). Other social media tools such as Path (a photograph sharing and messaging service similar to Instagram), Tumblr (a micro blogging website where the user can post multimedia and other content in a short-form blog), and WhatsApp (a smartphone application where the user can share different multimedia, make phone/video calls etc.). Throughout this thesis, I will use the term social media instead of Web 2.0 because social media provides the main characteristic of these emergent technologies, which is the social aspect of it, and this term is well known nowadays and used by the majority of people. Web 2.0 is a more technical term and more known among the scholars in educational technology and in computer science. The term ‘digital technology’ will be used in its broadest sense to refer to all forms of educational technologies, which
include social media, different equipment such as PCs, tablets, smartphones and projectors, while the use of the term ‘social media’ will be limited to only social media tools (e.g., Twitter, YouTube and Path).

2.2.2 Historical overview

In this section, I provide a discussion of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which is considered an umbrella where social media has come to light in terms of its role in language education. With the emergence of technologies and their continuing innovation, CALL has become more widely recognised as an important area of scholarship (Thomas et al. 2013). CALL applications in language education have been increasingly innovated and become popular over the past 20 to 30 years (ibid). Many articles as well as books have been published around CALL, which represents on-going and cutting-edge research in this field. Chapelle (2001; 2003) was one of the first scholars to give a theoretical foundation and a practical focus for using technology in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). After that, edited books were published on this topic with the label CALL in their titles such as Teacher Education in CALL by Hubbard and Levy (2006) and more recently Contemporary Computer-assisted Language Learning by Thomas, Reinders and Warschauer (2013), which includes the historical overview of CALL, research on different kinds of technologies for language learning, and research on teacher education in CALL. CALL has become not only a course that is widely taught at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, but also it has become a compulsory course in language teacher education programmes in many countries around the world.

Teacher education in CALL started to gain its unique identity within the past 10 years (Motteram et al. 2013) when scholars argued that the sociocultural turn is the most appropriate development of second language teacher education (Johnson 1996; Johnson 2009; Motteram 2013). Indeed, Motteram (1999; 2014) called for the necessity of the theory in language teacher education and the movement to a qualitative paradigm in CALL research, which will offer in-depth data with more insightful and broader ideas.

The evolution of CALL started in the last half of the 20th century when the behaviouristic approaches and cognitive theories predominated (Davis et al. 2013). These approaches shifted during the 21st century as the theories emphasised the social
aspects of language learning (ibid). The history of CALL has been shaped by different trends in language pedagogy, SLA theories and the state of digital technology (Davis et al. 2013; Thomas et al. 2013), and more recently a sociocultural emphasis has become more prevalent (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). Thus, it has progressed through different phases from the first forms of digital technology until the invention of social media or Web 2.0, which represents the social aspect of technology (Thomas et al. 2013).

CALL history was argued by Warschauer and Healey (1998) as having three phases, namely behaviourist, communicative and integrative CALL, whereas Bax (2003; 2011) criticised this approach and offered an alternative non-history-based analysis. He contends that his three approaches – restricted, open, and integrated – provide a more detailed way of understanding institutions and classrooms than the earlier ones. Thomas, Reinders and Warschauer (2013: 6) have added a ‘fourth social phase’ to the original three phases and called it ‘social CALL’. The shift towards the social aspect of the technology is underpinned by the emergence and widespread use of advanced portable digital devices such as smartphones and tablets and also the constructivist principles, which call for the social and collaborative way of learning (ibid). It is worth noting that these progressive changes in CALL did not occur in a linear way but rather were uneven and overlapping over a long period of time (Davis et al. 2013; Thomas et al. 2013).

2.2.3 The role of social media in language learning

Thomas, Reinders and Warschauer (2013: 7) called Web 2.0 ‘social technologies’ or ‘social CALL’ to refer to the latest phase of the development of CALL throughout that time. This latest phase has attracted many scholars in the field who argue that social media have become appealing as instructional tools (M. Thomas 2009; Greenhow and Lewin 2016). Moreover, a number of scholars have called for the implementation of social media in education and have begun to look at its potential benefits for learning and teaching (Solomon and Schrum 2007; Lomicka and Lord 2009; Richardson 2010) and its ability to change teaching and learning practices, transforming them into more collaborative and social-oriented practices (Manca and Ranieri 2016a). In 2009, Handbook of Research on Web 2.0 and Second Language Learning by M. Thomas (2009) was published, which represented the most comprehensive collection of research in this area. This book contributed in
presenting to the reader the differences between the first and the second generations of the Web, and provided a considerable number of ideas for implementing these technologies for second language learning.

Since 2009, the research on social media has been widely conducted using different social media tools in various educational contexts (Selwyn and Stirling 2016) and in second or foreign language learning (Antenos-Conforti 2009; M. Thomas 2009). Implementing social media in language education, in particular, began with the identification of its potential for community-based learning and collaboration (Wang and Vasquez 2012). Social media can be considered as a promising tool for formal and informal language learning as it:

Offer[s] students an alternative venue for additional interesting and engaging activities, to ensure student-centeredness and autonomy as well as interaction and connectivity, and provide opportunities to practise reading, writing, speaking and listening outside the classroom walls at their own pace, in real life-semblance and safe environments (Pop 2010: 1186).

From the various research conducted on social media tools in language education, it was found that they increase motivation and interest in the use of the target language (Pinkman 2005) and help in enhancing learner autonomy (Kessler 2009). In addition, they are thought to provide opportunities for the negotiation of meaning, (Antenos-Conforti 2009; Raith 2009) and facilitate peer feedback (Dippold 2009; Yang 2009). The research on these emergent technologies in language education is grounded in different theories, such as constructivism, sociocultural perspectives, collaborative learning, task-based leaning and community of practice (Luo 2013), as they were found to “promote creativity, collaboration and communication, and they dovetail with learning methods in which these skills play a part” (Solomon and Schrum 2007: 21). These benefits “parallel those of the L2 acquisition process and make [social media] a promising language learning environment" (Antenos-Conforti 2009: 59).

With the increasing popularity of social media in language education, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) also has become prevalent in the field of English language teaching (Hockly 2012; Golonka et al. 2014). MALL refers to the use of portable devices such as mobile phones and tablets in language education. These devices can support the use of social media in English language classrooms.
2.2.4 Social media and language teaching

Although technology is not a new feature of language education (Salaberry 2001; Davis et al. 2013), arguments have increasingly advocated that effective teaching demands effective use of digital technologies and that this type of technology is becoming an essential tool for teaching rather than a supplement (Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich 2010). While it is true that digital technology has come to play a crucial role in many people’s lives and can be argued that it has many benefits in education as previously discussed, it is however hard to say that effective teaching could not be done without digital technology (Falcon 2010). Indeed, in many education systems around the world, languages are still taught effectively with no technology at all and certainly not with digital technologies. Nevertheless, there are arguments that today’s teachers’ low-level use of technology is not adequate to meet the needs of 21st-century learners (Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich 2010). In fact, meaningful technology integration requires the use of the technology to be toward students’ attainment of 21st-century goals (Ertmer et al. 2012).

Where digital technology exists, it can be argued that the technologies can facilitate teaching and the learning process, if used appropriately (Lawless and Pellegrino 2007). Technology can make teaching less complicated and more efficient than traditional approaches (ibid). Moreover, it can be emphasised that it helps in adopting new and arguably better approaches in teaching and making changes to the content and the context of learning, assessment and instruction (Lawless and Pellegrino 2007; Ertmer et al. 2015).

With regard to social media tools, the argument has been made that they are “ideal for educators because they are nimble, flexible, easy to use and often very powerful” (Poore 2016: 7). They are characterised by their intuitive designs, which allows the user sufficient time to understand their functions and engage with the learning content (Thomas et al. 2013). Besides, the Internet provides us with numerous resources and tools for authentic materials and most of them are free, presenting people the ability to socialise in different ways, textually (e.g., blogs, wikis, twitter), orally and/or visually (e.g., Skype, Tango), and aurally (e.g., Podcasting) (Motteram and Sharma 2009). Pop (2010) suggested that teachers should work to adapt social
media from the living technologies that students enjoy into creating learning technologies that they use and will be using to make the students’ experiences “richer, real, motivating, and lasting” (p. 1189).

2.2.5 Barriers for digital technology implementation

In literature, there are different factors that affect teachers’ implementation of digital technology in general and social media in particular, and these factors can be grouped into two main categories, that are contextual factors and personal factors. Contextual factors or ‘first-order barriers to technology integration’ as it was termed by Ertmer (1999), are described as the factors that are extrinsic to teachers and beyond the teacher’s control. These include the availability of resources; time availability for new lesson planning that includes technology, technical support, technology training and computer competence, students and their attitudes, the community, the institution and the curriculum, and inadequate technological and administrative support. Although the first-order barriers have been reduced in some Western countries such as the USA, it is not the case in Saudi Arabia.

Infrastructure refers to the availability of resources, the building, the classroom, Internet access, and the computers that facilitate the adoption of technology in education. Thus, infrastructure is one of the most influential factors of technology integration because without the proper infrastructure, technology adoption is not going to be possible. The issues of infrastructure and lack of reliable telecommunications in Arabic countries have been highlighted and discussed by managers and knowledge workers from both the private and public sectors (Loch et al. 2003). The limited availability of resources and the Internet have similarly been reported by teachers as an obstacle for technology adoption (Al-Alwani 2003; Saqlain and Mahmood 2013). Class size (Al-Asmari 2005) as well as technical difficulties (Saqlain and Mahmood 2013) were also considered to have hindered technology adoption. The Internet has numerous resources for authentic materials in English language, although one needs to take into consideration the suitability of those materials to the targeted culture.

While there is an increase in the availability of the electronic resources in schools and universities, they are minimally integrated with other classroom instructional activities. When they are available, the teachers tend to use them in more traditional
ways such as word processing, and not in innovative ways that encourages critical thinking and problem solving (Lawless & Pellegrino 2007). Therefore, professional development is crucial to ensure that:

Teachers keep up with changes in state-wide student performance standards, become familiar with new methods of teaching in the content areas, learn how to make the most effective instructional use of new technologies for teaching and learning, and adapt their teaching to shifting school environments and an increasingly diverse student population (Lawless & Pellegrino 2007:575)

Teachers need to have the technical skills and pedagogical knowledge to effectively integrate these technologies to begin to develop effective instructional practices (Ertmer 1999). Lawless and Pellegrino (2007) argued that it is important to be clear on the content of the professional development to be assessed, whether the focus is on the integration of the technology, or to learn about a specific type of technology or how to use it. In the Arab world, most public institutions lack the facilities and the technological training for the faculty staff (Loch et al. 2003).

Another factor that may affect digital technology in education is related to the students themselves. For example, it has been argued that students’ attitudes are important for the success or failure of technology implementation (Venkatesh et al. 2014) and their different learning styles can affect the way they use social media in the classroom (Balakrishnan and Gan 2016). Moreover, the misconception between students and teachers regarding the goal of using technology is another factor that may impact digital technology implementation (Wiebe & Kabata 2010). Having discussed the role of social media in language education and the barriers of its use in the classroom, the next section will move to provide a detailed discussion of the personal factors that may affect digital technology implementation.

2.3 The cultural history of EFL teachers

2.3.1 Introduction

As it has been mentioned, digital technology helps in adopting new approaches to teaching and making changes to the context of learning (Lawless and Pellegrino 2007; Ertmer et al. 2015). However, for many teachers currently in the system, making changes and using new approaches are found to be challenging (Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich 2010; Ertmer et al. 2015). Thus, attention turned to the teacher’s role in technology integration (Hannafin and Savenye 1993) and it has been found
that their roles play an important part in the successful integration of technologies in their classrooms (Egbert et al. 2009) and they are viewed as being key to the change process of classroom practice (Ertmer 1999). The attitudes and beliefs of teachers also have an impact on their integration of new technologies in learning (Yuen et al. 2011; Ertmer et al. 2012; Sadaf et al. 2012;). In fact, teachers’ beliefs have been considered as one of the essential factors for successful technology integration (Ertmer 2005). Moreover, research on teachers’ belief shows that teachers must hold positive beliefs concerning the value of the technologies for their learners and their teaching in order to be able to change and develop their practices, and include effectively these technologies in their work (Motteram et al. 2013).

Ertmer (1999: 48) argued that teachers’ beliefs are considered second-order barriers in addition to the first-order barriers (mentioned previously in section 2.2.5) to technology implementation. Those barriers are intrinsic to a teacher, which include teacher beliefs about their practice, about using technologies, their confidence and established classroom practice. These constructs can be placed under the umbrella of teacher ‘cognition research’. It can be argued that these factors are the most influential factor of technology integration (Attiah 2011) and that if the first-order barriers were removed, teachers would not automatically be able to use the technology to meet the desired outcomes (Ertmer 1999). It is still the case in Western countries that second-order barriers are preventing teachers from effectively integrating the technology to meet the needs of the 21st-century learners (Ertmer et al. 2015). However, in the context of Saudi Arabia, the first- and second-order barriers to digital technology implementation are under researched in the EFL field. In the next section, I will provide a historical overview of teacher’s cognition research to understand the history of the research on teacher’s belief.

2.3.2 Historical overview

More than 40 years ago, research in teacher education was primarily focused on teachers’ behaviours (Borg 2003; 2006). Teacher learning was viewed within a process-product paradigm in which teachers’ mental lives were not considered (Shulman 1987; Freeman 2002). This paradigm examines teaching through the learning outcomes it produced. The teacher is seen as a doer as he/she implements others’ ideas and masters specific content and methodologies to convey the content
to the learners (Freeman 2002:5). This paradigm has not gone away; in fact, it can be argued that it is even more prevalent today, although perhaps less so in some areas of English language teaching.

Research on teacher cognition, particularly second and foreign language teacher cognition, has recently become more prominent and is widely recognised within the field of language education (Borg 2009). Teacher cognition research is concerned with teachers’ mental lives, which means what they know, believe and think (Borg 2003; 2009). The research about teachers’ mental lives and how this affects their professionalism has been conducted for the past 40 years, mainly in mainstream education. In second and foreign language education, research on teacher cognition started in the mid-1990s.

Freeman (2002) and Borg (2003) conducted extensive literature reviews about teachers’ cognition in English language teaching. In Freeman's (2002) review, much of the literature was drawn from North American perspectives. The aim of his review was to add an emphasis that the teachers’ mental lives represent a hidden side of their teaching. He represented the research on teacher education as three different periods: the 70s, 80s and 90s. He called the 1990s “the decade of consolidation” (p. 8) as the research moved from only focusing on teachers’ behaviours, their practices in the classroom and learning outcomes, to teachers’ mental lives and the relationship between teachers’ mental lives and their behaviours. Moreover, he argued that the context had become a fundamental aspect in the teacher education field.

The other review was conducted by Simon Borg (2003) and was mostly drawn from countries such as the UK, Canada and some Asian countries along with the USA. Borg used the term ‘cognition’ to refer to the complexity of teachers’ mental lives. The review included research that had been conducted to examine what language teachers believe, think or know in relation to various aspects of their work. The review also involved studies of actual classroom practices and the relationships between teachers’ cognition and these practices.

The field of teacher cognition is characterised by numerous concepts that describe teacher cognition, such as beliefs, knowledge, practical knowledge, conceptions of
teaching and so on (Borg 2003; 2006). In his review article, Borg argues that this causes confusion because identical terms have been defined with different meanings and, on the other hand different terms refer to similar concepts. However, in this thesis I am using the term ‘belief’ instead of cognition, which can be a part of the cultural history of the teachers.

2.3.3 Teachers’ belief (definition)

As discussed in the previous section, the earliest research on teachers’ beliefs originate in the 80s when investigation started to move from behaviouristic theory into a more cognitive orientation (Ashton 2015). Many books and articles were published around this topic to clarify the complex constructs of the teachers’ belief system. Many researchers in diverse fields have defined the term ‘belief’ differently. For example, Kagan (1992) claims that teacher beliefs are “tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught” (p. 65). He argues that teacher’s belief about teaching impacts her future teaching behaviour. Pajares (1992) conducted a comprehensive review about the concept of teachers’ belief and provided the following thorough definition, which clarifies the meaning of what he referred to as educational belief:

Educational beliefs are “beliefs about confidence to affect students' performance (teacher efficacy), about the nature of knowledge (epistemological beliefs), about causes of teachers' or students' performance (attributions, locus of control, motivation, writing apprehension, math anxiety), about perceptions of self and feelings of self-worth (self-concept, self-esteem), about confidence to perform specific tasks (self-efficacy). There are also educational beliefs about specific subjects or disciplines (reading instruction, the nature of reading, whole language) (p. 316).

Pajares made a distinction between broader belief and educational belief and he argues that educational belief concerned belief about teaching and learning and everything related to education. He mentions that a researcher can narrow his research and look at specific belief regarding education such as self-efficacy belief or belief about a specific subject. Those beliefs are seen as an individual’s judgment of the reality or falseness of the subject matter (ibid).

Similarly, Buehl and Beck (2015:66) argue that the teachers hold beliefs about different educational matters such as students and teaching. Those beliefs are different in their levels of specificity and some of them are implicit and others are
being said explicitly. A further definition is given by Levin (2015: 48) who describes that “teachers hold many different kinds of beliefs simultaneously, about knowledge (epistemology), belief about their students and about themselves, self-efficacy, self-esteem and agency. They also hold beliefs about their subject matter (content), how to teach (pedagogy) and about the contextual issues around them that have an impact on their teaching”. The definitions above take into account that diversity of the constructs of belief systems, which Buehl and Beck (2015: 79) recommend that a researcher should give careful attention to the types of beliefs and practices that they should investigate and this includes how to situate this type of belief into the belief system and functional relationship between specific beliefs and practices. Pajares (1992) gave an example of how a belief system may consist of:

When clusters of beliefs are organised around an object or situation and predisposed to action, this holistic organisation becomes an attitude. Beliefs may also become values, which house the evaluative, comparative, and judgmental functions of beliefs and replace predisposition with an imperative to action. Beliefs, attitudes, and values form an individual’s belief system (p. 314).

From the discussion above, we understand that teachers’ belief is a complex field of research and that belief systems may consist of belief about different matters related to education. Covering the whole belief system is beyond my scope in this research. Therefore, the focus is on value belief that will be discussed in the next section.

2.3.4 Teachers’ belief about digital technology

Teachers’ beliefs about technology consist of three interrelated, but independent elements: pedagogical beliefs about education (i.e. teaching and learning), self-efficacy beliefs about the use of technology, and beliefs about the perceived value of technology in education (Miller et al. 2003; Park and Ertmer 2007). Those components were found to be the key predictors of teachers’ use of technology in their classrooms (Russell et al. 2003).

Ertmer (2005) used the term ‘pedagogical belief’ in most of her work from 2005-2015. She first used this term in accordance with the term ‘educational belief’ used by Pajares (1992) (mentioned earlier in section 2.3.3). Teachers’ pedagogical beliefs are defined as beliefs about teaching and learning (Ertmer 2005), which consist of traditional (teacher-fronted) beliefs and constructivist (student-centred) beliefs (Park and Ertmer 2007) and belief systems (Richards and Lockhart 1996).
A simple distinction made by some researchers, such as Ertmer, between two types of beliefs held by teachers is that of constructivist and traditional. These different perspectives lead to teachers using the technology in different ways (Becker 2000; Ertmer et al. 2012). Indeed, teachers in a study by Becker (2000), with more constructivist beliefs, used technology more frequently and their students increasingly worked with the technology to support their reflective learning (Ertmer et al. 2012). On the other hand, teachers with traditional beliefs may use technology to present a lecture or to search for information (Ertmer 2005) without encouraging students to use these technologies to achieve the 21st-century goals (e.g., problem solving, collaborative learning, critical thinking) (Ertmer et al. 2015). Although these distinctions appear to be simple, they are influenced by different variables that make it difficult for the teachers to enact their beliefs. More discussion on this will be in section 2.3.7. Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich and Tondeur (2015) argue that:

Rather than focusing on whether teachers have constructivist or traditional beliefs, it might be more productive to examine specific practices (e.g., use of questioning strategies) that are supported by these beliefs…. It might be worthwhile to begin our change efforts by determining what tools teachers currently use in their daily lives (e.g., e-mail, Facebook, Skype) and then helping them to consider ways they can use these tools to accomplish classroom learning goals, particularly those directed toward students’ attainment of 21st-century skills (p.412-413).

Self-efficacy belief is defined as teachers’ beliefs about their abilities to use social media in their teaching (Ertmer et al. 2003). It comprises “beliefs about what one is capable of doing, not about whether one knows what to do” (p. 97). The teachers might express their confidence or lack of confidence verbally or they may appear confident or not while implementing technology in their classrooms. Beliefs about the value of social media denotes, “belief about the importance of technology for teaching” (Russell et al. 2003: 303) and the extent to which a teacher values a particular tool in their teaching (ibid).

Therefore, teachers’ beliefs about the role of technologies for teaching and learning may affect their decisions to either implement them into their classrooms or to minimise their use and efforts to use them effectively (Hermans et al. 2008; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich 2010). This shows how teachers’ value beliefs are important because they are considered as the background of their actions. In fact, it has been suggested that value belief is a stronger predictor of technology use than self-efficacy belief (Vongkulluksn et al. 2018).
Teachers’ belief regarding social media in higher education

Recent research concerning social media in higher education were more related to students’ perspectives or their learning (Hartshorne and Ajjan 2009). Investigating academics’ beliefs and attitudes and their actual use of social media in higher education is still limited. In the higher education sector, social media has been widely used by academics to communicate with each other, to spread their knowledge and to facilitate their teaching. In a large survey project on the Italian higher education system, Manca and Ranieri (2016a; 2016b) distributed questionnaires to a large population of academic staff (N=6139) to investigate whether they use social media or not, and if so for what purpose. It was found that academics in higher education primarily use social media for their personal and professional use (e.g., to communicate with other scholars in their field or for their research) than using them for their teaching. The findings are consistent with other studies that found academic staff preferred to use social media to connect professionally with their colleagues and to disseminate their knowledge, but they are reluctant to use them for teaching practices (Brown 2012; Manca and Ranieri 2016a). This may be related to the fact that teachers or academics in higher sector education value research more than teaching (Manca and Ranieri 2016b).

Manca and Ranieri (2016a; 2016b) investigated the relationship between academics’ use of social media and their socio-demographic variables. In their thorough analysis, they found that younger academics are using social media for personal, professional and teaching purposes more than senior staff. They argue that the reason for this is younger scholars use these tools for their personal use, thus they are more familiar with their potential application than their older colleagues. Another reason they suggest for younger academics using social media is to enhance their reputation over their older counterparts, who already maintain their position in the field. A further surprising result from this study is related to the number of years in teaching. It was found that academics with more teaching experience use different tools in their personal, professional and teaching practice. For example, academics with 10 to 20 years of teaching experience use Facebook in their teaching more than colleagues who have less than 5 years’ experience. Manca and Ranieri (2016a; 2016b) suggest that the reason for that might be that the seniors are more apprehensive to apply and
use new approaches because of their high number of years in teaching. Another reason they suggest is that seniors may have more time to work on their teaching and develop their approach compared to their younger counterparts, whose effort is focused more towards research in order to establish their position in the research world. It was also found that scholars in the discipline of arts and humanities as well as social sciences are more enthusiastic about using social media than scholars in the faculty of science such as mathematics, and natural science. However, they also found that university staff personal use of social media like communicating with friends or their professional use, such as disseminating their knowledge and research, are not considered predictive factors for their use in teaching. Academics tend to use the tools that are easy to adapt in their classroom, such as Podcasts, blogs and YouTube, and they argue that academics in general place greater value on their research and this then affects use of social media in their teaching.

Prior experiences of academics in the use of e-learning system platforms made them more inclined to use social media for these three purposes: personal, professional and teaching. However, they tend to use the tools that are easily adapted (e.g., SlideShare and Podcasts) to their traditional lecturing practices. Manca and Ranieri (2016a; 2016b) called for more research on why academics are resistant to the use of social media in teaching and argue that the tools of social media in teaching are important components of scholarship.

2.3.5 Belief and knowledge

The distinction between teachers’ beliefs and knowledge has been an on-going area of debate; researchers have found this matter problematic. Pajares (1992) claims that the confusion in the creation of different psychological constructs (e.g., attitude, perceptions, perspectives, conceptions, ideology, personal theories, opinions, values etc.) is attributed to the lack of apparent distinction between belief and knowledge. Borg (2003) in his review used the term ‘cognition’ to refer to what the teachers know, believe and think (and also do), as he believes that these constructs represent the complexity of the teacher’s mental life. Similarly, ‘knowledge’ was referred to as one of the constructs of the teachers mental life (Freeman 2002). Those two terms (belief and knowledge) have been described as “inextricably intertwined” (Pajares 1992: 325) and overlapping constructs (Murphy and Mason 2006). Furthermore, Woods (1996) proposed the idea of BAK (belief, assumptions, and knowledge) in
which he sees those terms as interrelated propositions. On the other hand, Buehl and Beck (2015) argue that belief is distinct from knowledge as belief is subjective whereas knowledge can be externally verified; that is, we can test what people know. From the above arguments, it is believed that although knowledge and belief are related in one way or another, they are in fact distinct terms as belief refers to the value of something, while knowledge is what a person knows about specific matter as Buehl and Beck (2015) stated; that knowledge can be tested in comparison to belief, which is more subjective. Knowledge and belief are related in the way that their knowledge of specific matters can contribute to the formation of belief. So, we can say that the teacher’s knowledge can shape teachers’ current belief.

2.3.6 Belief and cultural history

Arguments have been made proposing that beliefs that are established as a part of learners’ early learning experiences are hard to change. For instance, according to the synthesis of findings on belief done by Pajares (1992: 324), beliefs that are formed early in life are self-perpetuating and persistent, even against contradictions caused by different reasons such as time, schooling or experiences. However, those beliefs that are formed later in life are the most vulnerable to change (ibid). Teachers early lived experiences as learners are argued to have a strong influence on the way they teach (Bailey et al. 1996). This happens when the teacher’s experiences establish their belief and knowledge about language learning and these cognitions form the basis of their initial understandings of language teaching during the teacher education programme or schooling. The influence of these initial conceptualisations might continue throughout their professional lives (Borg 2003). This is called by Lortie (1975) “apprenticeship of observation” (p. 65); which refers to learners who have watched teachers for numerous hours and they have internalised many of their teachers’ behaviours.

Another matter related to teachers’ cultural history and its impact on teachers’ beliefs is teacher education. The relationship between teacher education and belief was seen as not significant (Kagan 1992). On the other hand, many researchers concluded that teacher education programmes did have impacts on teachers’ beliefs (Borg 2003). With regard to technology use, teacher professional development can facilitate and enable changes in teachers’ pedagogical beliefs (Ertmer et al. 2015). However, the new practices would not necessarily change beliefs, but by adopting new practices
associated beliefs might subsequently start to change (Levin 2015). Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich and Tondeur (2015: 412) argue that professional development programmes can have an impact on changing teachers’ practices when the focus is on developing small but meaningful aspects of practices. Observing other teachers who have successfully implemented technology helps the novice teacher to recognise effective technology use and they subsequently adopt these new practices. Moreover, sharing ideas with other teachers may also help to effectively change their practices. Teacher practices are defined through the interaction between their beliefs and the situational factors both inside and outside the classroom (Borg 2006). To better understand language teaching and teachers, it is beneficial to study teacher beliefs about digital technology with close attention to what happens in the classroom (Borg 2003).

Ertmer (2005) suggested strategies to promote changes in beliefs about teaching and learning in general, and about technology in particular. These strategies are: personal experiences, vicarious experiences, and socio-cultural influences.

A personal experiences strategy implies introducing teachers to simple uses of technology to initiate the adoption process and this will be a more productive path towards changing teachers’ practice. Those instructional changes will gradually replace the teachers’ beliefs with more relevant ones. This strategy comprises questioning one’s own practice and the practices of others, making assumptions explicit and using classrooms as sites for inquiry (Ertmer 2005: 33).

Vicarious experiences: observing successful people’s practices, which in turn increase the observer’s confidence to generate the same behaviour (ibid).

Socio-cultural influences: This strategy emphasises the importance of a professional learning community for teachers to change their practices and beliefs as they are discussing and exchanging ideas, creating new materials and developing new strategies for the deployment of their ideas. It might also include changes to infrastructure that come about as a result of the influences of the teacher community on other parts of the institution.

Ertmer (2005) also argues that these strategies should be considered for effectively initiating and supporting teachers’ use of technology. Moreover, teachers’ beliefs
about the value of technology are likely to change when they participate and socialise with their peers. This will make them think differently about technology use (ibid).

2.3.7 Belief and practice

The relationship between teachers’ belief and practices is a matter of debate. Many researchers have investigated to find whether teachers’ practices are aligned with their stated beliefs (Buehl and Beck 2015). Researchers have looked at teachers’ beliefs through the use of interviews, surveys and written reflections subsequently examining them in relation to the observed practices, and various studies concluded that teachers’ belief influences their classroom practices and has a strong influence on teachers’ thinking and behaviour (Pajares 1992; Ashton 2015). Pajares (1992) argued that teacher belief should precede individual behaviour. On the other hand, Gusky (1986) suggested that changes that could happen to teachers’ behaviour precedes their changes in belief, if the behaviour is successful.

Researchers have found that teachers’ beliefs were formed through engaging in specific classroom practices (Buehl and Beck 2015). Richardson (1996) argued that the changes to teachers’ practices happen with the interactions between belief and behaviours. On the contrary, other researchers claim that the there is no relationship between belief and practice (Ashton 2015).

In fact, the relationship between belief and practice is not an easy matter. It is complex because one thing is influencing the other (Richardson 1996) and “the strength of this relationship may vary across individuals and contexts as well as the type of beliefs and practices being assessed” (Buehl and Beck 2015: 70). Buehl and Beck (2015: 72) suggested that the broader context might obscure the relationship between belief and practice. They mentioned that the beliefs that are central to their practices inside the classroom, for example belief that shapes their lesson planning, are easily identified compared to the ones that are implicitly used to interpret new information.

Fives and Buehl (2012) identified several internal and external factors that affect the teachers’ beliefs and whether they act on their beliefs or not; these included the culture, the parents and students’ reactions, and the policy. They emphasised the role of belief about knowledge, their perceived self-efficacy and identity. Moreover, they recommended that there is need to investigate the internal and external influences
together to identify the most powerful influences. Consequently, this helps to create a hierarchy of support and challenges that are needed to assist the teachers’ ability to enact their beliefs.

In Buehl and Beck’s (2015) comprehensive review on the topic of the relationship between teachers’ belief and practices, they identified in addition to other previous reviews, i.e. Five and Buehl (2012), internal and external factors that support or hinder teachers’ enacting their beliefs. With regard to the internal factors, Buehl and Beck (2015: 75) argued that the different aspects of the teacher’s belief system may either facilitate or hinder the enactment of their beliefs into practice. Additionally, teachers need to have the necessary knowledge about content to enact their beliefs. Teachers’ self-awareness and their engagement in self-reflection are another internal factor that is related to the alignment between teachers’ belief and practices. Ertmer et al. (2012) put great emphasis on the internal factors that affect teachers enacting their beliefs. Pedagogical beliefs are considered one of the strongest predictors of teachers’ use of technology (Miranda and Russell 2012; Ertmer et al. 2015). As Pajares (1992) also argues, belief is the best indicator for decision making throughout a person’s life.

Buehl and Beck (2015) mention the external factors, which could be facilitators or impediments to teachers enacting their beliefs in practice, and they categorise them by various levels, classroom-context factors (e.g., student ability, student attitudes, classroom management and class size), school-context factors (e.g., administration, parental support, colleagues, available resources), and national-, state-, and district-level factors (e.g., education policies, curricular standards).

Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich and Tondeur (2015: 404) claim that due to the potential changes in the nature of instruction caused by the use of digital technologies as well as the difficulties in adopting new tools and pedagogies, digital technologies “provide a critical context for the investigation of the relationship between teachers; beliefs and classroom practice”. Indeed, they stated that that there are factors that have a direct and indirect impact on teachers to enact their pedagogical beliefs, and these are teacher-related (e.g., knowledge, confidence), school-related (e.g., ICT policies) and culturally and societally-related (e.g., parental expectations).
Furthermore, Pajares (1992) argued that the inconsistencies between teacher belief and practices are due to the difficulty in assessing beliefs. In other words, researchers need to focus more on specific beliefs and practices rather than making it more general (e.g., constructivist) (Ertmer et al. 2015). Another reason for the inconsistency between belief and practice is argued by Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, Sendurur, and Sendurur (2012) to be due to the cultural context. It has been found that the cultural context is one of the most powerful factors that have an impact on teachers’ decisions (Hennessy et al. 2005).

Having discussed the internal and external factors that affect the enactment of teachers’ belief, and following the recommendations of Lim and Chai (2008) and Buehl and Beck (2015) for making changes to the traditional teaching practices, external factors must be also be addressed:

This is not to say that teachers’ beliefs and practices cannot be changed until there are broad changes in culture and national policies. Instead, it is a caution that for more local changes to be effective, they must take the broader context into account (Buehl & Beck 2015:80)

Researchers need to consider the different (internal and external) factors when examining the relationship between belief and practices (ibid). Ashton (2015) argued that more research about the relationship between teachers’ belief and practice is needed.

2.4 The interplay between the internal and external factors

Having discussed the external and internal factors of digital technology implementation in the classroom, we can see that the interplay between those different factors is crucial. Based on views such as Freeman (2002) who argued that the context had become a fundamental aspect in the field of teacher education, the view of the context has changed from a place where teachers’ behaviours can be explained into a more complex view where their practices are “situated in personal and institutional histories and seen as interactive (or dialogical) with others students, parents and community members, and fellow teachers” (Freeman 2002:12). In addition, Hennessy, Ruthven and Brindley (2005) considered the cultural context one of the most powerful factors to have an impact on teachers’ decisions. Similarly, Buehl and Beck (2015) claim that the broader context has an impact on the relationship between belief and practice. Borg (2003; 2006) argues that teachers’
practices are shaped by many interrelating and often conflicting factors and he points out that to study teacher’s practices one should take into consideration the social, psychological and environmental factors of the classroom and the institution. Ertmer (1999: 53) meanwhile states that:

we should not try to eliminate one first-order barrier before addressing another, or to eliminate all first- (or second-) order barriers prior to addressing barriers at the next level. Because of continual interactions between barriers, it may be more effective to address first- and second-order barriers simultaneously, or at least recursively, as they fluctuate in relative strength throughout the integration process”.

Together these arguments seem to suggest that we need a more encompassing theory to explore the implementation of social media in this particular context. Therefore, cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) might prove useful as a way to look at the broader picture of technology use in a specific context.

2.5 Summary

It can be seen that the majority of literature on teachers’ use of technology and beliefs is largely drawn from the Western perspective and there is limited research on this from the Arabic perspective. Attia's (2011) research on teacher cognition and the use of technology is one of the few studies in the Arabic context. In her thorough cross-case analysis of three teachers of Arabic as a second language, she found that teachers’ cognitions are shaped by their prior experiences and influenced by the interactions with other peers, parents and social relations. Their ideas of teaching and learning that were established when they were students are exhibited in their use of technology in the classroom. Moreover, she found that there is close relationship between teachers’ cognition and their classroom practices. She argued that the context has a significant role in shaping teachers’ cognition and practices. Therefore, the research on teacher cognition sees teacher knowledge of teaching being revealed through their prior experiences, their interactions with students, peers or administrators, thus “the processes of learning to teach are socially negotiated” (Johnson 2009: 10). Teacher cognition requires teachers to have knowledge and belief about themselves, about the content to be taught, about the students and also the contexts where they are working (ibid).

Previous research has examined teachers’ cognition and belief and focused on teachers’ mental lives (Woods 1996; Freeman 2002; Borg 2003), while other
scholars have looked at teacher learning from a sociocultural perspective (Johnson 2009; Johnson and Golombek 2011). Moreover, teachers’ beliefs have been analysed from a variety of perspectives in language teaching in relation to many different aspects of teachers’ work (Birello 2012: 89). However, no research has been found to look at English language teachers’ beliefs regarding technology from the perspective of CHAT. This research therefore aims to fill this gap and conceptualise teachers’ beliefs as a part of the cultural history of the activity system. This perspective is taken because it appears to enable a more effective interpretative framework, and because CHAT specifically includes aspects of the context within its framework.

Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that my research is not to investigate change in teachers’ beliefs per se because this kind of investigation requires longitudinal research to follow the teacher for an extended period of time to see how their beliefs have developed and changed (Levin 2015). Change in teacher beliefs is complex and it needs a long-term process (Ashton 2015), which was impossible for me to do as I had limited time to conduct my research. In fact, my research aims to investigate how these EFL novice teachers use social media in their classroom and explore how they negotiate the context while implementing the digital technology, and what kind of transformation can happen as a result of introducing social media in this particular context. Therefore, in the pages that follow I will look at teachers’ belief from another perspective, through the lens of cultural-historical activity theory, and argue that teacher beliefs need to be viewed as part of the teacher’s cultural history. I will therefore discuss in the following sections ‘why’ I situate my research within the CHAT perspectives. I will discuss the ‘how’ in the methodology chapter.

The research studies that were found to investigate teachers’ perspectives on social media in higher education are mostly quantitative in nature, where surveys have been distributed among the staff in higher education. Those survey research studies were conducted in Western contexts such as the USA (Ajjan and Hartshorne 2008; Moran et al. 2012; Seaman and Tinti-kane 2013), UK (Brown 2012) and Italy (Manca and Ranieri 2016a; Manca and Ranieri 2016b). My research aims to fill this gap and introduce social media in a new context not explored so far in the literature and evaluate how these technologies that were built in a different context can be used in a different culture; in this case, in the context of Saudi Arabia. To add more critically
to the research and investigate the challenges (Selwyn and Stirling 2016), this study will use CHAT as interpretive framework.

This chapter has so far covered the literature regarding three main themes. The first theme discussed English language education in Saudi Arabia. The second theme discussed the mediating artefact in this study, namely here social media, and provided an overview of its history, its benefits and its implementation barriers. The last themes discussed the role of teachers’ cultural history in digital technology implementation.
3  Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

3.1  Introduction

CHAT is based on a theoretical concept that allows us to understand the relationship between the human mind and what an individual does (how an individual acts) (Nardi 1996). The changes that happen in an individual’s consciousness or belief structures are directly associated with the social and material conditions that a person finds themselves in (ibid). Thus, the interplay between the internal (which includes teachers’ beliefs) and the social and material conditions is crucial, as Borg (2003) argued that teachers’ practices are shaped by many interrelating and often conflicting factors, and belief has a powerful impact. Therefore, CHAT is appropriate for my research as it will help in explicating the relationship between the cultural history of the teachers (which includes beliefs) and the cultural and institutional situation of the context in which their development occurred; thereby capturing the situated activity system as a whole (Johnson and Golombek 2011).

In this research I prefer to use the term ‘cultural-historical activity theory’ instead of activity theory because I support the argument made by Cole (1996) that cultural history as well as activity are significant, as he argued that “to understand behaviour one must study the history of behaviour” (p. 335). In fact, Cole preferred CHAT over sociocultural theory to refer to his approach in studying culture in human development (Cole 2005) (more discussion on this will follow later in the chapter).

The lens of CHAT has been applied previously by many scholars in education (Ryder and Yamagata-Lynch 2014; Gedera and Williams 2016) including childhood education (Fleer and Oers 2018), maths education (Brown et al. 2016; Williams 2016) and teachers’ education (Yang 2015; Golombek 2015; Wei 2017), for instance, to explain teachers’ practices (Motteram 2014) and to find inner contradictions within teachers’ professional development (Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild 2009). Moreover, CHAT has been used quite extensively in discussions of technology in education (Mwanza 2002; Blin 2004; Mwanza and Engeström 2005), Human computer interaction (HCI) (Nardi 1996) and in understanding teachers’ approaches to technology (Kahveci et al. 2008; Karasavvidis 2009). The use of CHAT in language in higher education is an under-researched area in the context of Saudi Arabia.
In this chapter, I will outline the interpretative framework of this study. First, I will provide a definition of CHAT followed by a discussion of its history. Secondly, I will describe the three generations of CHAT. After that, I will consider the main principles of CHAT that were drawn upon in this study; namely cultural history, contradictions, agency, boundary crossing, community, expansive learning and transformation.

3.2 Definition

Activity theory or cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) (Cole and Engeström 1993) has been widely used around the world in different disciplines. This theory is defined as “a philosophical and cross-disciplinary framework for studying different forms of human practices as development processes, with individual and social levels interlinked at the same time” (Kuutti 1996: 25). Although CHAT has been considered as a theoretical framework, for many scholars it is an analytical framework and is only effective in particular research contexts. Indeed, Johnson and Golombek (2011: 9) explain that CHAT is “an analytical framework (rather than a theory *per se*) that maps the social influences and relationships involved in networks of human activity”. In addition, Roth and Lee (2007: 188) point out that CHAT has been shown to be “fruitful for both analysing data recorded in real classrooms and designing change when trouble and contradictions become evident in these cultural settings”. More recently, Rantavuori et al. (2016) argue that CHAT should be considered as a method for systematic empirical analysis. The use of CHAT also enables the researcher to recognise how different components of the activity system affect each other directly or indirectly and, at the same time, captures the situated activity system as a whole (Johnson and Golombek 2011). Here, I am using CHAT as an interpretive framework because this theory has informed my understanding before conducting the study, and I subsequently used its principles to interpret my collected data.

3.3 The early history of CHAT

The theoretical roots of CHAT can be traced back to three historical origins Hegel, Marx and Vygotsky (Engeström 1999a). The very basic concept of CHAT is founded on Karl Marx’s notion of productive practices in which this practice transforms the individual and at the same time the individual transforms his world (Ploettner and
CHAT was developed by Vygotsky and his followers, Leont’ev and Luria, who were trying to develop a cultural psychology for the Soviet age (Cole 1996; Engeström 1999a).

Based on the original ideas of Vygotsky, his followers subsequently interpreted his work and developed CHAT into different concepts. The notion of the ‘Vygotsky project’ was first named by Stetsenko and Arievitch (2010) to refer to the seminal work of Vygotsky from which many concepts were formed. Fleer (2016) in her writing also used the term ‘Vygotsky project’ to argue that it best illustrates how researchers and scholars in education use a variety of concepts and methodological tools from across different theories such as activity theory, CHAT, cultural-historical theory and sociocultural theory (ibid). However, this term by Fleer neglects the role of other scholars such as Hegel, Marx, Leont’ev, Luria, Cole and Engeström. We can say that sociocultural theory can be called Vygotsky’s project because this theory is based on Vygotsky’s concept of mediation. As Cole (2010) suggested, scholars who followed the work of Vygotsky focused on mediated action as the unit of analysis while in CHAT, for instance, the unit of analysis is the entire activity system (Engeström 1999a).

Therefore, we can also say that CHAT and sociocultural theory have the same origins and they are related to learning and development in social settings (Postholm 2015). In fact, CHAT is considered a member of the broader family of sociocultural theory (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016). Nonetheless, sociocultural perspectives emphasise the importance of mediated action while CHAT considers, besides the artefacts mediated action, history and culture, which are important factors in understanding learning and development (Postholm 2015). In the next section, I will present the original ideas of both sociocultural theory and CHAT to understand the relationship between those two perspectives.

### 3.3.1 Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural perspectives that led to the development of CHAT started with the work of the Russian psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky when he began to formulate psychology in the context of the new soviet reality (1978, 1986: 10). It was psychology in general that he criticised as having lost its cultural underpinning, having become more ‘scientific’ through the latter part of the 19th century (Cole
1996). He saw the separation of internal mental processes from activity in the world as problematic and wanted to bring these two elements together. Moreover, criticisms also came from Cole (1996) who argued that psychology saw culture and mind as separate variables “culture is stimulus”, the “independent variable” and mind the “dependent variable” “response” (p. 327). Building on Vygotsky, Cole called for a second psychology and proposed cultural psychology, which treats culture and mind as inseparable entities. In his writing, he used cultural historical approaches to study learning and development (Cole and Engeström 1993; Cole 1996, 1999, 2005, 2010).

Vygotsky’s (1978) original ideas of sociocultural theory were mainly related to children’s cognitive development whereby he argued that society and culture have a substantial role in promoting the child’s cognitive development. Vygotsky proposed an alternative view of the processes of internalisation, which occurs when children’s interaction with others stimulates internal developmental processes and once these processes are internalised, they only then become a part of individual cognitive development. Therefore, children are in the process of developing and thus their development can be observed and monitored (Motteram et al. 2013). For example, when a child wants to reach for a toy, he/she might first point at that toy and try to imitate the sounds that his/her parents made when he/she was trying to reach for it. After some time, these sounds become words and then eventually, full, complex sentences will be used by the child to declare that he/she wants that toy, without the need to point at it (Motteram et al. 2013). However, the key argument here is that all learning is mediated through semiotic and physical tools. What is essentially being said in sociocultural theory is that our knowledge of the world is constructed by our understandings of what we find in it and through our engagement with the world, with artefacts and with others. This process of knowledge construction is mediated by a number of objects, the primary tool being language. We also make use of other existing cultural tools such as other people’s knowledge. So, someone tells us that an object is a tree, or we use a book to find that specific kind of tree. Vygotsky (1978) states:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary
attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals (p. 57).

Here, Vygotsky was talking about early child development, so our example above extrapolates from that to an older child who is using language in different forms, both spoken and written, and thus different cultural tools. This perspective by Vygotsky overcame the dichotomous notion that human is whether controlled externally or internally, which was found in social sciences and psychology (Engeström 1999a)

Johnson (2009) has taken Vygotsky’s idea of internalisation and applied it to teachers’ learning, which can be understood at both the social and individual levels. When they first interact and socialise with other teachers who have the same interests and share the same goals, then a teacher may reconceptualise and restructure her own activities when she encounters new ideas. In her initial attempt to explore sociocultural perspectives for second language teacher education, Johnson (2009) provides us with a comprehensive overview of the epistemological underpinnings of the sociocultural perspective on human learning, and especially what this theory offers for second language teacher education. She stated, “the epistemological stance of a sociocultural perspective defines human learning as a dynamic social activity that is situated in physical and social contexts, and is distributed across persons, tools and activities” (p. 1). Sociocultural theory has been used by scholars such as Warschauer (2005) and Lantolf (2000) in the second language acquisition field, and in second language teacher education by Johnson (2009), and Johnson and Golombek (2011). The following section will provide an overview of the development of CHAT throughout history.

3.4 The three generations of CHAT

In the literature in general and especially in the work of Engeström (2001), it is argued that CHAT has three generations with Vygotsky’s idea of mediated activity being the first. The work of his followers Leont’ev and Luria constitute the second generation and Engeström subsequently proposed a third generation of CHAT in which he argues that the world we live in is too complex to be understood by the second generation of the theory (Engeström 2001). In the following sections, I will present discussion on the three generations of CHAT. The first is artefact-mediated action (Cole 1996: 118), which is essentially taken from the Russian psychologist
Vyogtsky’s concept of mediation. Next, I will talk about the concept of collective activity that was developed according to the original ideas of mediation. Finally, I will discuss the third generation of activity theory.

3.4.1 Artefact-mediated action

As previously discussed, Vygotsky proposed the concept of mediation (Vygotsky 1978; 1986) in which the dialectical relationship between the subject (the individual) and the object (the objective of the action) or the environment (Cole 1996) is not simply a relationship between stimulus and response. Each generation interacts with the cultural tools that it encounters, some of which it finds useful and others it needs to modify. According to Vygotsky, these always mediate the subject’s engagement with the object. Each generation adapts existing and develops a range of new cultural tools that it passes on to the next generation. Those cultural tools can act as a constraint besides a mediating role (Cole 1999).

What is more, Cole (1996) uses the term ‘artefacts’ instead of Vygotsky’ term ‘tools’ and he defines them as “the fundamental constituents of culture” (p. 144). Artefacts are seen as a product of the history of human beings in which it is considered as a concrete object “material” as well as conceptual “ideal” (Cole 1996: 117-118).

Artefacts "are ideal in that their material form has been shaped by their participation in the interactions of which they were previously a part and which they mediate in the present” (ibid: 117). Artefacts should not be only interpreted as physical objects, which are shaped and used for a reason (ibid). Artefacts are also conceptual as human being can use their previous experiences and knowledge to engage with the object. Artefacts can also be semiotic systems like language. Cole (1996: 118) proposed that this definition of artefacts can contribute to the longstanding debate of where culture should be, “should it be located external to the individual, as the product of prior human activity, or should it be located internally, as a pool of knowledge and belief?”

Vygotsky (1978) argued that the human (the subject) controls his/her own behaviour (learning) by using and forming artefacts. Human learning occurs when individuals try to do something and are supported in this process by mediating artefacts/tools. Vygotsky’s concept of mediation is considered the first generation of CHAT (Engeström 2001). This notion has been visualised as a simple triangle, which shows
the three basic elements of subject, object and mediating artefact (Engeström 1987, 2009) (See Figure 3-1). Object-oriented actions have become essential for understanding human psychological development (Engeström 2009). However, the unit of analysis for the first generation of activity theory was mainly focused on the individual, and this was considered a limitation of the theory (ibid). Moreover, the artefacts and actions of the human do not exist in isolation but rather are intertwined with each other and also with the social world around them (Cole 1996).

![Figure 3-1: (a) Vygotsky's model of mediated action and (b) its common reformulation. Adapted from Engeström (2009: 54)](image)

3.4.2 The concept of collective activity

The limitation of individuality of the first generation of CHAT was overcome by Vygotsky’s colleague Leont’ev (1978), when he extended Vygotsky’s idea of mediation and developed the concept of the activity, which is initiated by a motive or an object. It is therefore clear that Leont’ev (1978) proposed the notion of activity (collective activity) as a theoretical concept (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016). Vygotsky looked at children’s development whereas Leont’ev and other members of the research group, that Vygotsky had been a part of before his death, worked with adults. The activity system that Leont’ev developed is composed of community and the actions it takes to obtain the object (See Figure 3-2). Leont'ev (1981: 210-213) moved from individual action to collective activity in his famous example of the “primeval collective hunt”. He explained how individual activity consists of different elements surrounding the basic relationship between the subject and the object (Engeström 2001; Engeström 2009; Motteram 2013; Gedera 2016). Collective action, which is the feature of the activity, provides opportunities for the participants to work towards achieving an outcome that an individual is incapable of doing alone (Roth and Lee, 2007). This concept of collective activity was considered as the second generation of CHAT. The work of Leont’ev was recognised and applied in
classroom learning (Roth and Lee, 2007) and in different fields (e.g., linguistics; (Lantolf and Thorne 2006)).

![Activity system model](image)

Figure 3-2: Activity system model. Adapted from Engeström (1987: 87)

3.4.3 CHAT as the latest generation

Further developing Leont’ev’s idea of the activity and Vygotsky’s original notion of mediation, Engeström (1987) developed the theory to include a broader sociocultural environment. He argued that the contemporary world had become too complex to be explained by the second generation of activity theory. Engeström (2001; 2009); indeed is the one who specified that activity theory has three generations and his theoretical development (CHAT) is considered the latest generation of the theory. The third generation is represented by the joint activity systems in which the minimum unit of analysis is two interacting activity systems, and this network of those activity systems in its totality “constitutes human society” (Roth and Lee 2007: 200). When dealing with those networks of activity systems, researchers made it their priority to uncover the roles of multiple perspectives, dialogue and issues of power (ibid). The third generation of activity theory was introduced to meet the challenges regarding the diversity and dialogue between different traditions and perspectives, and these challenges appeared when the model became international (Engeström 2009). It was developed to “understand dialogue, multiple perspectives, and networks of interacting activity systems” (ibid: 55). In the latest generation, the
object moved from being raw material to becoming a collective meaningful object formed by the activity system (ibid).

Engeström (2009) started to represent this as a triangle showing the relationship between different parts. Those parts represent the elements of the activity system: the object, subject, mediating artefacts, rules, community, and division of labour (See Figure 3-3). Engeström and his colleagues (1999: 9) argue that the internal tensions and contradictions of these elements are the motivating force of the development – what he terms ‘expansive learning’. He explains that this model moves from only analysing the actions of the individual to a broader analysis of the activity context and back again. Moreover, he contends that actions, even well-planned ones, are likely to involve unexpected innovations, failures or disruptions and that this model helps in illuminating the underlying contradictions that bring on these failures and disruptions. Although the triangular model may look static, the activity is in fact dynamic. It is argued that the use of this model is only for the sake of clarity (Kuutti 1996). Engeström (2009: 56-57) maintained that there are five principles that constitute the current shape of the activity system: goal-oriented individual and group actions; the community of multiple voicedness; historicity, where there is a need to study the local history of the activity; contradictions; and lastly, this leads to expansive transformation. The historical angle and contradictions are important differences from the earlier theory.

![Figure 3-3](image-url)  
*Figure 3-3: Third generation of activity theory presented by two interacting activity systems. Adapted from Engeström (2009: 56)*
3.5 **CHAT principles within the study**

The work of Leont’ev on the concept of activity had a great influence on scholars such as Michael Cole, the American Psychologist, and Yrjö Engeström who both suggested the term ‘cultural-historical activity theory’ instead of activity theory (Cole and Engeström 1993) as this term best reflects “the structure and development of human psychological processes [that] emerge through culturally mediated, historically developing, practical activity. Each term in this formulation is tightly interconnected with, and in some sense implies, the others” (Cole 1996: 108). In his research, Cole (Cole 1996; Cole 2010; Cole and Packer 2016) discussed the theoretical principles underlying the perspective of CHAT, which will be summarised in the following paragraphs:

The first principle is the role of mediating artefact, which was discussed previously in section 3.4.1. This principle emphasises that “human psychological processes emerged simultaneously with a new form of behaviour in which humans modified material objects as a means of regulating their interactions with the world and one another” (Cole 1996: 108). The second principle is the centrality of culture in human life (Cole 2010: 360) as culture composed of material and ideal artefacts are accumulated over a history (short or long) of a particular group of people (ibid).

The third principle is the role of history, as humans do not only use and modify tools but also they rediscover existing tools that were created by the previous generations (Cole 1996). This means that the current humans are living this way because of what has been accomplished through the activities of the previous generations (ibid). Cole refers to this process as “enculturation” (Cole 1996: 109) and also sees culture as “a medium of human development… the history in the present” (ibid: 110). For Engeström (1999a), emphasis rests with the need to analyse the historical development that leads to “the differences in cognition across cultures, social groups and domains of practice” (pp. 25-26). Therefore, the activity system takes shape and is transformed over lengthy periods of time. The challenges that happen are only understood when we are able to understand our own history: “History itself needs to be studied as local history of the activity and its objects, and as history of the theoretical ideas and tools that have shaped the activity” (Engeström 2001: 137-138).
The fourth principle in a CHAT perspective is the role of the activity. The process of human psychology is situated in the human’s practical activities on a daily basis (Cole 1996, 2010). The fifth principle is the role of the social in children’s psychological functions. To make a relation with outside world, children need adults first to introduce them to the world and then they internalise that into a new form of psychological processes (Cole 2010). This idea of internalisation also applies to the adult’s psychological functions (Johnson 2009).

Having discussed these principles, we can say CHAT is valuable in exploring as well as understanding the implementation of social media in women’s language education in Saudi Arabia, which also helps in investigating the novice teachers’ cultural history, their practices of using social media as well as exploring the context. As Kuutti (1996) argued, CHAT highlights the point at which the context for individual actions must be included in the basic unit of analysis – the activity. Thus, the focus on the entire activity system (the community of teachers implementing social media) is the unit of analysis (Engeström 2001).

This activity system is illustrated in the thread metaphor employed by Roth and Lee (2007) where the dialectical relations are within the unit of analysis, as they suggest “any part that one might heuristically isolate within a unit presupposes all other parts; a unit can be analysed in terms of component parts, but none of these parts can be understood or theorised apart from the others that contribute to defining it” (p. 196). In their metaphor, the thread can be seen as one form but in reality it is composed of two or more intertwined strands. If we take a closer look at the strands we can see the strands are also composed of short fibres. Therefore, the thread presupposes strands and the strand presuppose fibres and without the strands and the fibres, the thread would not exist. Similarly, Cole (1996; 1999) used the metaphor of rope to describe the meaning of context as “a process of weaving together” (Cole 1996: 135), which means “a qualitative relation between a minimum of two analytical entities (threads)” (ibid: 135).

The unit of analysis in my research is like a thread that presupposes different parts that comprise the activity system of social media introduction into the University, and without these different parts the activity would not exist, or perhaps it would not be well explained. The implementation of social media would not happen without the
English teachers and the beliefs and attitudes they bring to the activity; indeed it would not happen without the community of teachers, the researcher, the Head of the English Department, the students and their roles within the activity. All these are encompassed by the wider context of Saudi society, the culture, and the fact that the participants are all women. Johnson (2009: 2) argued:

How an individual learns something, what is learned, and how it is used will depend on the sum of the individual’s prior experiences, the sociocultural contexts in which the learning takes place and what the individual wants, needs and/or is expected to do with that knowledge.

She emphasised that:

The researchers could no longer ignore the fact that teachers’ prior experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in, and most importantly, the contexts within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do (p. 9).

The following sections will present in more detail the principles of CHAT that were drawn upon in this research to interpret the findings of this study.

3.5.1 The role of human cultural history within the activity system

From the discussion above about the role of culture and history in human development, it can be argued that it is important to study the cultural history of the subject of the activity system to understand the activity as a whole in terms of their practices as well. Through the lens of CHAT, teachers’ beliefs can be explained, as they are part of their cultural history. As Cole argued:

Only a culture-using human being can “reach into”, the cultural past, project it into the future, and then “carry” that (purely conceptual) future “back” into the present in the shape of beliefs which then constrain and organise the present sociocultural environment of the newcomer (Cole 1999: 90).

Therefore, teachers’ beliefs here can be seen as a process of mediating their practices through their experiences, as Cole (1996) suggested, “Culture [is] a system of artefacts and mind [is] a process of mediating behaviour through artefacts” (p. 143). The concept of re-mediation was a useful lens to understand the changes that happen to the cultural history of the subject as human development is “a process of re-mediation [and thus] mediating the behaviour of the group and each individual within it in a qualitative new way” (Cole 1996: 285). As a result, the teachers in the activity system “are not blank slates” (ibid: 285) at the start of the their
implementation, but their practices were mediated by their experiences and other cultural tools and “embodied social rules at the start” (ibid: 285).

Thus, CHAT is useful in finding how beliefs are shaped by the sociocultural context and also how the sociocultural context is shaped by beliefs. The sociocultural settings shape mental functioning and this happens through using cultural tools or artefacts (Cole 1996). This mediation “provides the formulation of how this shaping occurs” (ibid; 333). Cole (1996) argued that having the whole activity system as the unit of analysis will help in understanding how the cultural tools occur and have their impact. So it is crucial to study not only “cognitive tasks in context but also… the institutional settings of those activities-in-context… This level of analysis is important as a site where large-scale factors such as social class articulate with individual experience” (Cole 1996: 340).

Therefore, I found the concept of cultural history useful to interpret my data and look at how the teachers developed over time as “human development is constituted in culture” (Cole 1999: 77-78). Because when the subjects of the activity were introduced to social media implementation, they started to bring their cultural history to the current activity system, as Cole suggested “Culture comes into being wherever people engage in joint activity over a period of time” (Cole 1996: 301). Consequently, they interpreted the use of social media based on their experiences (Cole 1999). Cultural history comes in the shape of beliefs that mediates behaviour through cultural tools and tools can either mediate or constrain (Cole 1996). To understand how cultural tools exist and have their impact, it is important to focus on the entire activity system as the unit of analysis (ibid). These constraints can be a source of human development; therefore, they can be used by the subjects to develop their practices as it will be discussed in the next section.

3.5.2 Contradictions as sources of development and transformation
Contradictions are considered basic principles in CHAT, and key aspects of activity theory (Gedera 2016). They act as the catalyst for the development of the system (Fleer 2016). They do not mean problems and conflicts; however, they are defined as “historically accumulating structural tensions within and between the activity systems” (Engeström 2009: 57). The concept of contradiction was useful in this research as it helped in understanding the tensions that occurred as a result of
introducing new technology in a Saudi women’s context. In the quotation below, Yamagata-Lynch gives a good explanation of what impacts contradictions can have on the activity system:

The contextual systemic contradictions and the nature of each individual component in an activity system can create tensions within a system. Systemic contradictions exist beyond the instance of a single activity; but they also exist within the context of the activity. Tensions arise from the influences that systemic contradictions have on an activity and can affect the interactions between components in an activity system. Tensions can affect the subject’s ability to attain the object by taking a role as an obstacle, making it difficult for the subject to attain the object, or by taking a role as an enabling influence for the subject to attain the object (Yamagata-Lynch 2010: 2)

As in the quotation above, contradictions can be either a barrier or an impact on an element in the activity and this may lead to achieving the object of the activity. For example, when introducing new technology in a context, this may trigger a contradiction as it is something novel in this context. However, the subject may use this new technology to facilitate the attainment of the object (teaching with technology). According to Engeström (1987;1999a), the subject in the activity can experience four different kinds of contradictions: namely primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary (See Figure 3-4). At the primary level, the contradiction may occur within the element itself (i.e., the object) as Engeström (2001) argues:

The primary contradiction of activities in capitalism is that between the use value and exchange value of commodities. This primary contradiction pervades all elements of our activity systems. Activities are open systems. When an activity system adopts a new element from the outside (for example, a new technology or a new object), it often leads to an aggravated secondary contradiction where some old element (for example, the rules or the division of labour) collides with the new one (p.138).

So, the primary contradiction generated secondary contradictions that exist in a particular context, such as the University in my study (Engeström and Sannino 2011). Another example of primary contradiction is within the element of community. For instance, the teachers in my research may share the same object but they may have a different value system of using these technologies. At the secondary level, the contradiction may happen between two aspects of the activity system (e.g., between the subject and the rules). For example, the teachers need to follow the rules of time imposed by the institution, which causes tension between their enthusiasm to use technology and the rules of the university. As another example; when technology is introduced to a context, the teachers and the head of the department might have
different perspectives of the value of this technology in that it may lead to conflicts. The third or tertiary level of contradiction exists “between a newly established mode of activity and remnants of the previous mode of activity” (Engeström and Sannino 2010: 7). Thus, it occurs when the participant faces situations that make him/her use advanced methods to meet the object (Gedera 2016). For example, when the teacher encounters a new aspect of an activity and incorporates this aspect into his/her daily routine, it causes tensions (Yamagata-Lynch and Haudenschild 2009). At the fourth level, the quaternary contradiction occurs between the activity system and its neighbouring activities. However, the discussion of contradictions within the study will not use the classification discussed above because the use of these four levels may restrict my ability to interpret the contradictions within the study data. Sometimes, contradictions cannot be observed empirically but they can be interpreted through their manifestations in the discourse of the participants within the activity (Engeström and Sannino 2011). Those discursive manifestations as suggested by Engeström and Sannino (2011: 373) comprise four types: dilemmas, conflicts, critical conflicts and double binds (more discussion on this will be in section 5.2.1).

Although these contradictions lead to conflicts and disturbances, they can be a motive for finding innovative solutions to modify/enhance the activity (Engeström 2009). It is believed that contradictions can act as “driving force of change” (Engeström 2001: 133) and development when the participants start to recognise them in the activity (Roth and Lee 2007), which also leads to the transformation of the activity (Engeström and Sannino 2010). These contradictions can also trigger the agency of the subject to deal with the tensions. More discussion of the subject’s agency is in the next section.
3.5.3 Human agency

The concept of individual agency is conceptualised differently in different perspectives (Feryok 2012). However, in this research I am examining agency from the perspective of CHAT. In CHAT, the central role of human agency is emphasised because within the limited norms of a specific place created by the culture and the context, the individual can choose the approach that works best for her (Johnson 2009). Besides, as in Vygotsky's (1978) concept of mediation, Johnson (2009) argued that “[human]learning is not straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal mediational control by individual learners, which result in the transformation of both the self and the activity” (pp. 1–2) and eventually the system changes. We can therefore say that the teachers’ autonomy helps them to be able to choose whether to adopt, adapt or refuse an instructional reform (Dexter et al. 1999). In other words, they master the skills to plan their lessons and do their teaching and assessing their students, and at the same time adapt and adjust their lessons according to the contradictions within the activity (Johnson, 2009).

Within a CHAT perspective, human agency is viewed as “being on a continuum with society” (Feryok 2012: 97) and that both an individual agent and society are conceptualised as evolving in every day practices (Stetsenko 2005; Stetsenko and Arievitch 2010). The teachers can cause new forms of activities to emerge through their agency (Stetsenko and Arievitch 2010). Although the role of individual agency
in CHAT is quite problematic, because of the way that learning is seen all the time as collaborative, understanding agency through the concept of expansive learning may address some of the issues within this debate. From an expansive learning perspective, the notion of transformative agency was proposed (Haapasaari and Kerosuo 2015; Haapasaari et al. 2016). This notion is defined “as a dynamic, long lasting process of learning and development which evolved in interaction” (Haapasaari et al. 2016: 257). It “examines disturbances and contradictions in a local activity and takes actions to transform the activity and its current work practices” (ibid: 257). This means teachers worked on their object through their agency in the college, as they were more able to confront the contradictions that occurred throughout the research. This happened when they were questioning and criticising the current practice and taking actions, which were considered actions of expansive learning that will be discussed in the next section.

3.5.4 Expansive learning and transformation
Expansive learning was an approach proposed by Engeström to differentiate learning from the traditional theories of learning that assumed “what needs to be learned is already fully known ahead of time by those who either manage or teach” (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016: 89). Therefore, expansive learning is about learning something that is not yet there (Engeström 2001). Expansive learning theory was found to be a useful analytical lens for my research because the first expansive cycle started when questions about the current or the accepted practice were raised by the subjects in the activity and then it steadily expanded into collective movement (Engeström 1999b). Thus, expansive learning is examining the “learning processes in which the very subject of learning is transformed from an individual to a collective activity system or a network of activity systems” (Engeström and Sannino 2012: 51). In this way, expansive learning puts great emphasis on the community of individuals, on transformation, and the construction of culture (Engeström and Sannino 2010). The theory of expansive learning was mostly used in work settings, such as organisation and health care practices. It is not widely used in the higher education sector (ibid).

The contradictions that happen within and between activity systems cause, in most of the cases, collective and individual transformation. Therefore:
The theory of expansive learning must rely on its own metaphor: expansion. The core idea is qualitatively different from both acquisition and participation. In expansive learning, learners learn something that is not yet there. In other words, the learners construct a new object and concept for their collective activity, and implement this new object and concept in practice" (Engeström and Sannino 2010: 2).

So, transformation occurs when the object of the system is reconceptualised to include more possibilities than in the previous activity system (Engeström 2001). Expansive learning is a transformation of all components of the activity system, not only individual cognition or behaviour, as it primarily concerns transformation of the object of the collective activity. Successful expansive learning happens when all of the components of the activity system have transformed (Engeström and Sannino 2010).

Moreover, expansive learning can be defined as “a stepwise process that involves seven phases called learning actions. Together these actions form an expansive cycle” (Rantavuori et al. 2016: 4) (See Figure 3-5). The first expansive action is ‘questioning’ and this is when the subjects of the activity start to ask question, criticise and evaluate the current practices in the context. The second action is ‘analysing the situation’, which involves “mental, discursive or practical transformation of the situation in order to find out causes or explanatory mechanisms” (Engeström and Sannino 2010: 7). The evaluation can also involve historic analysis to trace back the origin of the situation or approach it by empirical investigation. The third action is ‘modelling’, which means creating a model that may solve the issues in the subject matter. The fourth action is ‘examining the model’ and investigates its potential and limitation. The fifth action is ‘implementing the model’. The sixth and seventh actions are “reflecting on and evaluating the process and consolidating its outcomes into a new stable form of practice” (Engeström and Sannino 2010: 7)

The lens of expansive learning was drawn upon in this research to analyse the actions and the perspectives of the teachers during their implementation of social media in their teaching (Rantavuori et al. 2016). The following sections will discuss a number of concepts that were found to be useful in explaining the transformation in the activity system. These concepts are the object of the activity, zone of proximal development (ZPD) and brokering.
3.5.5 The object of the activity

The concept of object in the activity system is one of the significant perspectives in CHAT (Kaptelinin and Miettinen 2005). This concept is considered “a promising analytical tool providing the possibility of understanding not only what people are doing, but also why they are doing it” (Kaptelinin 2005:5). However, there has been debate about the exact definition of object among CHAT scholars because this concept was originally proposed in the Russian language and problems arose in translating it into English language (Kaptelinin 2005). Another difficulty is that fact that this concept has been conceptualised differently from different perspectives in CHAT research (ibid). The object of the activity system can be defined as “the ‘raw material’ or ‘problem space’ at which the activity is directed” (Engeström and Sannino 2010: 6) and humans can construct their object according their needs and motives (Miettinen 2005)

To understand the meaning of the object, we need to make a distinction between object-oriented activity and goal-oriented actions. According to Yamagata-Lynch (2010), object-oriented activity refers “to mediational processes in which individuals and groups of individuals participate driven by their goals and motives, which may lead them to create or gain new artefacts or cultural tools intended to make the activity robust” (Yamagata-Lynch 2010: 17). The object-oriented activity system is considered the prime unit of analysis (Engeström 2001:136). Yet, it is worth pointing
out that the activity may not necessarily become robust, instead it may become unsustainable and in many cases it may collapse (Yamagata-Lynch 2010).

On the other hand, goal-directed actions are short-term in nature and it might be considered as a step that the teacher can take when participating in the object-oriented activity; therefore, those actions are individually focused (Yamagata-Lynch 2010). In fact:

Goal-directed individual and group actions, as well as automatic operations, are relatively independent but subordinate units of analysis, eventually understandable only when interpreted against the background of entire activity systems. Activity systems realise and reproduce themselves by generating actions and operations (Engeström 2001: 136).

The examination of these two types of objects helps us to identify the systemic contradictions within the activity system and between the different activity systems (Yamagata-Lynch 2010).

From a CHAT perspective, the psychological functioning of an individual and her development are all object-related (Stetsenko 2005). Therefore, the object is what drives the activity forward and makes the activity meaningful (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016). The object of the activity gradually changes and develops over a period of time and it is historically embedded (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016). The changes in the object can be seen through the lens of expansive learning as Rantavuori and her colleagues (2016) stated, “Expansive learning is a process of identifying, articulating, reconceptualising and expanding the object of the activity” (p. 7). Kärrkäinen (1999) cited in Rantavuori et al. (2016) suggests three stages for the formation of the object of the collective activity (see Figure 3-6). In the first stage, the object:

May be in crisis due to fragmentation and routinisation that prevent the practitioners from facing and embracing new challenges and opportunities in their activity. Alternatively, the object may be in such an embryonic state of emergence that it is only vaguely and diffusely grasped and understood by the participants” (Rantavuori et al. 2016: 7).

In the second phase, the subjects of the activity start to “articulate, conceptualise and model a new object” for their activity (ibid: 7). The object in this phase is still a basic idea, a “germ cell” (ibid: 7). Then the object starts to expand in the last phase and forms a new object. These phases of object formation were drawn upon in this
research to understand how teachers’ collective object expanded towards the end of the research.

![Diagram](image.png)

Figure 3-6: Phases of the formation of the object in expansive learning. Adapted from Rantavuori et al. (2016: 7)

### 3.5.6 ZPD

One of the principles of CHAT is the multi-voicedness of activity systems.

An activity system is always a community of multiple, points of view, traditions and interests. The division of labor in an activity creates different positions for the participants, the participants carry their own diverse histories, and the activity system itself carries multiple layers and strands of history engraved in its artefacts, rules and conventions. The multi-voicedness is multiplied in networks of interacting activity systems. It is a source of trouble and a source of innovation, demanding actions of translation and negotiation (Engeström 2001: 137).

Therefore, we can say that the community members and their roles within the activity are significant as they bring the activity forward and cause transformation. This process of transformation can be described as internalisation and externalisation.

According to Engeström (1999a), “an expansive cycle is a developmental process that contains both internalisation and externalisation” (p. 33). Engeström (1999a) explained that an expansive cycle starts with:

An almost exclusive emphasis on internalisation, on socialising and training the novices to be become competent members of the activity… As the disruptions and contradictions of the activity become more demanding, internalisation increasingly takes the form of critical self-reflection and externalisation, a search for solutions increases” (pp. 33-34).

Engeström’s view is aligned with the zone of proximal development (ZPD) proposed by Vygotsky (1978) (this has been discussed earlier in section 3.3.1). In fact, the theory of expansive learning is connected to the key concepts of the first generation of activity theory and especially to the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Engeström and Sannino 2010). It is worth pointing out that this concept was originally related to children’s cognitive development but in CHAT it was expanded
to include collective adults (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016). These ideas were found to be fruitful to analyse my data and find out how individual and collective transformation occurred.

Engeström (1999a) argues that an expansive cycle is “a reorchestration of [multiple voices… different viewpoints and approaches of the various participants” (p. 35). He emphasises the importance of studying the cultural history of the activity and the participants in order to understand these multiple voices. Transformation at the individual level can be examined by observing the changes that happen to the behaviour as well as “the internalisation of culturally given higher psychological functions” (Engeström 1999a: 35). Transformation at the collective level can be investigated by observing the behaviour, finding contradictions, identifying the object of the activity and the roles of different participants in the activity system. My role was significant in the study. For this reason, the next section will discuss how I describe myself in the study.

3.5.7 Brokering

Engeström, Virkkunen, Helle, Pihlaja and Poikela (1996) proposed an interventionist methodology and they called it formative intervention to study expansive learning (i.e. the Change Laboratory). They differentiate this methodology from the normal interventionist approaches in four ways (Engeström and Sannino 2010). In normal intervention the researcher knows the aim of the intervention before embarking on the study, while in formative intervention the subjects of the activity start to question the current practices and the contradictions and try to find solutions for them; therefore, the aim of the intervention is not previously known to the researcher. In linear intervention, the subjects of the activity do perform the new reforms, for instance without resistance, whereas in formative intervention they can have roles in forming the intervention with their agency playing a significant role. The outcome in normal intervention “is to control all the variables and to achieve a standardised solution module, typically a new learning environment, that will reliably generate the same desired outcomes when transferred and implemented in new settings” (Engeström and Sannino 2010: 15). On the other hand, the outcome of the formative intervention “is to generate new concepts that may be used in other settings as frames for the design on locally appropriate new solutions. A key outcome of formative interventions is agency among the participants” (ibid: 15). The researcher’s role in
normal intervention is to control all aspects of the intervention. Whereas, the researcher’s role in formative intervention is attempting to maintain the transformation process which is managed and controlled by the subjects of the activity system (Engeström and Sannino 2010)

From the above discussion, this study to some extent can be described as formative intervention because my aim for the study is to initiate the implementation of social media in the context of women’s language education and explore the possibilities and challenges from this intervention. I introduced this idea of social media in language education and allowed the teachers to lead its implementation; however, I had a role in facilitating implementation because of the contradictions that happened during the study. Therefore, I consider myself as a broker who has a significant role in the activity system. The idea of ‘brokering’, or ‘boundary crossing’, has been discussed by Wenger (1998) and refers to “the use of multi-membership to transfer some element of one practice into another” (p. 109). Brokering is a term first introduced by Wenger and he argues that a broker should have the following qualities. First, the broker should have the legitimacy to affect the development of a practice and is able to deal with different interests. Second, the broker requires being able to cause learning by transferring the practices from one context into another. The broker should be able to make it possible for the negotiation inherent in participation. Wenger (1998: 110) argues that brokers should avoid two opposite tendencies, “being pulled in to become full members and being rejected as intruders” (p. 110). He reminds us that brokering “requires an ability to manage carefully the coexistence of membership and non-membership, yielding enough distance to bring a different perspective, but also enough legitimacy to be listened to” (ibid). The idea of brokering or boundary crossing was also proposed by Engeström, Engeström, and Kärkkäinen (1995) to refer to the “horizontal expertise where practitioners must move across boundaries to seek and give help, to find information and tools wherever they happen to be available” (p. 332). I found the concept of brokering is relevant to my research and I used it to some extent to interpret the data of my study (See section 0 for a discussion of my role in the research).

Yamagata-Lynch (2010) proposes participant observer continuum through the lens of CHAT and argues that the researchers who used CHAT in their studies could assume different roles, from an observer who observes from a distance and does not really
intervene in the field to a full participant by the end of the study (See Figure 3-7). At the beginning of the study, the researcher can take on the role of observer, which means observing the participants’ activities that do not overlap with the researcher’s activities. Then the researcher can become a participant observer, which means she sometimes engages with the participants’ activity but in a limited way. At this point, the researcher can become highly engaged with participants’ activities while maintaining her fundamental role as an investigator. Following this, the researcher can assume the role of full participant where she becomes fully engaged with participants’ activity. Yamagata-Lynch, suggests that the researcher should have the role of full participant to “gain first-hand knowledge of participant experiences” (Yamagata-Lynch 2010) as the participants will feel more comfortable to share their ideas with the researcher who has become a full member of the community. These ideas of the researcher’s role were drawn upon to interpret my own role throughout the research.

Figure 3-7: Participant observer continuum from the CHAT perspective. Adapted from Yamagata-Lynch (2010: 67)

3.6 Summary

This chapter has covered the theoretical framework used in this research. CHAT was found to be a fruitful interpretative framework to explore the data of this study. This chapter has started by providing a definition of the theory followed by a discussion of its history. Then, the three generations of CHAT have been discussed starting from the concept of mediation by Vygotsky (1978) to his follower Leont’ev (1981) who developed CHAT, building on Vygotsky’s ideas of mediating artefacts and extending sociocultural theory to include other parts of the social world, which are termed: community, rules and divisions of labour. Engeström (2001) took up
Leont’ev’s ideas (2nd generation of CHAT) and has got us to see CHAT as more complex in the world we now inhabit (3rd generation of CHAT). The next part of the chapter considers the CHAT principles used in the study. The first principle is cultural history and this is crucial to understanding the activity system. The second concept is contradictions and the importance of identifying them to understand how transformations occur in the activity system. The third principle is the subject’s agency and its key role in the expansive process. The fourth principle is expansive learning and transformations and the key concepts to understand transformation, namely, the object of the activity, ZPD and brokering.
4 Methodology

This chapter establishes the methodology used in this investigation and the rationale behind the paradigm of the study. The chapter will provide a discussion of the research design and the rationale for choosing it, followed by a further discussion of the context of the study and the research participants. Then, the research methods used to generate data will be explained. The chapter will conclude by addressing the issues of trustworthiness of the research followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations and a reflection on the research experience.

This research was designed to address the following research questions:

1) What role does the cultural history of EFL teachers play in the activity system?
   a) In what way can teachers’ beliefs be described as a part of the cultural history?

2) What are the contradictions that emerged as a result of the use of social media in Saudi women’s language education?

3) What kind of transformation occurs to the activity system as a result of using social media?

4.1 Constructivist paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (2004) define a paradigm or a perspective as “the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of methods but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (p. 17). This view describes what the world looks like; the individual’s position in the world and her/his relationship to this world. They argue that a perspective consists of three domains: epistemology, ontology and methodology. Ontology is concerned with the nature of the reality. Epistemology asks how we understand the world and what the relationship is between the researcher and the research. Methodology involves how can we come to understand the world (ibid) and its nature through the research we conduct.

A constructivist perspective argues that “reality is a social construction of the mind” (Pring 2000: 47). It also believes that there is no distinction between the researcher and the researched, and the findings of research are not discovered (as in the
scientific perspective) but instead they are formed through the interaction between
the researcher and what is researched (ibid). I position myself in this research
through the constructivist paradigm because I believe that aspects of reality are
constructed by the way we understand it through our experiences.

In my research, I approached the topic of study through my understandings of the
reality, which was informed by the perspectives of CHAT (ontology). I chose
specific aspects of CHAT to ask research questions, which I thought relevant to
explore the activity of the teachers when implementing social media (epistemology).
I chose case study design, as my focus is on a specific group of teachers, their
perspectives and practices, and the context where the community of teachers are. I
used interviews and observation to elicit teachers’ perspectives and observe their
practices (methodology).

4.2 Qualitative research
As my study investigates teachers in their natural setting, I chose a qualitative
research paradigm (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). This
paradigm has been increasingly used in a varied range of academic and professional
areas and has developed from the fields of anthropology and sociology. Although
many books and journals have been written about qualitative research, very few
authors have provided a fixed definition of this research tradition. Here, I present the
definition provided by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), which I believe is relevant to my
research:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the
world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the
world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world
into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews,
conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this
level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach
to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their
natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena
in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln
2005:3)

Below I explain my rationale for choosing the qualitative paradigm rather than a
quantitative method:

My aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of the teachers and at every stage of
the research I followed a rigorous approach when collecting the data, analysing it and
reporting the findings (Creswell 1998). My role as a researcher was to gain a holistic understanding of the context under study and achieve an overview of its social organisation, how it functioned, its explicit and implicit rules, and how it influenced the participants (Miles et al. 2014: 9). Moreover, as the key instrument I collected all the data myself through different research methods (Creswell 1998; Miles et al. 2014). The context was explored at an initial stage of my research and that was when I implemented the pilot study. At the early stages of research, I conducted a literature review that helped me to substantiate the problem and state the aim and the research questions in a general and broad way (Creswell 2012: 16). In the main study, I focused on a small number of participants, i.e. six teachers (Richards 2003; Silverman 2005; Creswell 2012). My research was conducted through intense contact with the participants and I studied their approach during regular teaching in order to understand the practices from the perspective of the participants as well as to observe the practices themselves (Richards 2003; Creswell 2007; Miles et al. 2014) as Guba and Lincoln (2004: 18) affirm, “human behaviour, unlike that of physical objects, cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by human actors to their activities”.

It can be argued that qualitative research is a more appropriate methodology for the “messy” construct of teachers’ belief (Pajares 1992: 329). Indeed, Pajares (1992: 314) maintained that “beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do”. Following Pajares’s argument, Ashton added:

Researchers cannot be content with questionnaire assessments of teachers’ self-reports of their beliefs. They must seek carefully conceptualised, integrated and validated understandings by focusing on teachers’ context-specific beliefs and their interconnections to other beliefs and behaviour. They should use open-ended interviews, observations and related think aloud to determine consistencies between what teachers say, intend and what they do; reactions to dilemmas that challenge core beliefs; creation of concept maps that identify the connections between educational and personal beliefs and most importantly explorations of the beliefs that lead to motivations and behaviours that affect students’ learning and well-being. (Ashton 2015:39)

According to Hoffman and Seidel (2015), “qualitative analysis seeks to assess the meanings and logical aetiology of teaching behaviours” (p. 108). Thus, qualitative data is useful to understand the nature of teachers’ thinking and their views of the
world (Richardson 1996). Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich and Tondeur (2015) also called for a qualitative approach and triangulation of different methods to study teachers’ beliefs. All the above arguments and claims fit very well with adopting CHAT as an interpretative framework to understand the teachers’ perspectives, practices and the context and kind of transformations that happen as a result of doing this kind of intervention.

4.3 Case study design

Case study is a research design where the investigator is interested in making meaning from a particular phenomenon (Merriam 2009). The goal of case study research is not to compare different cases, but its goal instead is to understand a particular case (Yamagata-Lynch 2010). Therefore, the research’s aim is to understand the different relationships concerning a certain phenomenon, the context and the variables within a particular bounded system (ibid).

Case study has a long and distinguished history in many disciplines (Creswell 2007) and there are many different approaches are represented by researchers in the literature. Some tend to present case study as a strategy of inquiry, a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Creswell 2007; Yin 2009; Robson 2011). Others present the case study as the choice for what is being studied rather than a methodology (Stake 2005). Here, I use and present case study as the design of my research as the focus is a specific case, which was the group of English language teachers in higher education in Saudi Arabia.

In their thorough analysis of studies that have adopted qualitative approaches to investigate teachers’ beliefs, Olafson, Grandy and Owens (2015) classified the research into seven categories by their qualitative approaches, which include case study, phenomenology, grounded theory, narrative research, action research, self-study and the last category is for studies that showed a more general approach to qualitative enquiry. Olafson, Grandy and Owens (2015) found that case study design is the most frequently adopted design by researchers to investigate teachers’ belief. They argue that, “case study methodology is well-suited to the study of teachers’ beliefs and practices as they occur in the natural setting of the classroom…. and this allowed an investigation of the complex relationship between beliefs, practices and contexts” (p. 134). They supported their claim through Yin's (2009) argument when
she stated that “the case study will typically be about complex events and behaviours, occurring within a possibly more complex, real-life context” (p. 129).

The following are the reasons why I considered case study as the most appropriate design for my research:

Case study is suitable for my research aims and questions because it allows me to gain a rich and detailed understanding of the teachers (G. Thomas 2009). My focus is on a specific case or what Bassey (1999: 47) calls a “singularity” in its particular context (Yin 2009; Robson 2011; Miles et al. 2014). My focused case is a group of English language teachers working in the English language department and the influences of the context are taken into account (Yin 2009; Robson 2011; Miles et al. 2014). I identified the case I am going to study from the initial stages of the research (Creswell 2007; Miles et al. 2014). The most appropriate data collection methods were chosen, which were interviews and classroom observations, to understand the teachers’ beliefs and practices and those two methods are usually combined in many case studies (Silverman 2001; Yin 2009). I needed to know the background of the individuals involved as well as their experiences and so obtained this through conducting in-depth interviews with the individuals (Richards 2003). In addition, I linked the data from classroom observations to the data from the interviews and developed a rich impression of the experiences of the participants (ibid). I conducted a holistic analysis of the entire case or (an embedded analysis of some aspects of the case) (Yin 2009).

4.4 The context and the case

The case is a unit of analysis that can be defined as “phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (Miles et al. 2014: 28). The unit of analysis in my research was the entire activity system (Engeström 1999a), which means the group of teachers and the English department they worked in is the context. I focused on the beliefs and practices of a group of teachers regarding social media implementation in their classrooms and the factors that impact the integration of this technology. Therefore, my aim was to understand this particular case (Stake 1995).

I conducted my study in the regional University where I had previously worked seven years ago (see chapter 1 for background on these types of university). My
study was specifically in the English department in the college of the foundation year, which is a part of this University. A private company, that provides English language courses around the country, also works with a number of Universities and operates the English language department by providing the department with qualified staff and English language curriculums. The department has about 30 teachers who teach general English to the first year students. Each teacher teaches the same group of students until the end of the semester. The course book is *Touchstone (1 & 2) Middle East Edition 2009*. The course book 1 is designed for beginners and 2 for high beginners, and teaches the basic skills, grammar, vocabulary and some conversation strategies for everyday interaction. The use of technology in the department is very limited and the teachers use their own devices when the need arises. When I conducted the pilot study to discover and elicit teachers’ and students’ perceptions of using social media, the teachers reported that it was the norm for teachers to be have full responsibility for when they want to use technology inside their classrooms.

In support of the Saudization initiatives, Saudi higher education has started to initiate new reforms to recruit only Saudi academics to work at the universities and this is to support the corporate value of citizenship. As most of the academic staff at the universities are non-Saudi, the newly recruited staff are novice in their academic and teaching lives. Moreover, due to the fact that this University – where my study was conducted – is a recently established one, most of the staff there are novices. So, apart from one teacher who had one year’s experience all my participants are novice English language teachers.

The case study was small-scale, and I targeted a particular group; therefore, the sample or the case I chose does not represent the broader population and it simply represented itself (Cohen et al. 2007). For recruiting the participants, I used the non-probability sampling strategy (purposive and snowball sampling) (Cohen et al. 2007). The participants were six EFL teachers with whom I used different research methods to understand their implementation of social media in their classrooms. I chose those teachers because they were willing to use technology in their classrooms and had experiences of using different kinds of technology when they were learners and also in their leisure time. I recruited the participants with the help of several teachers who suggested a number of their colleagues who would be willing to participate in the research (snowball). Having homogenous sampling was beneficial to my study
because my focus concerned the collective group of teachers with similar characteristics. The teachers had a similar background because they were brought up in the same town and gained their degrees from the same University. The teachers were young, in their twenties, and they had just graduated from their undergraduate degrees except for two of them, who had diplomas in education, and another who had one year’s teaching experience.

During the first two weeks of the research project, I met the Head of the English Department to get to know her and to have a brief chat with her about the department, the teachers and the students. After that, I met the teacher who was responsible for the e-learning program (which was conducted at the time of my study) and she facilitated the process of recruiting the participants. I met the participants and explained to them the research project. The first two weeks were important for me because I had the chance to get to know the college, the buildings, and the system of the University. I also had the opportunity to get to know the Head of the English Department, the staff at the University and the teachers, and this helped me to build trust and a relationship with them. Gaining access to the research site was not an issue for me at that time because I was required to carry out my research at this University, as it is my scholarship sponsor for studying for my PhD in the UK.

4.5 Methods of data collection

I used interviews and classroom observations as the primary methods for collecting the data. I also used some secondary methods to increase the validity of my research, such as notes from two informal meeting with the teachers, a Facebook group where teachers shared ideas, and artefacts collected during the research. In addition, I maintained a research diary where I noted the events I encountered throughout the study. In the next section, I will talk about the methods I used in my research and the rationale for choosing them. I conducted my study during the first term of 2014 and the data were collected during a period of 11 weeks (see appendices 1 and 2 for detailed research activities and the amount of generated data). I observed two classes before the teachers started to implement social media in their classrooms. My aim of observing these classes was to obtain background on the regular teaching practices in that context. I planned initially to conduct a focus group at the beginning of the study to help me in recruiting the participants and inform my subsequent research methods.
However, recruiting teachers to participate in the focus group took more time than expected. Therefore, to avoid losing time and due to the limited time I was given for conducting my research, I decided to start with the interviews.

### 4.5.1 Interviews

The interview is considered an essential source of case study information (Yin 2009). This method of collecting data is very widely used in social research and it can be applied as either a primary or an only approach in a research (Robson 2011). An interview includes a discussion with a research participant to try to obtain information from them. The information may involve facts, views or attitudes or any mixture of these (G. Thomas 2009). Interviews are also commonly used in research on teachers’ belief as they help “the researchers gain in-depth understanding of the origin, development and impact of beliefs on teachers’ thinking and behaviour” (Schraw and Olafson 2015: 92).

Although interviews have the characteristic of the participants’ stated point of view, it is not really the case because what the interviewee said mainly depends on what the interview questions are and the way the researcher asks the questions along with how she interprets what she selects from the data (Holliday 2016), which Holliday criticises as the interview may be affected by the researcher’s subjectivity. I tried to minimise my subjectivity by contacting the participants after the research to ask if what I had interpreted reflected what they actually meant.

The following are the principles I followed for designing this research method:

Semi-structured interviews were used as I followed a certain set of questions that helped me to be more focused on the aims of the interviews (Yin 2009). I had a checklist of the topics and the questions to be covered and a draft of the wording as well as the order of the questions. I changed some of the wording and the order of the questions based on the flow of the interview (Robson 2011). Although I had a set of questions to follow, the interviews were more likely to be discussions or conversations with the teachers.

Most of the questions I asked in the interviews were open-ended questions that gave the interviewees more freedom to talk. Indeed, Drever (1995) argues that one of the main characteristics of semi-structured interviews is that they should incorporate a
mixture of both open and closed questions. Open-ended questions add more flexibility to the research, allowing more in depth exploration and clearing up misunderstandings (Robson 2011). Furthermore, I used subordinate questions, prompts and probes. Prompts were used to encourage interviewees to talk while the probes helped the interviewees to expand in detail in the right direction when explaining further or clarifying what they had said previously (Drever 1995). I designed the interview questions in English and I asked the interviewees the questions in English as well and translated the questions into Arabic to make them clearer to the participants. I designed the questions in English because they were informed by previous research, which was written in English. This also reflects my readings and interpretations of the literature regarding the topic of my research. The participants’ answers were in Arabic, although they did use some English vocabulary. There are some issues I considered when preparing this instrument. When I designed the questions, I tried to present clear and simple questions. In addition, I tried to avoid long questions because the interviewee might remember only a part of the information (Robson 2011). Moreover, in my interview questions I tried not to ask leading questions and biased questions because this would influence what the participants were going to say (Holliday 2016). I therefore tried to make the questions more open and if they did not understand a specific question, I would alternate the questions or give them examples.

I designed the interview questions within a time frame that suited the participants, not less than 30 minutes and no more than one hour, as long interviews may cause respondents to experience fatigue, making them unwilling to continue (Robson 2011). However, the second interviews continued for more than an hour. I conducted all of the interviews face to face, which I preferred over telephone interviews because body language and “the non-verbal cues may give messages which help in understanding the verbal response” (Robson 2011: 280-281). I conducted the interviews in the teachers’ offices inside the University buildings, which were more convenient and quiet. Each interview began by thanking the interviewee and assuring her of confidentiality and that her anonymity would be maintained. After the participant information sheet had been read and signed, the interview started. The first questions I asked were introductory ones, and this I hoped would encourage the interviewees to feel comfortable and be willing to continue the interaction. The last question I asked
was “Is there anything else you would like to add?” (Drever 1995: 27). This gave the interviewee the opportunity to add anything they would like to include (ibid). Each interview ended by thanking the interviewee for her time and participation. I audio recorded all of the interviews with the teachers after I obtained their written and verbal consent. However, I did not audio record the interview with the Head of the English Department, as she did not give me her consent; nonetheless, I wrote notes and after I finished the interview I went to a quiet room and I completed the task. Each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes.

**Interview protocol**

All interviews were semi-structured. The interviews with the teachers were informed by the literature on teachers’ beliefs (Russell et al. 2003; Park and Ertmer 2007) and the interpretative framework (Mwanza 2002). The first interview was based on three main themes (see appendix 3 for full protocol):

a. History and belief: previous experiences and knowledge, any previous training and belief about self and teaching
b. Mediating tools and value belief: previous experience of digital technology, value belief
c. Contradictions: identification of any possible tensions

The second interview with the teachers was conducted at the end of the study and it was based on seven themes (see appendix 4 for full protocol):

a. Artefacts, object and belief: value belief, identify objects and tools
b. Outcome and possibility for transformation: possible qualitative changes, which include changes in students, belief and practices
c. Community: elicit perspective of having professional community
d. Contradictions: identify tensions and reflect on them
e. Clarification and rationale: reflect and clarify some issues and practices to incidents happened during the implementations
f. Reflection and future: expectations for the future

The second interview aided in reflecting on events that happened inside the classrooms (Gray 2004). This helped me to investigate teachers’ beliefs behind their own practices (Birello 2012). Because my unit of analysis in this study is the
collective, my questions in the second interviews with the teachers were not only about their experiences and perceptions but also about the others, the community and the University, and the students (Yin 2009). The interview with the Head of the English Department as well as the analysis of some University documents also served to provide sources of information about the collective unit of analysis (ibid).

The interview with the Head of English Department was semi-structured and it was conducted at the end of the study. The aim of this interview was to elicit her belief of the use of technology and to gain information about her role in the department, the policy of the department, and also the policy of technology use. The aim was also to reflect on some incidents that happened during the research (see appendix 5 for full protocol).

4.5.2 Classroom observation

Classroom observation is considered a fundamental method in much qualitative research (Silverman 2005). It is a valuable method in investigating belief as it refers to:

Observing real-time activities such as task performance, teaching or in vivo interactions in a classroom setting or a controlled research environment that provide information about belief or activities that are related to belief” (Stiggns, 2011, cited in Schraw and Olafson 2015: 92).

The naturalistic observation of teachers provides evidence of validity regarding how teachers’ belief affects their practices (Hoffman and Seidel 2015).

Observation is not easy; (Richards 2003) what this method actually involves “is more than a mechanical process to be gone through; it is a commitment to apply the full range of our perceptual and analytic skills as intensely and extensively as we are able, in the pursuit of understanding” (p. 106). With the limited time available to conduct my study and the resources used, I managed to observe 30 classes with teachers and the number of the observed classes varied for each teacher: between four and six classes. I observed the classes during a period of eight weeks. The duration of each lesson varied between 90 minutes and 120 minutes.

I considered classroom observation as an appropriate method for my study for the following reasons: My purpose was to observe the teachers’ practices inside their classrooms, which enabled me to improve my understanding of the teachers’
knowledge with regard to using social media and how their practices were changing. Observation enabled me “to see things that participants might not freely talk about in interview situations, to move beyond perception-based data (e.g., opinions in interviews), and to access personal knowledge” (Cohen et al. 2000: 305). The data from the observation complemented and supported the data gained from the interview method (Robson 2011). I used unstructured observations to allow me a considerable freedom in what information I could gather and how it was going to be recorded; however, this kind of observation, as opposed to the structured ones, require the researcher to perform difficult tasks of synthesis, abstraction and organisation of the data (Robson 2011:319). Unstructured observation “is undertaken when you are immersing yourself in a social situation, in order to understand what is going on there” (G. Thomas 2009:186). This kind of observation works well with my role in this research as a participant as observer (Cohen at al. 2000; G. Thomas 2009) because “it is associated with researchers becoming a participant in the situations they are researching” (G. Thomas 2009:186). Nonetheless, there were focus elements I had in mind when I designed the observation schedule as follows:

a. Environment (Tools): classroom size, classroom arrangement, number of students, type of technology equipment used, types of materials used and the reason for using them etc.
b. Curriculum (Rules): the lesson, types of activities, lesson objectives, and teaching methods
c. Teachers: teacher’s behaviour, teacher’s role, teacher’s interaction with the students
d. Students: Students’ behaviour and interactions
e. Identification of any critical incidents

(See appendices 6 and 7 for the observation schedule and observation notes).

I tried to minimise my subjectivity in the observation notes by asking the teachers questions related to their practices during the second interview.
4.5.3 Other research methods (informal meetings, Facebook group, artefacts and research diary)

Two informal meetings were arranged with the teachers and myself in the second and third month of the study. The aim of these meetings was to raise any issues that the teachers may have had, share their experiences and give them suggestions on how to develop their use of digital technologies. Each meeting lasted about 15–20 minutes and notes were taken by hand. We had a WhatsApp group and Facebook group. The first group was mainly to discuss the arrangements and preparation for technology use and it was a communication medium. Facebook was to share any materials or ideas regarding the use of social media in the classroom. Although the teachers did not open their accounts in Facebook until the middle of the second month, it was a good opportunity for them to share some materials with each other.

Artefacts can be useful secondary data for researchers as they can “promote triangulation and the creation of an evidence-based validity argument (Schraw & Olafson 2015:95). Different artefacts were collected during the research. It is worth pointing out that the description of the research setting and the artefacts was seen by the researcher neutrally, which meant looking at things through an outsider’s eye that was seeing “the familiar as strange” (Holliday 2016:77). Those artefacts included the different social media tools, the University documents such as the curriculum, teachers’ lesson plans, information on the syllabus and some pictures of the research setting.

Reflecting on my observations and taking notes was crucial. Richards (2003) stated that there are three stages of the writing process; the first one is the note taking. The second stage is the field notes where the researcher moves from basic notes to fuller descriptions. This should be done as soon as possible after the note taking. This stage also includes memoing, which is the start of the analytical process. The third stage concerns when the researcher needs to use the accounts from the notes and report them in the findings, and then the notes can be embedded in a broader account resulting from other notes and interpretations.

I used a research diary to keep a record of my research journey, which involved field notes detailing what I was going to do, the decisions I would make, a record of anecdotes or observations from informal meetings, my reflections throughout the
study, the most significant events (experiences, discussions, meetings activities, etc.) and how I as a researcher influenced the data I generated (Robson 2011). Moreover, I also recorded any changes that I intended make to the plan and why, and I recorded anything unexpected that could take place.

4.6 Role of the researcher

My role in this research was important, and as the study progressed over three months, it changed from a fully engaged participant to an observer. This section describes in detail my role throughout the research. The first subsection covers my role as a broker and a full participant in the research, while the second subsection discusses the change in my role near the end of the research.

4.6.1 The researcher as a broker and a full participant

In this research, I consider myself to have been a broker as I intervened to introduce social media into English-language classrooms in the Saudi context. Doing so consisted of brokering as I transferred Western ideas about technology use into the Saudi educational context. As I have shifted from being an English teacher in Saudi Arabia to studying for a MA TESOL in Edinburgh to starting a PhD, I have explored new ideas and wanted to try them in Saudi classrooms. However, I knew these ideas needed to be adapted to the Saudi context. As I have crossed numerous boundaries along the way, I have taken ideas across these boundaries. In the following, I give a detailed account of my role in this research as a broker and a full participant.

As discussed in section 4.4, the first two weeks of the study entailed getting to know the context and the participants. I met the head of the English department and started to recruit potential participants. I conversed with them to find out if they were interested in using technology in the classroom and had any experience using social media in their own language learning and teaching. After receiving consent forms from the teachers who wanted to participate, I opened a WhatsApp group to facilitate communication. Through this group, we made arrangements for using technology, attending classes and holding meetings and the short training for educational use of social media.

I then conducted interviews with the teachers. The study participants were aware of social media but did not have pedagogical knowledge about its classroom use, so
they needed training in how to use social media in teaching. I held two short training sessions with the teachers before initiating the social media implementation. Each session lasted 60–90 minutes, and I used PowerPoint slides, YouTube videos and a number of discussion tasks. I asked the teachers to bring their laptops and mobile phones to use in the sessions. The content sources for these sessions were primarily Poore (2013) and Stanley (2013).

The first session was held at the end of the second week of the research (see appendices 9 and 10 for the first session materials). It consisted of an orientation in which I introduced the use of technology and social media in education, defined what social media tools are and explained the educational benefits of their use. The session had four parts: first, an introduction to the definition of technology and its benefits in education in general; second, social media and its definition and benefits in education; and third, the steps teachers should follow before implementing social media (Poore 2013). These steps related to the broader purposes of teaching and learning, selection of the tools that best support those purposes and planning of how to implement these ideas in the classroom (ibid: 20). Fourth and last, the session covered social media tools, including their definitions, their benefits in education, ways to implement them and examples of these tools.

The second session was held at the beginning of the third week and specifically addressed implementing social media to support English-language learning (see appendix 11). This session consisted of two parts. The first part discussed how to build learning communities using social media, along with their definitions and benefits. The second part gave detailed explanations on how to use social media tools to teach the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and language systems, grammar and vocabulary. This session included a number of tasks the teachers performed using their laptops and mobile phones.

My role during the early implementation was crucial, and I consider myself to have been a full participant, technical support and facilitator. The university did not have proper infrastructure for technology use, and the teachers and students did not have Internet access, so I had to provide technical support throughout the research. I bought a router and let teachers use it whenever they needed to use technology in their classrooms. I tried to ensure that the Internet connection was working and to
help the teachers and students with any technical problems. Early in the study, I visited the classrooms to check whether they were suitable for using digital technology, and the router could capture a good Internet signal. When the teachers told me about language labs in another building, I asked if it was possible to visit them. I found these labs were not working, but some teachers, including Zahra, was used an English lab as the main building had limited classrooms. I used the router in one lab, but the Internet signal was poor due to the ground-floor location.

Before classes started, I arrived early to set up the router and make sure it had a good Internet connection. Sometimes, I needed to put the router in a next-door classroom or up high near a window to catch a better signal. I even tried placing the router in a staff room, where the Internet access was believed to be good. Sometimes I used the hotspot on my phone to let the teachers and students use the Internet. I also bought an external antenna for the router, which helped catch a better signal.

Regarding my role as a facilitator early in the research, I tried to offer to help the teachers as much as possible. I facilitated permission for the students to bring their devices to the university. I gave the teachers feedback on their social media implementation and advised them on how to use technologies and suitable tools to support their activities. I held two short informal meetings to discuss teachers’ use of social media, any issues encountered during implementation and any suggestions for improvement.

4.6.2 The researcher as an observer

My role started to change from a full participant when some issues regarding students’ access to devices emerged. The English department head banned the students from bringing their devices to the university. I resolved this issue by asking the dean of the college to let the students bring their devices inside the university. He kindly agreed and also offered use of the computer department’s labs in the same building. I went there and found that the labs were outdated, and it was impossible to catch an Internet signal using the router. Consequently, I asked the head of the English department if we could use the classrooms in the other building, which had a better Internet signal. She agreed, and from then on, the teachers used these classrooms.
Towards the end of the research, my role became more minor as issues with Internet access lessened, and the teachers were able to handle the challenges they encountered. They used the classroom in the other building, giving them better Internet access than early in the implementation. The teachers decided to take responsibility for the students’ devices at the university. Consequently, I withdrew from the scene, letting the teachers lead the implementation, and only observed their practices. The teachers learned to be prepared for any technical problems and issues regarding resources. The teachers started to work collaboratively, exchanging devices (e.g. laptops), helping each other set up projectors and laptops and carrying equipment from their offices to the classrooms. From their reliance on my help at the beginning of the research, the teachers became more independent, worked collaboratively, shared ideas on how to use technologies in teaching and interacted in the Facebook group, which was created for the teachers to exchange ideas towards the end of the research. This section has shown how my role in this research gradually changed from a broker and a full participant (facilitator and technical support) to an outsider observing what happened from a distance.

4.7 Ethical considerations

For this research, I followed the ethical guidelines for educational research from the British Educational Research Association (Bera 2011) and the University of Manchester (2014). I conducted the study only after I gained ethical approval from the School of Education, University of Manchester. In addition, I obtained permission to conduct the research in the targeted college before the data collection from the Dean of the College as well as the Head of the English Language Department.

I provided the teachers with a participant information sheet and the consent form, which included information about the research, the aim of the research, who would carry out the research, what would happen with data collected, and contact numbers of myself as the researcher and other staff at the University that they could approach if they had any inquiry or problem (See appendix 12). I gave the potential participants the two forms (the participant information sheet and the consent form) after they agreed to participate in the research. After handing out the forms, I gave them one week prior to the data collection to allow sufficient time to read and
understand what the research would involve and to make their decisions regarding to whether to participate or not, as participating in this research would be on voluntary basis. I also gave them hard copies of the participant information sheet prior to the data collection. Before each method, I obtained their consent in both verbal and written form. They were guaranteed their anonymity, confidentiality of their identities, and non-traceability. They were also informed that they had the right to withdraw at any stage of the study.

To protect their anonymity, their real names were not used or written in the raw or analysed data; instead, I used pseudonyms to refer to their names. Similarly, the real name of the University and the city where this research was conducted was not used to protect its anonymity. The interviews were audio-recorded after I obtained consent from all of the participants, and they were then transcribed. The data, the recorder, and the transcription were secured in a safe place, and no one except the researcher had access to it. The recorded data was destroyed after completion of the research. The Head of the English Department Miss Norah did not give her consent to record her voice. Therefore, I took notes during my interview with her and then moved straightaway to a quiet place to complete them.

4.8 Establishing trustworthiness

To increase the trustworthiness of the findings of my research, I put into consideration a number of issues while designing and conducting the research (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Robson 2011; Pandey & Patnaik 2014).

In order to address these issues, I employed the triangulation strategy, which strengthened the trustworthiness and confirmability of the research design. The term ‘triangulation’ refers to the use of more than one method to collect data in a study (Cohen et al. 2000) and for qualitative research in particular, triangulation is a powerful way in which to demonstrate concurrent validity (ibid: 112) and to understand complex phenomena when using it at different times (Olafson et al. 2015). With regard to researching teachers’ belief, it was recommended that using multiple methods helps to understand the belief at a broader and deeper level (Schraw and Olafson 2015). Schraw and Olafson recommend that using more than one method is “helpful and essential to researchers because they capture nuanced beliefs using different methods that can be triangulated to support evidence-based inferences” (p.
Keeping a record of the full activities during the research process increased the dependability and the reliability of the research (Robson 2011). It helped at the stage of reporting and writing the findings (ibid). The validity of the research could be checked when analysing, especially when comparing codes and looking for new relationships and interpretations (Richards 2003).

Member checking is a good way to guard against researcher bias, as well as to increase the credibility of the research (Cohen et al. 2000). Therefore, during the fieldwork, I contacted the participants after the interviews and showed them the transcript and my initial interpretations. None of the teachers returned them with modifications (Bassey 1999).

With regard to generalisability, the conclusions I made were generalised within the setting, because the aim of the study was to work with a relatively small number of people and obtain an in-depth understanding of their perspectives and their practices during the time of the study (Cohen et al. 2007; Creswell 2012). As Stake (1995) stated:

> the real business of case study is particularisation, not generalisation. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself (p.8).

Similarly, Bassey (1999: 75) suggests the term ‘singularity’ to refer to case study and he argues that the case study is not about typical examples of a phenomena as in experimental research but it is instead about researching a case that is of a particular interest to the researcher.

### 4.9 A reflection on my experience as a researcher

This section presents my experience during my PhD, which had a significant impact on carrying out this research. In the first section, I present my preliminary experiences with research, which affected my choice of the research paradigm and my data collection methods. Secondly, I reflect on my experience of how I managed bilingual data and justified the decisions I made regarding this matter. Lastly, I outline my experience of using qualitative analysis software.
4.9.1 Initial studies

The first year of my PhD was very fruitful as I had the chance to learn and conduct small research as part of the assessment of the modules I studied. The modules were about educational research, which included planning research, generating qualitative and quantitative data and then analysing them. Attending and writing the assignments of these courses helped to position myself within the qualitative paradigm. I had the chance to conduct first surveys and then focus groups with the teachers who were MSc students in TESOL at the University of Manchester at that time. This experience helped me to explore my topic of research and pilot some of the interview questions. I also had a chance to apply the lens of CHAT to analyse the qualitative data generated as a part of the assignment for the course Data Generation Method. I analysed the data through the lens of the activity theory to evaluate how I could use this theory to understand teachers’ perceptions and experiences. From the previous assignment I completed during the first year of my PhD and the pilot study, I gained valuable experience in generating data by using different research methods.

To understand the situation and the context in which I was planning to conduct my PhD, I performed an exploratory pilot study. The aim of the study was to explore the prior knowledge that Saudi female English language teachers and students already had with regard to Web 2.0, along with their beliefs and attitudes towards the use of these technologies in language education, and whether they were using these tools or not. Two questionnaires were distributed to the fifty-eight students and five teachers. As a result of the pilot study, I found that the majority of the teachers and students both held positive attitudes towards the use of these tools. However, its use in education is relatively new in that context. The questionnaire used to elicit teachers’ beliefs was based on the work of Sadaf et al. (2012). Yet, I found that the questionnaire did not yield rich information about teachers’ belief. Therefore, I decided to use qualitative methods in the main study.

4.9.2 Managing bilingual data

When I prepared for the field, I maintained English for the participant sheet and the consent form and informed the participants that I would answer any questions they would like ask about my research. I asked the interview questions in English and promptly translated the questions into Arabic to make them clearer to the participants.
The participants’ answers were in Arabic, although they tended to use some English vocabulary. All the data from the observation and field notes were written, developed and analysed in English language (See appendix 7 & 8 for sample of observation and field notes)

Although the research was with English language teachers and due to the fact that the research participants and I share the same non-English native language (Arabic), Arabic language was used as the medium of communication in interviews, which allowed the teachers to feel more comfortable in expressing their views and enabled me to attain a thorough set of data from them. I made this decision following my pilot study in Saudi Arabia, as the open questions in the questionnaire were in English and I found that the teachers did not provide sufficiently complete and thoughtful answers. More importantly, I wanted to make sure that the participants’ voices and my interpretations were as close as possible, and this in turn increased the validity of my research (Polkinghorne 2007). Moreover, language differences may have consequences as some concepts in one language may be understood differently in another language and because my research was qualitative – it worked with words – language was therefore central at all stages of the research from first generating the data, to data analysis, and then in producing the report and writing up the thesis (van Nes et al. 2010).

On the other hand, I found it to be beneficial to code and analyse my data in English and this is for the following reasons: I am a native speaker of Arabic language; I was born and raised in an Arabic-speaking country. I obtained my bachelor’s degree in English language at a University in Saudi Arabia and I have been living in the United Kingdom for six years and gained my master’s degree in TESOL from the University of Edinburgh. I am currently studying for a PhD on a four-year programme for which I completed six modules in educational research in the first year. The above reasons of being an Arabic native speaker and my experiences of studying English and conducting research in the English language helped to minimise any language differences that arose. In addition, talking and reading in English aided in making me think in English as well (van Nes et al. 2010:315). All these factors taken together made me feel more confident to analyse the data in English without the fear of losing the meaning and the participants’ voices if I translated the Arabic data into English. However, at the beginning of the data analysis process, I tried to translate the data
into English, which was a demanding task especially when there are Arabic words with no English equivalents and the fact that translation involves interpretation as well (van Nes et al. 2010:314). Consequently, and following the recommendation of van Nes et al. (2010), I decided to leave the interviews in Arabic and code the Arabic data in English. Therefore, all data analysis from first coding to generating the themes was done in English, and this was to avoid any potential limitations that may arise in the analysis.

With regard to my translation experience, I translated the interviews with one of the study participants and that was before I made my decision of maintaining English for the data. After I translated the interviews, I asked one of my friends who was studying for a PhD in translation to read my translation and compare the original transcript with the translated one. Her feedback was significant because she is British and lived in the Middle East for many years and is married to an Arabic man. She is fluent in Arabic and that helped me a lot. For the rest my data, I hired a professional translator to translate them into English to be able to present them in the findings. To confirm that all the translated material (done by the translator) was reflecting the same ideas as the original recording, I listened to the recorded interviews, which were in Arabic, and pause each one after a minute or so and then read the translated transcript correcting any identifiable mistakes.

4.9.3 Using CAQDAS

Using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) is efficient, time saving and feasible. It enables you organise your work without worrying about excessive paperwork that may be more time-consuming and chaotic. Using the software MAXQDA allowed me to read and reread the coded data, think more about them and do further coding, thus helping me to interpret the data (Richards 2015).

Choosing the particular software to use was complicated especially for software that supports the Arabic language. As my data is in two languages, Arabic and English, I experimented with some of the software and decided on one. Initially, I tried NVivo and imported the Arabic transcript but found that the versions of Mac and windows I had access to (as I use my personal MacBook Pro and the University PC) do not fully support the Arabic language. The Windows version did not fully show the Arabic characters. On the other hand, the Mac version did not support the Arabic language.
at all and also missed some features of the Windows version. I then tried ATLAS.ti Windows version and was able to upload the Arabic characters but I could not do NVivo coding, whereas on the Mac version I could do the coding although a number of the features were missing in the software. Finally, I tried MAXQDA, which does support Arabic language and retains the same features in both platform versions; they are also easy to use and good for organising your work. Moreover, MAXQDA helped when I transcribed the data, as there was a feature to speed up or slow down the pace of playback. All of the collected data from the interviews, classroom observation notes and the fieldwork diaries were entered into the data analysis software MAXQDA.

4.10 Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodology used in this research. First, the research design and the rationale behind using it were discussed. Second, a description of the research context and the participants were presented. Following on, the issues regarding trustworthiness were addressed as well as the ethical considerations. The chapter concluded by giving an account of several experiences during the research process.
5 Data analysis

This chapter will provide a detailed account of the data analysis in this research. The chapter has two parts. The first part of the chapter will discuss some aspects of CHAT used to interpret the data. The second part will concern the strategy I followed to analyse that data that includes three stages.

5.1 CHAT

In the following two sections, I will discuss the identification of the unit of analysis and the elements of the activity system. These two aided in analysing and interpreting the data at all stages of the data analysis.

5.1.1 Identifying the unit of analysis

Engeström (1999) has criticised the past theories of action in cognitive science or sociology for instance, as they focus on individual action as the unit of analysis. He argues that these theories have difficulty in conceptualising the collective aspect of the action, its mediated artefacts as well as the cultural aspects of human action. Therefore, the use of CHAT can overcome this debate and possibly helps us look at the system in a holistic manner and also examine the origins of the development of the system (Fleer 2016).

Some researchers, for instance Yamagata-Lynch (2010) and Yang (2015) who used CHAT in their research, are still focusing on the individual subject as the unit of analysis. However, it is worth pointing out that activity is not about the individual, yet it is about the collective activity and the individual’s actions are part of it. To avoid that, I looked at the collective activity (the community of teachers) as the unit of analysis. Therefore, the unit of analysis in this study was the entire activity system (Engeström 2001).

Having the unit of analysis as the collective activity of the group of teachers who used social media in their classrooms has been helpful in understanding the cultural history of this particular group, and the cultural history of the specific context in which the study has been conducted, as Engeström argues:

> Historical analyses must be focused on units of manageable size. If the unit is the individual or the individually constructed situation; history is reduced to ontogeny or biography. If the unit is the culture of the society, history becomes very general or endless complex. If a collective activity system is taken as the unit, history may
become manageable, and yet it steps beyond the confines of individual biography (Engeström 1999:26)

The question is; how can we look at the system holistically with a large amount of data?

Activity systems analysis provides a new method to extract meaningful information from massive and complex qualitative data sets and to conceptualise how real-world phenomena are entrenched within the situation that is being examined (Yamagata-Lynch 2010:6)

Identifying the internal relations within the system is key, and these represented the characteristics of the system as a whole. So, it is essential to search for elements that governed the internal core relations, which in turn reflected the whole activity system (Fleer 2016). Those elements will be discussed in the next section.

It is worth pointing out that identifying the elements of the system would not have been possible until the contradictions became evident. Fleer (2016:12), emphasises the importance of identifying contradictions within the activity system:

By noting the contradictions or tensions in the activity system, it becomes possible to make conscious the relations between the characteristics of that system and through this begins to determine the germ cell or unit that reflects the basic inner relationship of the object system.

This section has discussed the unit of analysis in this research and the importance of identifying internal relations within the unit of analysis. The next section will discuss those internal relations, which are basically described in this thesis as the elements of the activity system.

5.1.2 Identifying the elements of activity system

Although the elements of the activity system had been identified briefly in the literature review chapter, here I will discuss in detail the elements of the activity system with illustrations from my study.

In my case, the activity system was a group of novice teachers working together to implement social media in their language classrooms. The activities were recognised and differentiated with their distinct objects (Gedera 2016). The object and motive were not static; they went through changes during the process of the activity and could only be shown in the process of doing (Kuutti 1996). Therefore, the object
could not transform into an outcome immediately as it had to progress through different stages (Kuutti 1996; Gedera 2016). The outcome also could not be understood apart from the different mediating activity elements (Roth and Lee 2007).

According to Vygotsky's concept of mediation (1978; 1986), the subject and the object are in a dialectical or mutual relationship; therefore, the subject can transform the object and vice versa (Gedera 2016). The teachers were in dialectical relationships with their object as their object was changing throughout the research project.

The activity always has different artefacts (e.g., signs, instruments, methods, procedures, technology knowledge, prior experience), and the basic feature of these artefacts is their mediational role (Kuutti 1996). For instance, in this study, the digital technology mediated the interaction between the teacher and the object, while the object was seen and manipulated within the limitations of the digital technology (ibid). The artefacts enabled or limited the subject in the transformation process. These various artefacts were created and transformed through the activity developments and carried with them a particular culture (ibid). Moreover, these different means (artefacts) mediated the subjects’ activities that led to different outcomes (Roth and Lee 2007).

The material artefacts that the teachers used to reach the object included different kinds of technology such as laptops, iPads, mobile phones, wireless routers and projectors etc. Some of the mediation is my conversations with the teachers, the use of WhatsApp and Facebook to exchange ideas, and the specific social media tools (e.g., Twitter, Path, Facebook etc.) that the teachers used in the classroom.

The community is an important component of the activity system, because teachers need support when they embark on their professional life and as they continue to develop within the profession (Buehl and Beck 2015). The community comprises the people who share the same object. In this study, the community included the six English teachers, me as facilitator and provider of on-going support to the teachers in implementing these technologies, and the Head of the English Department (although she also sits within other external activity systems, too, as an administrator and manager). The community also included other English language teachers in the department who have a role in facilitating their colleagues’ implementation. Those
teachers helped by lending their devices, carrying and setting up the technological equipment. The students also can be considered as a part of the community because they have a role in helping the teachers in achieving their object of the activity system. I will use the term ‘technology group’ to refer to the six English language teachers as they are grouped together in this research and they have a communal aim to achieve.

The rules include implicit and explicit norms, conventions and social relations within the wider community (Kuutti 1996:28). Here, the rules included those of the local community governed by the University, the English department and the teachers themselves. The division of labour refers to “the explicit and implicit organisation of a community as related to the transformation process of the object into the outcome” (Kuutti 1996:28). Therefore, each participant in the activity, such as the other teachers, and me, played different roles in the activity that led to different kinds of outcomes.

5.2 Data analysis procedures

Having identified the unit of analysis in this research and the elements of the focal activity system, this section will cover the process of data analysis. Throughout the process of analysis, I underwent a series of phases, firstly familiarising myself with the data and then completing the writing aspect, with Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2013) phases of thematic analysis, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane's (2006) stages of coding, and Åsvoll's (2014) A.D.I approach helping to guide me in the analysis process. Thematic analysis is a widely used analytical approach for qualitative data (Boyatzis 1998; Braun & Clarke 2006). Although some researchers have considered thematic analysis as a tool to be used with different methods (e.g., Boyatzis 1998), Braun and Clarke (2006:78) argued in their article that thematic analysis should be considered a method in its own right. They define it as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (ibid: 79). During the data analysis, I made a number of decisions from Braun & Clarke (2006):
• Being flexible when analysing the data without restricting myself to rigid rules.
• Being explicit about how I determined the prevalence of the themes in the data set.
• Giving a rich description of the case and its emerged themes.

Åsvoll (2014) proposed an interpretative strategy and he called it A.D.I., which means “abductive (pre-theoretical hypotheses)–deductive (theoretical hypotheses)–inductive (empirical hypotheses)” (p.296). The following sections will be broadly based on this strategy by Åsvoll (2014), thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) and the methodological approach for data analysis by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). These analysis approaches helped me to demonstrate rigour throughout the process of data analysis. It is worth pointing out that the process of data analysis I went through did not happen in a linear way. Instead, I moved back and forth when needed throughout the analysis process (Braun & Clarke 2006).

5.2.1 Stage 1: familiarising myself with the data

The first stage of the data analysis started with transcribing the data from the interviews. According to Braun & Clarke (2013), “the transcript is the product of an interaction between the recording and the transcriber, who listens to the recording, and makes choices about what to preserve, and how to represent what they hear” (p. 162). I transcribed the interviews exactly as heard without trying to modify the words to avoid making any changes to the meaning of the data (ibid). For example, some teachers occasionally used English words in the interviews and I wrote the words as they were without trying to translate them. As my aim of my research is more on what was said than how it was said (e.g., in some conversation analysis studies), I transcribed the actual words with some non-semantic sounds (i.e. mmm) and without including more significant paralinguistic features (i.e. laughter or coughing).

Transcribing my own data was a very critical stage in my data analysis because it allowed me to familiarise myself with the data and to be more engaged with it.

I read and then reread the data, which contributed to familiarising myself with all elements of the data. Reading does not mean merely reading the data, but instead it
means reading the words “actively, analytically and critically” and asking questions about the data (Braun and Clarke 2013:205). For example, I asked myself questions about the data when I read them such as: Why did the teacher feel this way? How did she make sense of her experience? Asking myself these kinds of questions helped in developing a kind of analytic sensibility (ibid). Braun & Clarke (2013) presented the term ‘analytic sensibility’, which refers to:

The skills of reading and interpreting data through the particular theoretical lens of your chosen method. It also refers to being able to produce insights into the meaning of the data that go beyond the obvious or surface-level content of the data, to notice patterns or meanings that link to broader psychological, social or theoretical concerns (pp.201–4).

Therefore, it is essential to have this analytic sensibility to be able to see what is beyond the obvious in the data (ibid). This strategy is called abduction, which is defined as “process by which useful explanations are developed and is therefore an essential concept within pragmatism. This process of finding useful explanations is essentially ‘an inference’ from observed facts” (Richardson and Kramer 2006:499). This strategy involves looking at surprising facts and asking questions about them (Åsvoll 2014). Another way to make sense of my data; I summarised each transcript separately by outlining the main points raised by each participant (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006) (See appendix 13). Moreover, I assembled the data from other methods such as observations and informal meetings and outlined the main points (See appendix 14).

During this stage, I was able to identify contradictions within the data through their discursive manifestations in the teachers’ interviews (Engeström and Sannino 2011). Engeström and Sannino identified four types of discursive manifestations, namely double bind, critical conflict, conflict and dilemma. One of the recurring manifestations that were evident in the data was the ‘double binds’ type. It is defined as “processes in which actors repeatedly face pressing and equally unacceptable alternatives in their activity system” (ibid: 374). They cannot be resolved by the actor alone; therefore, it is transferred from the individual to the collective. Double binds were identified by the rhetorical questions asked by the teachers, which illustrates a desperate situation. Another type of discursive manifestations that was evident in the data was the ‘conflict’ type, which can be defined as an expression that “take[s] the form of resistance, disagreement, argument and criticism” (Engeström & Sannino
They are identified by words such as ‘no’ and ‘disagree’. The words that I found indicated conflicts such as ‘supposed’, ‘unfortunately’, ‘but no’, ‘maybe’, ‘I do not know’, ‘if’. The extract below illustrates the linguistic cues (in bold) for contradiction.

Technology **supposed** to be available **but** it’s **not** provided. It’s **difficult** for the girls to carry their laptops every day (Latifah, Int 1, 21 Oct 2014).

5.2.2 Stage 2: coding

After the abductive stage, which involved reading the data, becoming familiar with all aspects of the data and looking at surprising facts, I started the second stage (deductive) (Åsvoll 2014). In this stage, the theory was drawn upon to explain the facts (ibid). Therefore, I used belief and CHAT principles to explain the data. The use of Mwanza’s eight-step-model (Mwanza 2002) helped in the deductive stage (Table 5-1).

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Table 5-1: Mwanza's eight-step-model adapted from Mwanza (2002:86)

This was achieved by the process of coding, which is defined as “a word or a phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña 2016:4). Coding is an integral part of qualitative data analysis but it is worth pointing out that coding in qualitative research is not about reducing the amount of data, it is more about “data retention” (Richards 2015:104) and adding value to the story (Saldaña 2016). In other words, coding helps in bringing all the data together and reviewing them, which helps in understanding them. Another benefit of coding is you can go back to the raw data easily for more interrogation and interpretation (Richards 2015:104).
Saldaña's (2016) methods of coding guided me in the coding process. One of his most useful coding methods that I used was the affective method as it is a good way to analyse the participants’ experiences. They investigate “subjective qualities of human experiences (e.g., emotions, values, conflicts, judgements) by directly acknowledging and naming those experiences (Saldaña 2016:124). They are crucial because they can have a strong influence on human actions and their reactions (ibid). I used these methods to code the data from interviews and observations. This effective method includes values and versus coding which I used to code the data. Brief descriptions of two of these coding methods, namely values and versus, will be provided below.

Saldaña (2016) distinguished between three constructs that represent the value of coding, which are values, attitudes and beliefs. He defines them as:

A value is the importance we attribute to ourselves, another person, thing or idea…
An attitude is the way we think and feel about a person, another thing, idea or ourselves… A belief is part of a system that includes our values and attitudes, plus our personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals and other interpretative perceptions of the social world (pp. 131–32).

It is not necessary to differentiate between those constructs or use all of them while coding unless the aim of the study, for instance, is to determine participants’ agency or ideology (ibid). The coding method here was to analyse teachers’ belief.

The other effective method is versus coding, which is a good way to show how the tensions appear in the data. By using this method, I add more criticality to the interpretation of the data. I used dichotomous terms to identify the direct conflict between different elements in a particular context such as people, organisations, processes, practices, perspectives and concepts (ibid). I used versus coding when there were emergent contradictions and issues of power in the data. In the table 5-2 below, I show examples of the coding methods I used in the data.
At first, I was worried about how I was going to use the technology with my students because it was new, I didn’t know how to use it and I didn’t know what students were going to think about it. How am I going to use it as it is my first try at using it and my first time teaching? So at the start, teaching was difficult and using technology on top of that made it harder. I was worried about how I am going to actually accomplish this. So I didn’t use technology to teach anything new.

Table 5-2: Example of different code methods applied to the data

In the example above, regarding the unit “I didn’t know how to use it and I didn’t know what students were going to think about it”, it was coded as ‘Teacher VS students’ expectations’ because from the teacher’s own words as well as from her observed actions, we can say that the teacher has conflicting emotions between keeping her enthusiasm to use the technology and her anxiety about her students responses, especially as she is a novice teacher. The values code shows her belief about teaching and technology and those beliefs are evident due to a number of factors such as the lack of training and prior experience. As it was discussed previously, I used MAXQDA to analyse my data; therefore, I did the coding using this program, which allowed me to write memos in a systematic and neat way (See appendix 15).

After the deductive coding, I started to code inductively as Åsvoll (2014) argues that “the purpose of induction is to give the deductive hypotheses sufficient empirical basis” (p.292). Thus, the deductive approach provides “less a rich description of the data overall and more detailed analysis of some aspect of the data” (Braun & Clarke 2006:84).
5.2.3 Stage 3: searching for themes

A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006:82).

With all the data coded, I began to investigate whether there were any similarities between the data and any identical codes, which could be combined into one code. I then looked for any codes that could be combined into one theme. Using MAXQDA aided me in this stage as I was able to look at all the codes by maximising the window of the code system and thoroughly examine at the codes. This helped me to understand the relationships between the codes, themes and subthemes. In this stage, similar codes (data-driven and theory-driven) were connected and initial themes were identified across all the data set (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006). Those themes were grouped together under the headings that were related to the research questions (See appendix 16).

Then, the themes were examined closely with an interpretive approach and assigned brief and clear phrases that described their meanings. Those themes constituted subthemes from the data-driven and theory-driven themes. Similar themes were then clustered and core and final (second-order theme) themes were identified (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006). Subsequent to this, the themes were seen, understood and discussed through the lens of activity theory. There were three main themes; each one had a number of different subthemes. The main themes were related to three different elements of the activity system. The first theme concerned the subject of the system; the group of teachers. The second theme involved the contradictions and the difficulties the teachers faced and the role their agency played within the system. The last theme dealt with the outcome of the study and the possibility for transformation. More discussion on the themes will be in the next chapter.

5.3 Summary

This chapter has presented the process of data analysis in this research. The chapter consisted of two main sections. The first section has covered a discussion of some aspects of data analysis based on the interpretative framework. The second section has provided a detailed discussion of the stages of data analysis, namely familiarising myself with the data, coding and searching for themes. The next chapter will discuss these themes that emerged from the data analysis in more detail.
6 Findings

This chapter reports the findings of this study. The data of the research was analysed using a hybrid of abductive, deductive and inductive approaches with cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) as an interpretative framework. The main activity system, which is the focus of the study, is the teachers’ activity system and the focus of the activity itself is social media implementation. To provide a clear description of the context in which the teachers defined their work and applied their ideas concerning social media in their classrooms, this chapter begins by presenting an overview of the cultural history, which includes general information on the system of women’s higher education and the foundation year college where this study was conducted. The chapter presents three overarching themes. In CHAT terms, these themes are related to different elements of the activity system. The first theme concerns the cultural history of the novice teachers, which includes their beliefs and their role within the current activity system (second generation activity). The second theme relates to contradictions within the main activity system (the teachers’ system) and between this and other activity systems (e.g., the management and students’ systems – third generation activity). The possibility for transformation is the last theme and is primarily a discussion about the positive outcomes of social media implementation and the division of labour, which examines the different actors in the activity system. It is worth pointing out that although those themes appear to be distinct from each other, they are in fact interrelated and cannot be explained or discussed without the presence of the other elements. Each theme augments the cultural history of the context and shows the relationship between the subject (the group of teachers) and the object of the activity (the use of social media), along with the rules of the system (implicit and explicit) and the community within the system and the different roles they play. The themes are addressed to answer the following research questions:

1) What role does the cultural history of EFL teachers play in the activity system?
   a) In what way can teachers’ beliefs be described as a part of the cultural history?

2) What are the contradictions that emerged as a result of the use of social media in Saudi women’s English language education?
3) What kind of transformation occurs to the activity system as a result of using social media?

6.1 Saudi women’s higher education system (cultural history)

In this section the findings regarding the cultural history of the research context are presented and it is a partly a document analysis, which is based on the thematic analysis of a number of documents: namely interviews with participants, field notes and document analysis. Moreover, I used some references from literature to relate the research context to the wider context of the Saudi female higher education system. This section will help in providing a rich description of the research context, and the reader will therefore be able to recognize the particularities and similarities and then generalise the findings to their own context and experiences (Stake, 1978).

The research was conducted in the foundation year of a women’s college in a new university in Saudi Arabia. Men and women are segregated within the whole Saudi education system, including universities. Indeed, according to Elyas and Picard (2010) female lectures/teachers in Saudi universities work within a strict hierarchy of teaching and learning transactions, where national and religious identities frame the system and it functions according to the policies of the Ministry of Education. For instance, in the system of language education, the dean of a college/ university holds the top position and information passes from the dean to the head of the English department and then on to the English language committee, subsequently informing the teachers who teach and deliver information to the students (Elyas and Picard, 2010). This information is based on the language education policy of the higher education system, which is nationally and locally decided (See Figure 6-1), which depicts the hierarchy of the language education system in universities in Saudi Arabia).
In the context of my study, the Dean of the Foundation Year College (the female section) is male, while all of the other staff and students are female. Communication passes from the Dean of the College to the Associate Dean, who is female, and then to the Head of the English Department. The Head of the Department passes the information to the teachers and it is ultimately delivered to the students. The Dean of the College has significant authority over the College, yet he might not be aware of some of the internal issues and this is mainly a result of the segregation between men and women. All the communication that takes place between the Dean and Vice Dean is passed via mobile phone, email or by formal letters. Therefore, the female Associate Dean has a significant role within the women’s college.
With regard to support for the adoption of digital technology in higher education, the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia established the National Centre for e-Learning and Distance Learning (NeLC) in 2005. Their aim is to move away from traditional education practices towards a new type of education that is based on cutting-edge technologies. Nonetheless, some newly established universities in the country still lack the appropriate infrastructure to facilitate technology adoption, as is the case in the University where this Foundation Year College is located. Although the University lacks the proper infrastructure, the staff believe that technology is essential for learning; for example, Miss Norah, the Head of the English Department, expressed a belief in the importance of technology and in the teachers deriving benefits for their teaching from using technology. She talked about how the teachers could use the Internet effectively to search for materials and their ability to bring personal laptops to the University. She stated:

I encourage using technology and I am with the teachers to [be able to] search for new materials. Technology broadens students’ minds, improves their language, and enriches their vocabulary (Miss Norah, 25 Dec. 2014).

From the extract above, we can see that Miss Norah has a belief that technology is beneficial to the students’ language learning. In a telephone conversation I had with her prior to initiating the research project, she supported the idea of implementing technology and was keen for the teachers to implement social media in their classrooms.

Although in her role as Head of the English Department, Miss Norah emphasised the need for the technology and its crucial role in language education, the curriculum itself does not include the use of technology to support activities inside the classroom. Moreover, the teachers complained that the curriculum does not provide guidance on how to use technology to support their activities. They found it difficult to identify tools that are suitable for their students’ level of English.

With respect to the cultural history of Saudi society, Saudi Arabia is a country where the influences of Islam and Arabic culture are embedded in its culture and every aspect of society, including education. For instance, when I asked Miss Norah about the curriculum, the first answer she gave was:

The curriculum respects our religion, Islam, and Arabic traditions – that is why we have chosen Touchstone (Miss Norah, 25 Dec. 2014).
This therefore indicates the extent to which Islam and culture are crucial to Saudi society. One influence of Islamic and Arabic culture concerns the strict rules that universities have for women’s education and includes the segregation between men and women. As per university rules, the female students were not allowed to bring devices to class that contain a camera unless requested by a teacher or staff member. This rule is to protect the identity of female students and staff at the University. Therefore, the only way to bring devices was to obtain formal permission from the Head of the English Department, and the students were expected to bring the written, formal permission to campus along with their laptop to be presented to a female security guard before entering the premises. Male and female security staff were responsible for ensuring the security of the gates and the students inside the University, which was achieved by monitoring the entrance and departure of employees, students and visitors to maintain the security of the students and the premises. In the sections that follow, I will briefly discuss the Foundation Year College and the English Department to provide background to the themes I will present following that.

6.1.1 Foundation year

The objective of the English Department is to improve students’ English language in order to be able to continue their studies (Miss Nora, 25 Dec. 2014).

The main goal of the foundation year is to prepare the students for university life by helping them to acquire the necessary skills to pursue their higher education and support the students in choosing the majors that are suitable for them. Its aim is to improve the students’ learning and thinking skills, which then helps them to develop the skills needed for the job market. The foundation year consists of two semesters and the basic subjects in the first semester are English language, self-development skills (i.e. information technology skills, scientific thinking skills, learning skills, and communication skills), voluntary service and entrepreneurship. The foundation year programme includes three strands that the students can specialise in according to their high school grades and their preferences. These are the scientific strand (e.g., medicine, pharmacy, physics, chemistry, and computer science), business strand (e.g., financial administration) and the arts and humanities strand (e.g., English language, Arabic language, and Islamic studies). In the second semester, the students are taught English as well as subjects related to their chosen strand. English language weekly
contact hours range between 14 (for the humanities strand), 20 (for the business strand) and 24 (for the scientific strand).

The English language curriculum is a Middle Eastern edition of the popular Touchstone series; the level that is used in the foundation year is the first level, which is targeted for beginners in the English language. Students in the foundation year have just graduated from high school and have been learning English for six years in secondary school (13–15 years old) and high school (16–18 years old). However, their English proficiency is generally not adequate for progression in their academic studies; therefore, they need to take English language courses for beginners in the foundation year. This issue regarding the low level of English in high school students transitioning to university was raised by Alnassar and Dow (2013) who identified that high school students have not been taught as required or have been drilled to answer exam questions that were sometimes predictable. These questions about the appropriateness of student preparation for university in the high schools began to arise after the massive growth in the number of universities in Saudi Arabia during the last 15 years. The solution was to accept the students as they are into the foundation year and teach them the basic skills, including English, to be able to pursue their academic studies (Alnassar and Dow, 2013).

In the foundation year, students from the scientific strand are required to take an intensive language course in English for academic purposes to ensure that their academic progress is not hindered by their level of proficiency in English. At the beginning of the academic year, the students take a placement test to assess their level of English; however, students are categorised according to their strand rather than their level of English. The number of students in each group ranges between 25 and 30. By the end of the term and as a part of the assessment, the students need to work on projects for each subject they study (such as designing a poster on a specific topic chosen by the school).

It is worth pointing out that the policy of the foundation year in this specific context is different from that in most well-known universities in Saudi Arabia. For example, in the research setting, students can specialise in one of the three strands, namely, the
scientific, the business and the arts-and-humanities strands. By contrast, students at other universities can choose from only two strands; the first is science, the second humanities and administration. Moreover, the foundation-year students at other universities are categorised according to their level of English, while in the research setting the students’ level of English is not considered. Instead, the students are categorised only according to their strands, and the students in each classroom have various levels of English. Furthermore, the subjects that they study are different from those in other contexts. Moreover, as the University is newly established, it lacks a number of facilities commonly found among more substantial universities.

6.1.2 The English Language Department

The Faculty of the Foundation Year comprises a number of departments and among them is the Department of English Language. The Department is administered by an international academy that offers English language courses around the country. This private company is an accredited organisation from the Ministry of Higher Education and recruits teachers from Saudi Arabia and different Western countries such as the USA and UK.

The Head of the English Department, Miss Norah, plays a significant role in the community within the Department. This position entails the responsibilities of managing the Department, making arrangements for the Department, doing class visits, arranging the exams and publishing the results as well as providing workshops for the teachers. She arranges regular meetings with the teachers to discuss any issues that they have and ways to develop their teaching methods. Essentially, her job is to improve the quality of English language teaching (Miss Norah, 25 Dec. 2014, field notes).

Within the English Department there are 30 Saudi teachers and two Western teachers, of whom one is British and the other is American. Most of the Saudi English teachers are novice teachers with between one and two years’ experience and some of them had graduated the year before I conducted my study. The participants in this study were six English language teachers who all hold a bachelor’s degree in English language from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. They had followed a four-year programme in which all the modules are related to English language skills and literature, translation studies, technology, and general teaching methods. Two of
the teachers who participated in the study also hold a one-year diploma in teaching. The diploma course is a general programme aimed at preparing the students to become teachers in different subjects, for example, languages (i.e. English and Arabic) and science education. The teachers engaged on this diploma programme study modules about curriculum and teaching methods. These modules include learning theory, educational psychology, educational technology, and teaching methods. Although it is not a specialist English language-teaching programme, they study English teaching methods in general. In recent years, it has not been a requirement to hold a diploma in education to secure a teaching job at the University. This is because the teachers/academics who are recruited to work at the University are required to continue their studies and hold master’s and PhD degrees. Indeed, the diploma is only compulsory for teaching at school level. The teachers who participated in the study were first-year teachers apart from one, Maram, who had one year’s teaching experience and was a part-time student studying for a master’s degree in applied linguistics and TESOL at the time of my research.

The Saudi female teachers at this specific Department gained their English language teaching appointment primarily because of the high grades of their bachelor’s degree (Miss Norah, 25 Dec. 2014). Prior to securing their present job as language teachers, they had taken a short training course provided by the English language department at the Foundation Year College. The Head of the English Department attended some of the teachers’ classes to assess their teaching and to determine whether they were suitable for the post. The course involves training the teachers the methods to teach the four skills as well as grammar and vocabulary, and how to apply this specifically to the University curriculum. A number of people attended the classes to assess the teachers’ teaching including the Head of the English Department, the other English teachers who were currently working at the University, and native English-speaking teachers from Western countries. The Head of the English Department trained the teachers and gave instruction on how to teach the curriculum unit by unit (Wala, Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014; Miss Norah, 25 Dec. 2014).

As a part of the training course and workshops that are conducted throughout the academic year, the English Department runs pioneering lessons where the teachers do some ‘pioneering’ (as it was called by the Head of the English Department); that is, free lessons for other teachers to benefit from as well as to try new methods. This
form of lesson is related to teaching methods; for instance, through ways in which to introduce grammar by communication through situations, teaching vocabulary through meaning making and so on.

6.1.3 Summary
This section has presented and discussed the cultural history of the context of the research. This section is more related to the rules element of the activity system. The aim of this section is to contextualise the themes that I will discuss in the sections that follow. I presented five main topics in this section starting off by discussing the way in which women’s higher education functions within the bigger picture of the higher education system in Saudi Arabia. The second topic relates to technology in higher education and the general beliefs surrounding it. For the third topic, the concern is the influences of culture and religion in education in Saudi Arabia. The fourth involves the Foundation Year College, its system, and the issues regarding students’ English language. The fifth topic discusses the English Language Department within the University, its policy and staff. In the following section, I will present the main themes that were generated during the data analysis.

6.2 Main themes
This main section provides the themes that were generated from data analysis. Three broad themes emerged from the analysis, each of which has different subthemes. The first is the cultural history of the subjects of the activity system. The second subtheme relates to contradictions that happened or were revealed as a result of introducing social media in the Saudi women’s context. The last subtheme concerns the outcome of implementing social media and the kind of transformations that occurred.

6.2.1 The cultural history of teachers
This theme encompasses the cultural history of the subjects and its role in the current activity system. Here, the study participants carry their past into the present in the shape of beliefs (Cole, 1999). Therefore, their beliefs are embedded in cultural history and vice versa. The developmental experiences of the teachers can thus be argued to be the source of their current beliefs about social media for language learning.
The concept of re-mediation described by Cole (1996) was useful in understanding and conceptualising how the cultural history of the teachers was remediated through their practices inside the classroom. Therefore, the teachers in the activity system “are not blank slates” (ibid: 285) at the start of the social media implementation, but they brought their cultural history in the current activity system and thus achieved the object of using social media to support the teaching of language. However, it is not always the case, as occasionally their cultural history cannot be re-mediated because some of their experiences lead to conflicts. This as a result illustrates the dialectic relationship between the subjects and objects of the activity system.

This theme will be divided into four subthemes. The first presents the findings regarding teachers’ different objects for achieving the job of teaching at the University and the impact of this on their current activity system of social media use. The second discusses the professional background of the teachers and how this can be remediated towards their object. The third subtheme examines the community of people who have influence over the future and beliefs of the study participants. In the last subtheme, the concern will primarily be value beliefs and the role of technological experiences in shaping these beliefs.

6.2.1.1 Different objects for teaching

I like teaching; it is something I find interesting… something I enjoy doing. Teaching is the best thing I can do. It is my future (Maram, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

Some research participants reported that they liked being a teacher and their previous experiences of teaching, whether during the time they were student teachers or their early experiences as school students, which contributed to their motivation to teach and indeed their choice of career to ultimately become teachers. For example, Manal and Maram, who both had a diploma in teaching, talked about their previous experiences of teaching – which shows how their cultural history shaped their current belief about teaching.

Early experiences of teaching were reported by the study participants as having an impact on their motivation to become teachers. Maram, for instance, talked about her experience of secondary school and how her teacher at that time allowed her to practice teaching in front of the other students and the extent to which this
experience informed her enjoyment of teaching and ambition to be a teacher in the future:

When I was in secondary school, my teachers used to ask me to stand in front of the blackboard and explain [things] to the students. As a result, I really liked teaching, I felt that I could stand in front of the board and explain confidently. I enjoyed teaching and felt it was something I could do and be creative in (Maram, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

Similarly, Manal reflected on her past experience of being a student teacher:

I was excited about the experience. I liked it when I was a student teacher and the students would tell me how much they understood my teaching. I enjoyed hearing that and used to tell myself that when I graduate I’d like to be a teacher (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Manal’s positive experience as a student teacher made her realise that teaching is the job that she would like to do in the future. For example, she talked about how enthusiastic she was when she heard about the opportunity at the University before her graduation, “I was really excited because I had my eyes on this job even before I graduated” (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Although the study participants stated that they enjoyed the experience of being a teacher and some of them had planned for this career, it was not the case for all teachers, especially those without a diploma in education, as some had no ambition to be teachers at all. For example, it was a coincidence that led to Wala becoming a teacher as she simply noticed the job advertisement and applied:

I didn’t know I was going to be a teacher – it just happened that one day I found the job advert. My friends told me about the academy’s advert and I signed up to see if they’d accept me. They accepted me immediately because I had a high GPA (Wala, Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014).

On the other hand, Zahra and Latifah appeared to have plans other than teaching such as continuing their studies. Nevertheless, they secured the post as soon as they graduated, which was for them an opportunity they could not miss because they would have the chance to teach at the University and gain experience. Latifah stated:

I really enjoy teaching, personally. I really like it when people benefit from my input or from the knowledge I’m sharing. It wasn’t my aim to be honest, but it’s a step forward. I’m using it as an opportunity to gain experience now, but my ambition is bigger than that hopefully. But for now, I’m happy with being a teacher… My ambition is to continue my studies in master’s and PhD degrees (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).
Teachers’ motivation to teach at the University was partly because they did not like the idea of teaching in schools. For example, Zahra said that teaching in this post was the only opportunity she had in the time following her graduation:

So the option left for me was teaching at university level as there was no way I would be a teacher at school level. I wouldn’t consider doing that at all because I couldn’t see the point of teaching at school level… it’s teaching the same curriculum – really basic things, which is not something I would be thinking of at all (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

In this extract, Zahra commented that teaching at the University provides her with more flexibility on the content she is teaching compared to teaching in school, and she considered teaching at university level would improve her language as well, possibly giving her options to do other work with her language ability. Zahra reflected on her experience of teaching at the University as valuable in a number of ways such as the improvement in her vocabulary and pronunciation. She prefers to teach at the University rather than teaching in schools because she thinks that the University curriculum is beneficial for her own language development as it helps in improving her vocabulary. She also talked about the contrast between being a student and a teacher in terms of her language development and use:

I’ve now found a big difference between being a student and being a teacher. Firstly, my pronunciation has improved. Also my use of language, such as when I say something I can say it without having to think how to say it… It is in a process of improvement, Thank God (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

From this section, we can see that the teachers who are the subjects of the activity system have different objects of teaching at the University. Some of them see teaching is an end in itself, while others regard it as a first step towards another future and consider their current job as an opportunity to learn and gain teaching experience. This however reveals a potential contradiction within the goal-oriented actions of teachers regarding their teaching, which may affect their motivation to use digital technology for their teaching as well.

6.2.1.2 Learning to teach

The study participants believed that they were not qualified to be teachers, especially those who did not hold a diploma in teaching. This is because when the teachers started their English language college or their diploma in teaching, they did not have sufficient training in teaching the English language. During the bachelor’s degree,
they studied a general course in teaching English. Similarly, the diploma in education as discussed before is a general teacher education programme, which is aimed at preparing students to become teachers in different subjects, and English language is among these subjects. The study participants were taught how to teach the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and the systems (grammar and vocabulary) in isolation. Therefore, a traditional methodology governs every aspect of their teaching. As an example, the class is teacher-fronted and grammar translation is the dominant method to teach grammar. When I asked the teachers about new approaches, such as communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching, they said they had never heard about these techniques and that they had been taught general teaching methods – which means teaching the four skills in isolation. The teachers were also not aware of collaborative or autonomous learning and the benefits of these approaches for language acquisition. This is not only due to the fact that they are novice teachers, but also because of the inadequate language teacher education programmes at the University.

While the teachers have a lack of prior training, in-service opportunities are available. These include teacher training and workshops at the English Department where the teachers work. The Head of the Department had regular meetings with the teachers to discuss any issues related to their teaching and she regularly visited their classrooms to assess their teaching methods. From time to time, the teachers also sit-in in each other’s’ classes to observe their colleagues’ teaching. These in-service training activities were reported to be beneficial by the Head of the English Department and that they improved teachers’ practices (Miss Norah, 25 Dec. 2014).

At the University, albeit in another faculty (arts and humanities), a new master’s programme is available in applied linguistics and TESOL. Many prospective English language teachers living in the same town study this postgraduate teaching qualification after their undergraduate degree. In fact, even experienced teachers study on this programme for their professional development. Maram was one such teacher who considered the postgraduate programme to improve her teaching, in addition to her diploma in education and one year of teaching experience.

A number of the study participants reported that they had planned to study for this master’s degree before gaining their present teaching post, thus making them more
qualified to teach the language; however, they had just graduated and did not have the opportunity to complete their studies. This is because they missed the application deadline for the programme as it was just before graduation and it was therefore impossible for them to apply until they had obtained the bachelor’s degree. Zahra, for example, expressed the belief that studying for a master’s degree would make her more qualified to teach English:

I like teaching… to be honest if I had completed a master’s I may have thought about going into teaching at the University. I wanted to gain the master’s degree first and then become a teacher, so I would be qualified. But to be a teacher after graduation is not… To be honest I would have preferred to have the master’s degree first but I missed it out [registration for the master’s]… but it’s fine, I accept that’s how things are and I’ll apply for the master’s degree next year (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

These teachers seemed to lack confidence in teaching because of their educational background. This is because as students they only studied teaching methods as a general subject and so lacked the knowledge associated with language teaching. Moreover, due to the fact that the teachers work in the higher education sector, they are not required to hold qualifications in language teaching as the focus is on research rather than teaching itself. Nonetheless, the study participants appeared to be aware of their current level of knowledge in English language teaching and the need for more adequate training, and they believed that this master’s programme will improve the quality of their teaching.

Furthermore, the teachers said that they endeavored to learn about teaching methods and try the techniques that work best for their students. They considered their teaching experiences as an opportunity to learn new methods and attempt to apply them in their classrooms. This shows individual agency and the extent to which teachers seek to develop their independent teaching. For example, Zahra also talked about her own attempt to learn about teaching when she was accepted for the job:

When I knew that I would be taking up this position, I had a look at teaching methods. When they interviewed us at the beginning, the first thing they asked us was about teaching methods, especially for grammar. How are you going to teach grammar? – as they consider it to be the most important section in the course-book. Then, I looked at the teaching methods – what teaching methods are there? How should communication with the students take place? (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

The study participants also learned from their experiences of teaching. For example, Maram reflected on her experience:
I try as much as possible to apply with the girls all I learned in my diploma in education. For example, last year I tried many methods until I got to the method I am now using… I learned the same thing from my diploma and also the language school I was working at. The curriculum was similar to the one used here at the University, so I used the same method that I used at the language school (Maram, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

Similarly, Latifah said she used what works best with her students:

I try to simplify things for the students and pass my knowledge on to them in the simplest and fastest ways. I try to help them understand what’s relevant and what’s secondary – to follow the style that suits them. If they don’t understand me when I’m using traditional teaching methods, then I’ll need to look for other methods to do so. I mean, I won’t stick to one specific method; I see whether it’s working with the students (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

Ruba talked about how she tried different methods such as giving examples or even drawing pictures on the blackboard to explain new vocabulary:

If the lesson is about grammar, I give them examples and rules about the grammar rule. If it’s a normal lesson such as talking about themselves or about their routine, I start by talking about my own routine. The students pick it up and then each student speaks about her own routine. When we had a lesson about describing a neighbourhood, I drew a simple drawing on the board so they understand what ‘neighbour’ and ‘neighbourhood’ are. So I use different things, not just one method (Ruba, Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014).

Indeed, some teachers showed good knowledge of recent general methods for teaching such as differentiation; for instance, Manal talked about the idea of dividing her students into groups and providing a chance for scaffolding to occur:

I prefer not to put the excellent students whose level is quite high in one group, so I divided them into seven groups. I tried not to put all the high-level girls together. I put one whose level is quite high in each group so she can help the others (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

This approach also shows how Manal used her agency to deal with a situation where students are not divided according to their levels of English. So, she tried to practise differentiation as a way to resolve the issue (more discussion about this issue will be later in the 6.2.2.4)

All the study participants considered the presentations they made when they were students at the University as a way of learning how to teach. The presentation was a part of the assessment for the subjects they were studying. Manal reflected on her experience and said that through these presentations she had learned how to stand up in front of the students, and this increased her self-confidence:
I learned the most from my presentations at university and the reaction of my teacher when she gave me feedback on it [my presentation]. I try to use whatever impressed my teachers. We used to deliver presentations for every module we had because it was included within the overall mark. My first presentation was about phonemes and my teacher’s reaction was good (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Manal also talked about her experience of presenting in front of her peers and how their positive reaction encouraged her to do her best in all presentations:

The reaction of the girls who were studying with me encouraged me. Even my friends that I work with currently said they still remember the presentations I delivered. I put a lot of effort into them; other girls didn’t put in as much because our teachers were happy with anything, but I tried to put all my effort into them. I enjoyed giving presentations (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Latifah had similar views; when I asked her about any training she had undertaken before gaining this job she replied:

This is my first year; I hadn’t done anything before. At university we used to do presentations, but they were about lessons that were already explained to us and we were asked to present them in our own way, because this differs from that of the teacher’s. The teachers gave us the opportunity to do so freely; they provided us with topics and asked us to do a presentation on them. This was my training as a teacher; the students I was with had already understood the lesson I was delivering. But this year it is different; I wasn’t expecting the students’ level to be so poor. I’m used to teaching people who have an idea about what I’m saying, so it’s more difficult now because I’m responsible for everything. I have the book to use but I still need to search and plan. For me, this is my first experience. I hadn’t received any training before this (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

Although Latifah considered the presentation she gave as a way to learn teaching, she expressed concern about her teaching and the solo responsibility she needs to assume as a teacher. These concerns are due to the fact that she does not have experience in teaching English language.

Notwithstanding the teachers’ lack of proper teacher training, their cultural history can interact with their current activity system in the form of re-mediation towards achieving their object of language teaching. For instance, when they consider presentations as a way of acquiring the skills of teaching and then remediate this experience to achieve their objective. Moreover, the study participants are aware of their current knowledge in teaching, and therefore try to develop their teaching practices beside the in-service opportunities provided by their department. Although the study participants appeared to be worried about their current knowledge in
teaching, they were optimistic about their job. Zahra, for example, stated that she is satisfied with her current teaching and she hopes to be more satisfied in the future:

I can say I’m like 80% happy with my teaching – can’t say 100% because the journey of being a teacher has just begun as we have only just graduated, and hopefully it will reach 100% one day (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014)

6.2.1.3 The role of others

The cultural history of the study participants includes others who influenced their way of teaching or even their choice of career to become a teacher – namely, their previous teachers or their families. I found that the study participants’ previous teachers or tutors have a role in their students’ motivation to learn; for example, Manal talked about the role of her teacher and the encouragement she was given to deliver presentations:

I was hesitant in the beginning [of the presentation] but she [her teacher] encouraged me to be the first to present in the class (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Teachers’ methods of teaching affected their students, especially when they faced something new such as learning a different language (English). As an illustration, Wala reflected on her early experience when she first studied English in secondary school:

My English teacher in secondary school influenced my teaching. I mean she used to laugh with us and make us enjoy the lesson. She simplified things for us. I used to be terrified of English when I first began to study it, and when I started secondary school I didn’t understand any of it. We started immediately with the alphabet and numbers and she simplified things for us; she used images and pictures to match with words and even let us play. Her method is the method I’m using by the way (Wala, Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014).

The study participants talked about their tutors when they were students at university and they considered them as their role models, particularly the tutors who had obtained their degrees from abroad (e.g., from Western countries). In fact, Manal reported that she tried to imitate the teachers who taught her their approaches to teaching and especially the teacher who held a master’s degree in TESOL from an American university, together with a tutor who also gained her PhD from an American university. Latifah expressed a similar view and explained the ways in which she attempted to implement what she learned from her tutors, as well as to consider the needs of her students:
The first thing I tried was to imitate my professors and lecturers. I mean, whatever I liked when my lecturer explained a lesson to us, I try to implement with my students. Like her method of teaching – I try to imitate it. I try to learn from the experiences of those around me. Things that the students find difficult I avoid, and things that they understand I use. What I do most is not to imitate the personalities of the teachers who taught me, but instead to imitate their way of teaching (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

In addition to the teachers’ methods of teaching, their personality and relationship with their students had an impact on the students they teach. Manal stated that she was pleased with the personality of the teacher who had obtained their master’s from the USA:

Her presence alone made you respect her. Even her teaching style; she tried to simplify the information. She didn’t want the students to feel like her level was higher than theirs even though she understood the content better and was more knowledgeable and had studied in the USA, but she explained in a manner that suited the students’ level of understanding. What’s more, her style would demand us to respect her in the lecture. Honestly, I was really impressed with her manner of dealing with us and in her style of teaching (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Latifah also talked about her tutor and how she motivated students to learn:

She was empathetic with her students as this wasn’t their [the students] native language. She didn’t complicate things and overlook many of our mistakes. She tried to simplify things. She used to encourage us to like the module rather than fear it, and that impressed me (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

Zahra likewise talked about the type of relationship that her previous tutor had with her students and how she liked this kind of relationship:

In her [tutor] interaction there was always a space, a boundary between her and the students; there was no way she would let any student get too close to her or that she would create too much of a distance either. The only thing linking her and the students was the lectures, no contact outside university. If you needed to speak to her, you would have to go to her office [during her office hours]. I really like this when the space between student and teacher [professional boundaries] is maintained (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Furthermore, Zahra reported that she and her peers were able to communicate with their tutors via email if they had questions regarding their studies. She then talked about the reason why there should be professional boundaries between a tutor and a student and how she tried to maintain the boundaries with her students as well:

From what I’ve seen, when a teacher gets too close and doesn’t keep a boundary between herself and the students, I swear to God, it leads to a complete loss of respect… and that’s why I’ve kept this in mind; so there’s no way I would let the students take up the space between me and them… so I communicate with one student only via email and she contacts the rest of the class on my behalf. My students asked to be part of a virtual group but I told them, no way, it’s not possible (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).
The study participants reported that their previous tutors’ loyalty towards their job affected their current teaching and they have become more efficient in their work; for example, Zahra said:

With regard to her teaching methods, she did her utmost to make sure that the students understood the lesson to the extent that she would explain everything from the morning until the last hour of the working day, and then she would be teaching on the master’s programme. I mean that she must have spent the whole time teaching and working and I like this about her. I really liked her commitment to teaching and work ethic and she did absolutely everything to help us understand the lesson… She was such an influence on me that I started to apply what I learned from her with my students. So, I never leave my class without making sure that every student has understood the lesson. When a student hasn’t understood something, I give her another exercise to do so that she can understand it. Sometimes I go through something on paper [step by step] in the student’s own notebook to help a student to understand. But if a student really doesn’t understand, what can I do? – But I try my best to get the point across (Zhara, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Simplicity was a recurring word that the study participants used when they wanted to describe their tutors’ teaching or even their own teaching. Such as, they emphasised that simplicity is what they liked the most when they were learners. This in turn was reflected in what they try to do now they are teachers. To illustrate, most of the teachers, namely Zhara, Latifa, Manal and Wala, reported that they simplify their teaching for their students, which shows the influence of their tutors on their own teaching. For example, Manal described her teaching by saying:

Sometimes I try to simplify things for them [students] although I worry that it might be complicated for some of the girls… I try to make it simple as much as I can (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Latifah also talked about simplicity:

But for me personally, what I try to do is my best. Not to be perfect but to be able to get the students to understand in the simplest ways. I try not to complicate things (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

The emphasis on simplicity and the avoidance of difficulty in terms of language teaching might be because a large number of students consider English as a difficult subject, or their aim is to pass the exam rather than to learn the language. Therefore, the teachers want to make things simple in order to motivate their students to learn the language.
The role of the family

Besides the influence of previous teachers, family members also played a role in providing the study participants with support to specialise in English or become English language teachers. Zahra talked about her brother and how she sees him as her role model because he continued his studies and obtained master’s and PhD degrees. She said:

My brother… when I was choosing my preferred specialised area of study. He was the one who told me to study English as a major for a bachelor’s degree. He has a PhD in Translation Studies. He was also someone I looked up to. He started teaching as soon as he finished his studies… then he did a master’s and later got his PhD in Translation Studies. I used to help him to mark the examinations for his students; he would bring them to me and ask me to help him out… When I was a university student, I corrected the work of his students, then he would ask me to add up the marks, and from doing that, I liked teaching… But he was a great influence on me… like… whenever I need to ask anything; straightway I go to him (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

From the excerpt above, we can see how encouragement from family members can have an effect on an individual’s choice of study and their career as well. Zahra used to help her brother in his marking of students’ tests. She considered that experience influenced her choice to become a teacher. Likewise, Maram talked about her father who was a teacher and this was important for her choice to also become a teacher.

The cultural history of the study participants includes other people who may have a significant impact on shaping their beliefs, and in turn their future. Those experiences had an effect on their teaching methods and willingness to use technology – their beliefs as teachers no less. The study participants watched their former teachers for numerous hours and attempted to imitate their teaching and ultimately the way they treat their own students. Family members, on the other hand, may have a direct or indirect impact. An example of a direct impact is when an individual encourages a family member to specialise in the same discipline as theirs (e.g., Zahra’s brother) or an indirect impact is when an individual obtains a job similar to that of a member of the family (e.g., Maram’s father).

6.2.1.4 Value belief

Having discussed the background of the study participants and their perspectives on teaching, this section will move on to discuss the participants’ value beliefs regarding
social media. This subtheme has three main sections. Firstly, teachers’ prior technological experiences and their role in shaping the teachers’ current value beliefs will be discussed. Then, the discussion will move on to present specifically the findings related to value beliefs about social media in English language teaching and learning.

6.2.1.4.1 Prior technological experiences

The study participants were motivated to use social media in their classrooms. The reasons for their motivation might be due to the fact that they are young and in their twenties; therefore, they might be expected to be keen to use technology as compared to older generations. In addition, their positive experiences of using social media when they were learners as well as the benefits they gained for their language learning as a result of using these technologies in their free time subsequently led to their enthusiasm and motivation to try these technologies when they became teachers.

Some of the study participants were found to be more interested in using technology than others because they have more experience than others who agreed to participate in the research. Those experiences were when they were students at school, university, or during their free time. When they were students, the study participants had experience of various technological tools used by their tutors at the University, although these experiences were limited in terms of the type of tools used or the times that these tools were employed inside the classrooms. The most frequent tools used by tutors were PowerPoint and YouTube as the students were asked to give presentations around topics that were chosen by their tutors, or the tutors played a YouTube video in the lesson. This was reflected in the way they used digital technologies in their classrooms as they used PowerPoint and YouTube frequently in their teaching.

Wala talked about her experience of the time she was student at both school and university:

We did use PowerPoint at high school; we used it in geography and history. We didn’t use it in religious studies. We also used it in maths to explain to the girls, I mean, how calculations are made, in PowerPoint presentations. We didn’t use it for English, we rarely did. We didn’t use any other form of technology; it was PowerPoint most of the time. At university, we used YouTube, PowerPoint and the projector. The teacher asked us to bring our laptops and she brought hers too. And if we struggled with anything, she would give us her laptop to use (Wala Int. 1, 20 Oct 2014).
Latifah also talked about her experience of using YouTube in drama lessons when she was a student at the University and how this helped her in understanding the plays that they were studying:

> When we studied novels, the teacher told us that our assignment was to watch a film on YouTube and write comments on it. In drama lessons, the teachers brought us plays and we watched them and reacted to them, because analysing a character is different when you watch it compared to when you read about it. Plays are performances, you read them but you also need to watch them and be able to write about them (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

From the interviews and informal meetings and the Facebook group, study participants reported that they use their mobile phones most of the time for educational purposes and this is in their leisure time. They use chat services such as English Town to practise their speaking and writing skills. They also use blogs for writing and podcasts for listening. Communicating with native speakers of English is one of the benefits study participants reported, which they believe that social media could offer for second-language learning and through which they themselves found these as a useful resource for improving their English language. The participants said that they used the educational hashtags employed by the native speakers of English on Tumblr and Twitter. They also used applications such as Quora where they can share their knowledge using English in different fields such as linguistics and literature. Facebook was used to communicate and make friends with native speakers of English:

> From my own experience, I tried these technologies [social media] when I was a student and up till now I benefit from them, like, you can improve your English through using these technologies. Communicating with native speakers of English is very useful to improve our language level (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

When I asked the teachers if they ever used social media for their teaching, a number of them reported that they tried to use various tools; for instance, Ruba tried to use YouTube once in her classroom. Similarly, Zahra thought about using Path for the students to do their homework. Meanwhile, Wala is using WhatsApp to communicate with her students outside the classroom.

Those prior technological experiences contributed to shaping the current value beliefs concerning social media. Therefore, those experiences interact with the current activity system of social media use and thus motivate the subjects towards
achieving the object of the activity. In the sections that follow, I will present the findings regarding the study participants’ value beliefs.

6.2.1.4.2 Social media and language teaching

I am not a fan of social media, but we’ve come to a point where it’s become impossible to avoid in our everyday lives. In most of our free time, I mean here in Saudi Arabia, we don’t, unfortunately, have activities outside our homes. So we spend most of our time on social media (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

Latifah believes that social media is an unavoidable trend and has become an integral part of the lives of Saudi citizens. She believes that the sedentary lifestyle of Saudi women makes them use it frequently in their free time.

Social media may be an unavoidable trend in society, but the issues are more complex in education. A variety of perspectives have expressed whether social media could be essential in teaching or used sometimes to support teaching. For example, when I asked Zahra about her views of social media in language education, she replied:

I support the use of technology for education. Basically, it is an essential element for teaching. I think that teaching just with materials and without technology is not going to improve the students’ skills (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Her belief about technology in general was reflected in her practice inside the classroom in terms of her determination, her use of numerous tools and in experiencing new tools as well. However, her belief shows how she prioritises technology more than pedagogy.

On the other hand, Ruba and Latifah held somewhat different views in that technology generally should not be considered as an essential part of the classroom and should only be used when there is spare time during the lesson. As Latifah put it:

They do not have that benefit. I mean, it’s useful but not to the extent that I feel like I need to make it an essential part of my teaching. I mean, it can be used as an extra activity in their free time (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

Latifah’s belief was reflected in her practice; she was not enthusiastic about using social media in the classroom, especially at the beginning of the research when she focused on using only YouTube. Ruba had similar views as she thinks that the teacher’s role is more important than technology, “I feel that it can make the students
memorise the information but all this comes after the teaching by the teacher, which is more important” (Ruba, Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014).

With regard to using social media in her teaching, Latifah believes that it could facilitate her teaching. As she said:

> It might make things easier for me too – I mean parts of the teaching process. Yes, I’ll plan to explain some of it if they don’t understand it, but it facilitates things. It might help me look at different ways of explaining the lesson, I mean, I have my own way of explaining the lesson to the students but when I show them a YouTube clip which presents a different way, this might help them to understand it better and it might simplify it for them. I could benefit also by applying what was shown in the next lesson. I might show them the clip or might not, but it makes things easier from this aspect; that it might offer a different explanation or simplify the vocabulary and the content more than I’m able to (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

This view was echoed by Wala, who talked about the way that using social media facilitates her teaching as it eases the pressure on her and minimises the use of paper and handouts:

> It helps me in teaching when I need a break. For example, I can rest a bit when I show them a film and then I carry on with the lesson… It helps me because it eases the pressure on me. I mean, instead of me having to carry lots of handouts I can put them all in a PowerPoint presentation. So instead of using handouts and explaining, I can just use technology to teach (Wala, Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014).

Another benefit of technology that the teachers reported is providing them with material as the syllabus and the curriculum do not provide enough information about a specific topic. At present, they use the guidebook, which they believe is not sufficient for them to prepare for their lessons:

> I currently do not rely on the curriculum because it only provides outlines and bullet-points so when I go home I use the Internet. Using technology enables me to provide my students with more information than what is available in the book. As the book provides only an outline, this helps me and I exchange that with my students (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Here, Zahar means the students’ book that includes only outlines and does not give explanations of certain grammatical rules or new vocabulary. She used the guidebook to refer to, but she also used the Internet to obtain more information.
6.2.1.4.3 Social media and language learning

*Increase motivation*

At the beginning of the research and despite the fact the study participants’ lack the pedagogical knowledge of using social media in the classroom, the teachers appeared to be aware of the benefits of those tools and had ideas of how these could be implemented and developed over time, even though I only worked with them for a very short period of time. One of the benefits of social media that the teachers reported is the students’ increased motivation and the extent to which these kinds of technologies help in motivating students to learn the language:

There are many girls who find it boring to learn English language. English is not like IT or other modules that are more scientific such as maths and chemistry; it’s a language that requires a lot of memorisation and rules. When I use technology, this is a change from the routine and makes them more active in class; it might change their interests and it’ll aid them more (Latifah, Int.1, 21 Oct. 2014).

The teachers believed that technologies in general and social media in particular change the classroom environment to become more stimulating, which contributes to the increase in students’ motivation. It is worth pointing out here that many of these students are on different strands (e.g., science or finance) and they might regard English as an irrelevance. Nonetheless, it is conceivable that social media would make them more inclined to study the language (more discussion on students’ different strands and attitudes in section 6.2.2.4).

The comment below illustrates how the study participants were motivated when their university tutors used some social media tools with them and their expectations that these new tools would have a similar impact on their current students, as Zahra stated:

We were excited when they [their previous tutors] asked us to use YouTube. So what if they asked us to use Path or Twitter? Back then; we didn’t have these teaching tools. I feel that these technologies refresh the classroom environment more than traditional teaching methods (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Zahra explained that social media could increase students’ engagement in the learning process, as she put it:

There will be more engagement from them when using technology rather than asking them to answer a question they don’t want to answer. For example, if they all have iPads, every student can answer individually using the iPad. This will be an interesting activity for them (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).
The study participants believed that social media facilitated learning by making the material more accessible and helped the students to quickly grasp and retain the information. Moreover, they reported that these technologies allow their students to practise the language both inside and outside the classroom. For example, Zahra said:

As the students are not practising the language and only studying it, they go home and forget what they’ve learned. When I used Path (social media tool), I’ve found that they’ve started to practise the language more. They can practise the language by using it during the day, not just at the University but also at home (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

**Improving English skills**

The study participants reported that social media could also improve their students’ language in terms of their four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) as well as their pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Productive skills (e.g., writing and speaking) were among the skills that the study participants believed could particularly be improved by social media. By way of illustration, Zahra talked about issues that the students have regarding grammar and writing and how social media tools can address these issues:

The students make so many mistakes in grammar, so as they get used to writing, their grammar will certainly improve. There are so many other things they could improve on but this is the main problem that the students have (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

These words were evident in Zahra’s practice because she primarily focused on writing activities when using social media tools. With regard to this, the study participants considered that speaking skills could be improved when using these technologies, as Wala put it:

It helps them become confident and have courage whilst speaking English to their friends or with foreigners who come here from abroad (Wala Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014).

Manal also emphasised the importance of social media because she thinks that students at the University have little opportunity to speak the language in comparison to other big cities where the chances of practising English are more likely. Consequently, students lack language practice and speaking inside and outside the classroom. This may also relate to their previous education when they were English language learners, as the traditional way of teaching was the dominant approach at that time.
With regards to vocabulary leaning, the teachers said that technologies could help to increase the students’ vocabulary. For example, Zahra reported:

The first thing it could help with is vocabulary. Students’ vocabulary is very limited and by using these technologies they will come across different [types of] vocabulary. A student might find a word she doesn’t know the meaning of, so she goes and translates this word directly, and she might memorise it if she comes across this word more than once (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Enabling group work

The study participants’ espoused belief about group work was not actually enacted in their practices. Manal, for example, reported that she disliked group work but at the same time she applied this method in her teaching:

We use them [groups] in class sometimes. For example, every Thursday I ask them [students] to deliver a presentation. The aim of the presentation is to make sure they’re confident in speaking, because in the following levels they’ll have to do them as homework. They don’t know that they don’t have to do presentations but I told them that they have to, because I don’t want the students to be hesitant when they speak… In their group presentations, they choose a topic from the book that is simple and beneficial. For example, I asked the first group to present on “how to write a paragraph” because they’re going to need this in the test. Pair work and group work are often mentioned in the book’s exercises. If you ask me which I prefer, I personally don’t like group work (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

It seems that the study participants’ prior experiences of giving presentations when they were students (discussed before in section 6.2.1.2) affected their practices in terms of using similar activities in their current teaching. Manal is one of the teachers who appreciated her previous experience of presenting. She wanted to use group work to encourage her students to speak so she asked each group every Thursday to perform a presentation although it is not a part of the assessment, but she told them that is an element of assessment so the students would have a reason to do it. Nevertheless, she stated that she disliked group work and this may be due to her own previous experience:

Because I feel like it has an element of dependence and that it restricts the person. When I was a student and had to do group work, I used to feel that I wasn’t able to utilise my skills. When I worked individually, I performed better. In group work, there’s dependency so many students rely on one person while the others just relax. Some groups don’t have a team spirit (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Zahra similarly talked about the disadvantages of group work from her own experience and believes that group work might not be fair on some of the members of the group who are working harder than the others:
From my own point of view, from when I was a student until now, I prefer for each person to work individually… I feel it’s more productive… more than for example when I let them work in groups, as some students are active and the others are not… Its’ not fair if one student is working and the other student isn’t. For that reason, I prefer each student to work alone so she can produce her own work. I have lived that situation to be honest when I was a student… they would get us to work in groups. I would work hard and end up doing the work for the other student. It creates too much for students getting others to do their work for them; like one will say “it’s ok she’ll do the work with no effort on my part” so I prefer for everyone to produce their own work (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

However, when it comes to using group work in their classrooms, the teachers reported different views:

In the class, I like to set them into group work. I divide them up into groups in class. But outside the classroom, I’m not a supporter of group work amongst students; like each student needs to do her homework on her own so there would be no one leaning on or relying on the other to do the work for her. Inside the classroom though, I divide them up into groups so I can see what each one is doing. I can observe and tell one student to do this and another to do something else. For example, when I’m working through an exercise with them in class, I don’t like them to give answers as a group – I ask each student individually so I can see the extent [to which] she has grasped the lesson, how much she has understood from it (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Zahra talked about her preference to use group work with her students, although at the beginning she does not support the idea, but she stated that she could use group work only in the classroom, as she will be able to monitor her students’ work.

Manal has ideas of how social media tools could help in collaborating with other students from other groups and to work together:

A student can share things with her classmates at any time and they’ll all benefit from the posts and the comments. When a student posts pictures and the other students comment on them, this benefits them all. We even considered using my group and the other teacher’s group together and to share things with each other. So my group and the other teacher’s group would use the same programme at the same time, and it will benefit both groups (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Although the study participants reported that they disliked group work because of their previous experiences, my observations of their classes yielded another practice that is not aligned with their stated beliefs.

**Encouraging independent learning**

The study participants were generally in favour of autonomous learning. This is because they believe that English language learning should be independent and that the students need to be autonomous learners and try to improve their own language skills. For teacher Zahra:
I always tell my students “I am not a magician” because they seem to rely so much on the teacher – all of the students do, to the extent that they’ll say, “so what’s your job here?” I hear it so often. My response to them is “I am not a magician. I won’t be able to teach you everything. Rely on yourself to learn more. It is true that I can teach you the basics, like, for example in grammar. So when I teach you the basics, you can go home and search the Internet, read more, then come back next day and bring more information on what I’ve taught you the previous day, so I will also be learning from you. Education isn’t only about relying on your teacher – you will definitely have to depend on yourself, by searching and improving your language yourself” (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

From the extract above we can see how the students perceive the role of their teachers and their own expectations, which is something common in the Saudi education system, in that the teachers should do all the work and the students on the other hand should receive all the information without the need to look, search and interact with each other (students’ idea of the division of labour).

These beliefs of independent learning may be due to their experiences when they were learners and the fact that they were independent regarding learning the language and they still continue working on developing their language. As Wala reflected on her experience when learning English at university:

I relied more on myself at university, because the teachers would just come, give the lesson and go. The rest was up to us, we had to do everything, whether we understood or not… it was up to us (Wala, Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014).

Meanwhile, Manal brings her own experience of social media for her self-regulated learning and stated that she learned the most from these tools:

Personally, I tried to improve my English by using YouTube or ASK.fm, the latter from which I greatly benefited because it allows you to exchange questions, so I tried to contact foreigners who [would] ask questions in English and I’d try to answer in English. This improved my language more than school or university curriculums (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Latifah also used her experiences of social media for learning to encourage her students to work on their language, as she put it:

I think that teaching is a 50/50 process, personally. Half of the effort lies with the teacher and the other half is with the students because they need to learn to depend on themselves and search for their own resources – that’ll develop their language. That’s why I tell my students about YouTube and Twitter and so on, then they utilise it in their own way (Latifah, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).
Their belief of autonomous learning was reflected in their practices and they appeared to make use of social media to support its promotion, thus moving away from the traditional Saudi educational practices described above.

**Double-edged sword**

Despite the positive beliefs that the study participants expressed towards social media, they were worried about students’ negative application of these tools as they might use them inappropriately:

> What makes me hesitate to use it… is that… I think it could be a double-edged sword. I mean, when I ask students to watch YouTube or use any other type of social media, they might not use it properly or not use it to learn English and they’ll end up wasting their time. In this case neither of us will have benefitted, because I won’t have depended only on myself and explained it to them, nor will they have depended on themselves and used it correctly (Latifah, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

These beliefs or worries concerning the negative impact of social media were expressed by the Head of the English Department after she had forbidden the students from having their devices inside the University (further discussion on this will be in section 6.2.2.1).

What is more, concerns were expressed about the students’ privacy, and therefore Zahra tried to choose a tool where the privacy of students can be protected, as she stated:

> Path is private, but Tumblr can be both private and public. I did not want them to use something that they can mess around with, so while with Tumblr you can have access to different things… with Path you can communicate with your classmates and the teachers, and no one else (Zahra Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

The comment below illustrates Zahra’s determination to protect her students’ privacy through the use of additional privacy tools, although it may be against her students’ wishes:

> I told them about blogging but they’re still insisting on using Twitter – for whatever reason I don’t know, they may like it, although I keep telling them it’s not good (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Some teachers considered technology as a source of distraction if it is used inside the classroom. For example, Maram argued that social media would distract the students and they should be used only outside the classrooms:

> For sure it’ll benefit them when, for example, they’re on their own outside the class, it’ll benefit them. It might encourage them a bit in speaking, in listening, to listen quietly but not in class. I think it’ll distract them a bit in class – [it’s likely] they
won’t pay attention to my teaching (Maram, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

This potential problem was reflected in Maram’s hesitation to implement technology at the beginning of the study. Another issue is the time that using social media will consume. In illustration, Zahra talked about her worries that using technology will take up a lot of lesson time:

Using technology is good for teaching but it does have one big drawback – you can lose a lot of time, I mean the preparation of using it takes a long time (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

A further aspect of concern for the teachers is the students’ lack of digital literacy, and this is might obstruct their language learning:

I have real concerns that they will not understand, I mean, I don’t know how they are going to understand the lesson while using the technology at the same time (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

The issues related to time and students will be discussed in more detail under the theme of Contradictions.

This section presented the findings regarding the study participants’ value beliefs concerning social media in language education. The study participants generally hold positive beliefs about social media and this is partly because of their successful experiences when they were language learners. However, the teachers had various worries about issues that social media can bring to the students’ learning such as distraction and their privacy.

6.2.1.5 Summary

The findings under this theme are related to the subjects’ cultural history and how it can interact with the current activity system of social media implementation. Initially, the subjects had different objects from their experience of the job of teaching or from employing technology in their teaching approach. These diverse objects have different influences on their motivation to use social media. Although study participants appeared to be critical about their current knowledge of teaching, they held positive beliefs about social media in their teaching approach and regard them as tools to improve their practices. The cultural history of the study participants includes their previous teachers who had an impact on shaping their current belief about teaching and their teaching practices. The family may also have an influence
on shaping the future of the study participants. With reference to this theme, it can be argued that when the subject in an activity system faces something new, such as using social media, their cultural history can be remediated and interacts with the current activity system within its sociocultural context. Some of which can be mediated towards achieving the object of the activity while an amount can be constrained, which negatively affects the system by obstructing the subjects from attaining their object. The next theme moves on to discuss the findings related to the constraints imposed by the contradictions within the current activity system, and between this system and the neighbouring systems.

6.2.2 Contradictions

Because the world and relationships are much more complex than in the past and CHAT is a system of interrelated parts that are held together by a dialectic approach, this enabled me to begin to identify the contradictions within the activity system and between different activity systems that had developed over time. Introducing social media into the English language department at a new women’s college in the foundation year caused considerable tensions, which, in turn, exposed existing contradictions in the activity system. This is despite the fact that that the college was keen to include new technologies into their classrooms. They had agreed to the research that I wanted to conduct and it was not until I started trying to work with the teachers that tensions began to appear and the contradictions became evident. The teachers’ activity system is the focal activity in the study; however, there are other external systems that interacted with this system and caused several tensions within the teachers’ activity system. It is worth mentioning these activities to understand how the tensions happened. The external systems include the University and the English Department, and the students.

Contradictions in general are not empirically noticeable unless there is a historical analysis of the activity (Ploettner and Tresseras, 2016). That is why the first two themes in this chapter are important in establishing the background to identify the contradictions within and between the systems. Another way to identify contradictions were through their discursive manifestation (Engeström and Sannino, 2011), which were discussed in detail in the methodology chapter. The contradictions under this theme are divided into four categories: namely management-rules
contradictions, techno-infrastructure contradictions, teachers’ contradictions, and teacher-student contradictions.

6.2.2.1 Management and rules contradictions

The contradictions related to management and rules were evident from the first to the last stages of the research. These contradictions in turn caused tensions within the teachers’ activity system, which affected achieving the object. As this is a women’s university, the students are not allowed to bring to the campus any devices that contain a camera. This is a common feature of our conservative culture and it is a rigid rule associated with the culture that has been in place for a long time. This brings to light a tension between the rules imposed by the University and the subjects’ object of the activity. The teachers have their own goals in implementing social media in their classrooms but what is expected from them in terms of rules made it difficult to meet their objectives. This tension has been partially resolved by allowing the students to bring their laptops, yet requiring them to obtain formal permission, signed by the Head of the Department, and also requiring them to leave their devices with the female security staff at the entrance of the University. The students’ devices are stored in the female security staff room, and the security staff members then return them to the students when they are needed (i.e. when the students have a class where the teacher is going to use technology). The students can then collect their devices from the security staff at the end on the day.

The motive for these actions and University rules is to protect the students and their privacy; however, this also caused tensions within the students’ activity system. This tension is between the rules and the students’ collective object. These rules limit their freedom to use social media for educational purposes. As obtaining permission, for instance, is sometimes not a straightforward process. It takes time, and the student might feel demotivated by the time she receives it. Another complication of the current rules related to issues with security as complaints were made that some students had lost their devices. Latifah, Ruba and Miss Norah talked about these issues:

Some students’ laptops have been stolen, some have been broken. What are their families are going to do when a laptop is lost or stolen? Who has the responsibility?
The responsibility is divided between all of us, me, the department, and the students. What can we say to the family? (Miss Norah, 25 Dec. 2014).

Miss Norah expressed her concerns about the students’ families and their reaction to the issues surrounding the students’ devices and the level of security at the University.

The students had become accustomed to bringing their laptops or tablets to the University from the early stages. However, things changed after a while when the demands for permission to have the devices on the premises increased and the issues with security became observable. As a result, Miss Norah prevented the students from bringing their devices into the University, which signals a further tension between the teachers trying to implement technology and the rules of the University. Miss Norah reflected on that:

The rules of the system, they are not allowed to bring their laptops, but they can send their homework via e-mail. You can see, everything has two sides; technology has two sides, where the students can use it [appropriately or] inappropriately… We do this to control; we do not want to lose control over the students. We do not want the students to be out of control because the students do not use [their devices] for educational use (Miss Norah, Int. 1, 25 Dec. 2014).

It appears that she was worried that allowing the students to bring their laptops to class would affect her role as department head and cause her to lose control over the students. This is a contradiction, brought about by me trying to do something, a contradiction that was partly unresolved. After this episode, I was able to have a phone call with the Dean of the College, who was supportive and offered the use of any computer lab primarily used by the other departments, but I discovered other issues that will be discussed in the next section 6.2.2.2.

Time as a source of tensions

Time was a clear theme that I identified in my analysis of the data, and it was one of the critical factors that affected the activity system in terms of the institution, the teachers, and the students. Time is a significant issue, but when we look through the CHAT lens, we can see the relationship between the different elements where time is important. In activity system analysis, time signals contradictions between opposing demands or priorities. The fact that the teachers are novice and it is not easy for them
to manage time was one of the tensions related to time, besides the infrastructure of the University.

Moreover, time was one of the recurring themes in the interview with the Head of the English Department, Miss Nora, about its internal policy. For her, time meant several things that reflected her status and her responsibilities. She stated the following:

We respect the timing of the lecture. So, time management is very important. The lesson plan should be within the class time, as we respect the duty of time (Miss Norah, Int. 1, 25 Dec. 2014).

Thus, the Head of the Department was concerned about time and she emphasised that time management is crucial. According to the policy of the Department, the lessons should be completed on time and, accordingly, they must start and end at specific times, without fail. For that reason, the teachers should not arrive early or late to class.

Therefore, time signals a tension between the rules element of the teachers’ activity system and their object. The teachers wanted to use the new technologies in their classroom to improve their teaching but the institution demands from them to teach their lessons within a specific time frame. In the following discussion, I will discuss the issues related to time.

Due to the lack of proper infrastructure, the teachers spent a lot of time preparing their lessons and trying to teach these lessons within the class time, but when things did not function, they felt frustrated. For example, Latifah commented:

It stressed me out. Imagine planning and everything then not having the internet work or not having the PowerPoint presentation work as you had imagined, and the girls getting discouraged, and time being wasted whilst you set up and connect to the internet. That’s it, you feel like they get bored. It becomes time consuming when it’s meant to be time-saving (Latifah, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).

Similarly, Zahra reflected on her experience of the problems she faced when she tried to use YouTube as a brainstorming part in the lesson; the video did not work, which affected her lesson plan as well:

It wastes the lecture time because what I had prepared depended on the YouTube video. My plan was to watch the video and then do the writing task. But the video didn’t work. So I postponed the activity till the end of the lesson. It was supposed to be played at the beginning of the lesson and I had planned it step by step. And then this problem happened – the YouTube wasn’t working. It took up a lot of time and the lecture was only a few hours (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).
Ruba had similar views when I asked her about the challenges she faced:

Possibly the time needed to set up, for the students to switch on their laptops and to access the websites … I mean, this is time consuming and instead of starting at 8 o’clock we started at 8.15 or 8.20, something like that (Ruba, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

One impact of this tension is that the students become demotivated while they are waiting for the teachers to get ready for the lesson. For example, Manal said:

You end up getting put off using it because preparing for technology before the lesson takes time and the students get demotivated whilst they’re sat there waiting for the teacher to finish preparation (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

The teachers are novice and inexperienced, they struggled with managing their time effectively. For novice teachers, it takes a substantial amount of time to prepare the class materials, as compared to the more experienced teachers. They talked about the fact that a lot of time was spent searching and looking for social media tools that are suitable for the learning goals of the lesson. They said that finding the right tool was not an easy job for them to do, and this is might due to their lack of content and technological skills:

I get quite worn out because I spend a lot of time trying to find the right tools. Like, for the shopping lesson, I used mind-mapping because I thought it was useful. I’ve spent a lot of time looking for tools but I can’t always find what I am looking for. You can find a lot of things on YouTube, which would be useful, so I don’t rely on a lot of different tools but use the tool that is most useful and suitable for the lesson. I’ve registered on a million websites just to look for something useful, not just for variety (Zahra Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

The teachers complained about the limited time they had available to cover the curriculum and that they needed additional time just to explain to the students how to use a specific tool, and this, in turn, led some of them to use a specific tool (e.g., Twitter) from the beginning until the end of the semester. Yet, tensions in terms of time are not only related to teachers’ digital skills or teaching experiences, the students’ digital skills are also a factor. Therefore, teachers’ and students’ lack of digital literacy has an effect on teachers’ attainment of the object of social media implementation.

From this section, it appears that time has an impact in different ways within the activity system. With the lack of appropriate infrastructure and poor levels of digital literacy, technology becomes more of a challenge in terms of time.
Coping with tensions

Teachers’ agency played a role in handling the challenges they faced during the research project. Indeed, the teachers learned how to tackle the problems they faced during their implementation. These issues include, for instance, when there are technical problems or various matters regarding the rules for not allowing students to have their devices inside the University. Zahra expressed her views when the students were not able to bring their own devices into the classroom. In fact, she wanted to keep the activity going, so she used her own laptop and a projector to show the students pages from Wikis about restaurants. Instead of asking the students to use their devices to search and write the answers for the questions that the teacher asked, they listened to their teacher and read from the projectors. After that she asked each group of students to write on a piece of paper. Although the technology was not available at that time, Zahra considered the activity successful. She reflected on her students learning and how she was delighted about their engagement in the activity:

They wrote about restaurants… and before that they wrote on paper something about Turkey and Saudi Arabia. At first, I read to them, let them get the information from wiki; I followed on and then I collected all the papers they’d written on. Then I told them, now start writing again about what they had been doing the search for. You saw them yourself, God bless them, I was so amazed that they caught the whole information and wrote exactly the same thing I read to them at the beginning of the activity (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

When the Head of the Department banned the students from having their devices inside the University, the study participants discussed the issue and came up with the idea of leaving the students’ devices in their offices instead of the security room. When I talked to the teachers about the plan, they mentioned that they could take care of them much better than the security staff and this would ease the pressure on the students in regard to worrying about their devices. One day before the lesson, the teacher agrees with her group of students on who will bring the device. So, the teachers divide the students into groups and in each group there is one student who is responsible for bringing her device. On the next day, each student who is going to bring the device is responsible to bring her device into teacher’s office in the early morning and take it back after the lesson and then at the end of the day, she collects it from the teacher’s office. Leaving the devices with the teachers was more convenient for the students and encouraged them to bring their devices into the University.
6.2.2.2 Techno-infrastructure contradictions

Techno-infrastructure contradictions became evident from the start of the research project. The lack of resources and inadequate infrastructure, such as the lack of computers and reliable Internet connection, were significant sources of tension from the beginning. Below is a vignette of one of the first lessons where teachers used social media in their classroom.

Manal's classroom

Manal teaches one class of 35 students. The class was held in a mid-sized classroom with no technology provided. It was 9:53 am when teacher Manal went to her classroom seven minutes early to set up the portable projector (which was Zahra’s projector) and her laptop. I set up the router and wrote the username and password on the whiteboard. Manal spent some time to prepare the projector and her laptop. Four students came in to front of the class and asked whether they were allowed to go to the office of the Head of the English Department to bring their laptops and went down. Five minutes later, they arrived with eight laptops. Ten minutes had gone from the class time and the teacher then started her lesson. She began her lesson by revising the previous lesson. Then, she asked the students if they had managed to sign up to Tumblr. Some students replied “Yes” and others said they did not know how to sign up. The students started to connect to the Internet but the connection in the class was unreliable. Manal therefore decided to postpone the activity for some time. Then, she wrote on the whiteboard “out and about”. As a brainstorming task, Manal planned to play a YouTube video to introduce the topic of the lesson to the students. Unfortunately, she could not start the video because of the Internet connection – the router did not work. Manal consequently moved to the other task and wrote a sentence on the whiteboard, “I could not reach my friend when he was ‘out and about’”. Manal asked one student to read the sentence and describe the meaning of ‘out and about’. Then, she asked what the difference is between weather and climate? Some students tried to answer the question. To explain the difference, from her laptop using the projector she showed a picture that had two sentences on it: “What is climate? Average or typical weather for a given area over a relatively long period of time.” And, “What is the weather? The state of the atmosphere, temperature, precipitation, wind cloudiness, pressure and more.” Then, Manal
introduced the four seasons and asked the students “what are they?” The students raised their hands and answered. Manal tried to access her account in Tumblr but she was not able to so, and this was due to the unreliable Internet connection. She planned to post pictures of the four seasons and ask the students to describe them; however, she showed them pictures of the four seasons from her laptop instead. Manal asked them to describe each season by using adjectives and write them down in their notebooks. The teacher then asked the students to open their books and do the activities in those. After that, Manal gave them 20 minutes’ break from 10:40 am to 11:00 am. After the break, teacher Manal tried to play the video again but it was not working due to the Internet connection. She looked nervous as a result of that situation. So, she turned to the students and had a discussion with them on what tools to use; some students suggested changing Tumblr and using another tool such as Twitter. Other students said that Tumblr is better because Twitter is not effective, as the user cannot write longer than 140 characters. Manal told the students to decide which tool to use and let her know. Then, she played the video and it worked. She paused the video at intervals to ask questions about it. The students seemed to enjoy watching the video and answering the questions. After that task, the teacher returned to the book and they worked on its activities. The class ended at 11:30 am.

This vignette relates an example of the technical issues that happened during the first attempt at technology implementation in the classroom. At the beginning, Manal tried many times to play the videos without any success and this was due to the unreliable Internet connection. However, she was able to play the video at the end of the lesson. The technology was not there for them to use, so she had to bring her laptop and to ask students to bring their laptops as well. Manal brought the projector and I brought the router for the Internet. This caused tension between her attempt to sustain her motivation to use the technology and the lack of resources in the classroom. This tension was apparent during all stages of the research.

**The sources of tension**

In the following paragraphs, I will talk about the issues that related to the infrastructure at the University, which are considered as the sources of tensions in the teachers’ activity system.
Due to the fact that the English language department is not part of the University, and as it has been mentioned that it is owned by another company, it is not easy for teachers to use some of the facilities at the University. As a result, the English language teachers cannot have access to the Wi-Fi, which is mainly used by the University staff and not the English language staff employed by the external company.

The University is equipped with computer labs and conventional language labs. Nevertheless, it became clear that the computer labs were to be used by departments other than the English department. Their potential value to language learning had not been considered. In fact, they are only used by the department of computer studies. I had a chance to visit these computer labs after I gained permission from the Dean of the College to use them for my study (as discussed in the previous section); however, I discovered that the labs also lacked a reliable Internet connection, thus making them ineffective for deploying social media tools – which often require continuous access to the Web to operate effectively. When I tried to use the router for the Internet connection, it was difficult to catch any Internet signal as the location of the labs was on the lower floor of the building.

The English language labs were essentially used only for listening lessons, where the students could listen to recordings using headphones. Both the language labs and the computer labs at the University had been introduced more than six years before this research started; thus, they had become old, had not been upgraded and were not equipped with an Internet connection. Consequently, no development or maintenance was taking place. Although the labs were out of date due to their age (six years), they were still regarded, or described, as a part of an on-going process of trying to include more IT in education (Miss Norah, Int. 25, Dec. 2014).

In discussion with the teachers, we talked about the fact that when they were students at the University about four years previously, they had made use of the language labs which worked effectively, but things had changed since then. In addition, the labs – by the time the teachers had started trying to use them – were not functioning well, and the teachers encountered difficulties when they attempted to use what was available at the time of the study. Manal talked about the infrastructure at the University when she was a student:
At the university [where] we studied, we used to have our listening lessons in the labs. The computers were turned on and we listened. But nowadays, the system has changed. I’m not too sure, but they belong now to another department and the labs are not working. The University has Internet but the teachers don’t have access to it, only the dean does. It’s also provided for the computer studies department, not the English one. Miss Norah [the Head of the English Department] asked the University to provide Internet access but I don’t know what happened after that. In fact, the teacher who is responsible for EF (e-learning) is the one who brought the Internet router (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Due to the limited number of classes available in the building, some of the study participants had to use the language labs to teach their lessons, although the labs themselves were not working. This made it difficult for the students to work in pairs or groups as the labs are designed for the students to work individually. The first lessons I observed with Zahra were all in the language lab. The lab could only accommodate up to 15 students, whereas the number of students was around 30, which made it very difficult for those at the very back to hear the teacher. The study participants expressed that they are willing to use the labs for the listening activities but this is something out of their hands and they are unable do anything about it.

Generally, the English Department was allocated classrooms with no available technology, except for a number of classrooms where projectors and TV screens were in place. However, these TV screens were only used by the male lectures in the male college to be able to give lectures to the female students. Because of the segregation between males and females in education, it is considered inappropriate for the male lecturer or teacher to teach inside the female premises, as they are not expected to interact with the female students; thus video links are set up so that the male tutors can teach the female students remotely. As a result, the male tutors give lectures in the male wing of the University and the female students listen in.

Another issue related to the infrastructure at the University is the classroom. The classrooms were not designed to support English language teaching and group work. Therefore, the classes were similar to traditional lecture-based sessions where the students sit in rows, which made it hard for them to have an active role in the discussion. The number of students in each group was around 30, which is considered a large number for an English language classroom where the focus should be to interact and use the language, rather than sitting and listening to the teachers. The matter concerning the English language classrooms was raised by one of the
teachers; Indeed, Zahra complained about the classrooms when I asked her about the infrastructure at the University:

Regarding the classrooms, I think the classes are too small compared to the large number of students, and there is no air-conditioning (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

However, here Zahra complained about the current size of the classrooms and the fact that they do not accommodate the large number of students.

Coping with tensions

The lack of resources was not a barrier to the study participants’ efforts to teach, but it was a source of their development and their agency and played a significant role. They tried to use what was available in the department or even brought their own laptops and projectors into the classroom and used their personal 3G or 4G Internet connections; indeed they would bring their own CD players and speakers to play the CDs for the listening lessons. Miss Norah, the Head of the English Department, also talked about the fact that the teachers in the department had made use of technology in the past to search for materials and information, and so on. The teachers mainly used technology outside the classroom to communicate with their students via various tools such as Path, Tumblr, and WhatsApp. For instance, at the beginning of the research, Zahra tried to use social media with her students to do activities outside the classroom such as homework. I asked her how she describes the tools to her students – did she, for example, use a projector to explain how to use the tool? She replied:

No, unfortunately not – I used my mobile phone. I passed my own phone around the class, and with a group of four students I showed them the icon and how they can sign up, how they can use it. They told me, in time, we would learn how to use it. I can see that they have started to get to grips with it (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

This extract shows how Zahra’s motivation enabled her to use technology with her students and use what is available at the University to make the use of technology possible.

As time passed by, the study participants learned to be prepared for any technical problems or issues regarding the resources. Such as, they downloaded videos before the lesson or planned for additional activities besides those intended for the digital
technology. For example, Zahra reflected on her experience of using Path with her students:

When I use Path, I get them [the students] to write on a piece of paper if they don’t have devices or their laptops don’t support Path; for example, if they cannot add followers, as you might need an iPad for that. I always used to tell them, get a piece of paper, start writing and gather information (Zahra Int. 2 23 Dec. 2014).

Manal was also prepared for potential technical problems. To illustrate; for one class she had planned to use Twitter and Tumblr with her students, yet the Internet connection was poor at that time. Therefore, she presented the pictures she had planned to post on Twitter on the projector instead.

The teachers tried to resolve the problem of the lack of Internet connectivity by enquiring about changing classrooms with other teachers (in the English Department, not the teachers in the technology group) who had a better signal. Unfortunately, some of the teachers were not supportive in changing classes with the English teachers. There were several reasons for this. Teachers were accustomed to their classrooms and were not willing to change them, or their classes were bigger and they needed the space, or their classrooms had better ventilation. However, this issue had been resolved through support from the University staff (the administration) who assisted in finding classrooms in another building that had a stronger Internet signal, which in turn helped in attaining the object of social media implementation.

Nonetheless, the community of teachers had a significant role in resolving some of the issues of the infrastructure. The study participants tried to help each other to achieve their collective object of implementing digital technology. For example, they collaborated in setting up the projector and laptops prior to the start of lessons. They even exchanged their devices, as in the case of one of teacher who needed an additional device (this will be presented in the vignettes of Ruba’s classroom) to teach her lesson effectively. Thus, through cooperation this supportive group of teachers resolved contradictions that occurred between the subject and the tool elements of the teachers’ activity system.

6.2.2.3 Teachers’ contradictions

The cultural history of the teachers caused contradictions within the subjects of the activity system. As the study participants are novice teachers and they lack proper
teacher training, this caused tensions in the form of worries and the fear of failure. Therefore, tension was found between the subjects’ motivation to use digital technology, and at same time concern about their ability for this to be accomplished. Zahra stated, for example:

At first, I was worried about how I was going to use the technology with my students because it was new – I didn’t know how to use it and I didn’t know what students were going to think about it. How am I going to use it, as it is my first attempt at using it and my first time teaching? So at the start, teaching was difficult and using technology on top of that made it harder. I was worried about how I am going to actually accomplish this (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

This was the first response I obtained from Zahra in reflection on how she felt at the start of the research. She had concerns because (as has been discussed in the previous section 6.2.1.2) she lacks teaching knowledge and also in using technology thereby making things more difficult for her. Moreover, Zahra talked about the fact that she is a novice teacher, which also contributed to her feeling more anxious towards her use of technology. However, to address these concerns, she decided to only use technology for revision activities, which reveals a deliberate strategy for managing the introduction of tools into teaching: “So I didn’t use technology to teach anything new. It was only for one lecture, when I used it for a new lesson” (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

This strategy employed by Zahra was also used to reduce the likelihood of wasting time as a result of technological failure, and would thus make her less nervous:

Why did I do it like that then? Because there was an unreliable Internet connection and I didn’t want to waste time in the lecture trying to make sure that the Internet was working… So I used technology to revise previous lessons, as they would learn something from it, with the background from the previous lesson. That way they could start working using it, gathering what they have learned and applying it (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

The comment above illustrates the strategy that Zahra used as sometimes she postponed the writing activities on the course, and could therefore ask her students to complete them at a later time by using social media.

Anxiety of the ability to use digital technology in the classroom was also true for the other teachers, as Maram said:

I’m not that familiar with it. I worry about getting them to an incorrect source or something like that. I’m not confident enough in my own skill to use it, so that’s what perhaps makes me really hesitant to use it (Maram Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).
To cope with this, the study participants used the tools that they are more familiar with and occasionally also opted for tools more familiar to their students. Manal reflected on her own experience when she decided to use Twitter in her last lessons:

> I felt it’s [Twitter] easy because they’re familiar with how to use it, and I know how to use it too. I get worried about using new technology; I mean, it’s OK but I feel it’s better to use something I’m already familiar with, so that if they [students] ask me about something I’m able to respond and teach them how to use it (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

One of the things that study participants are afraid of, is their failing to implement social media in a successful way and that their students might not be motivated to use digital technology. Zahra, for example, talked about her expectations about her students:

> What makes me hesitant to use social media in the classroom is that there might be students who are active and others who are not, and they are depending only on their books – their only aim is to pass the exams without trying to improve themselves. I will try my best to make them willing to improve themselves. When I don’t get any response from them, I feel disappointed to be honest. I will try with them. They have only just started so hopefully they will become more active (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

### 6.2.2.4 Teacher-student contradictions

At the start of the research when the teachers began their implementation of social media, the students were generally excited about the idea of using social media with their teachers. From the first classroom observations and in the teachers’ interviews, it became clear that the students were motivated to learn with social media as they brought their devices, although strict rules were already in place preventing them from bringing their own technologies into the University. The students also helped their teachers in setting up the technology and to prepare the classroom. Consequently, the students played a significant role in the implementation of social media because their roles varied between facilitating and hindering the teachers from achieving their objective.

Students’ attitudes ranged from negative to very positive. The groups in the scientific strand were generally more eager to use technology than the groups in the arts strand. For example, Manal’s students (in the scientific strand) were motivated at the
beginning of the term. She said:

I would honestly say that the group I have is probably the best because they are eager to use technology. It’s just towards the end that they are not because they don’t want to come to the University. But at the beginning, they were really excited and impressed by the idea. Every time I asked them whether they would like to use it they said yes and that they enjoyed it, which means they want to use it. They enjoy bringing their laptops and using them (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

Another group in the scientific strand, like Zahra’s, was neutral about the idea of using social media; nonetheless, they worked very well with their teacher:

I felt that they [students] did not really like the idea of it [social media] but at the same time they were interacting very well. They were on the fence – not really with the technology, nor against using it. But they engage with it when I ask them to write; they write everything down, concentrate on what I am saying, gather information and everything (Zahra Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

The group with Ruba (in the arts and humanities strand) had somewhat different attitudes. At the beginning, she reported that they were less motivated but towards the end of the term, they enjoyed the experience:

The first time I asked them to bring their laptops and told them we’d be using technology, they said they couldn’t because they didn’t have time and were busy with lectures and tests and so on (Ruba, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

As foundation year students need to choose among three strands to specialise in; namely the humanities, science or finance, the students are different in their motivation to learn English language; so some believe that language is not essential to them, while others are keen to learn the language because some will become English language teachers or scientists. With regard to this matter, teacher Latifah said:

Some get excited because of their love of the language. I mean, they like language learning. Other girls don’t and think that it isn’t necessary because it’s not something they want to specialise in, so they don’t have to make an effort to study it (Latifah, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).

In comparison to the groups in other strands, students in the scientific strand usually have overall high marks because they need to meet the English language requirement to be able to major in science. Indeed, students in this strand will be specialising in majors that use English as the medium of instruction. The arts and humanities strand, however, have a number of different majors that the students can specialise in, such as Arabic, history and English. Therefore, some students in the humanities strand are
not willing to learn English language because they will not need it in the future as they will study for instance, history, Arabic or Islamic studies.

Although the students were generally motivated to use social media at the beginning of the research, it was not the case during the last lessons. Towards the end of the research, in some cases a contradiction arose between the objects of two activity systems; the teachers’ and the students’. The students perhaps saw the technology as a (failed) means to the end of learning the English language, while for the teachers the use of technology was an end in itself, i.e. the motive. This tension was reflected in teachers’ and students’ different attitudes towards the technologies. Although the teachers wanted their students to be active users of the social media, the students in some classes became bored, passive and non-responsive. This was evident in the classroom observation and teacher interviews. This was also obvious in Maram’s last lesson; her students became demotivated when she used Instagram. She posted a picture with words of different diseases (e.g., diabetes, cancer) and then asked them to write sentences using these words. She gave them some time to do the task. Yet, the time passed and the students did not appear to be engaged in a discussion, as was usually the case. Only a minority of students wrote the sentences and posted them using Instagram. Similarly, the students in Latifah’s class were initially active and everybody interacted with her first posts on Tumblr; however, the amount of interaction dropped towards the end of the term. Latifah reflected on her students’ negative attitudes and explained the ways she used to try to solve the issue of their demotivation and encourage the students to learn the language:

As for the reaction of the students, it wasn’t encouraging. They see the module as a general one that they don’t necessarily have to learn, so they weren’t eager to participate and answer and so on. Honestly, I tried using other means to get their attention such as giving them extra marks and so on but still, it took a lot of effort to tell them to do this and bring that and they weren’t excited at all. I felt like they were too irresponsive, which discouraged me (Latifah, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).

Students’ demotivation came about due to a number of reasons that will be discussed in the next section.

**The sources of tension**

The first reason to cause students’ demotivation towards the end of the research is perhaps the pressure on students from the other subjects they were studying, as well
as the number of additional tasks they are required to engage in. The students are in their foundation year and they are studying English as a general subject. The foundation year includes subjects other than English language and it is requirement for them to pass all the other subjects to be able to proceed to the following year and begin their actual University study. Consequently, when students had numerous responsibilities and were overloaded with work they became unwilling to use the technology. Latifah talked about her students and how their motivation changed towards the end of the term because they were preparing for the projects of the other subjects and also their exams:

At the beginning they were excited. But then they became really discouraged towards the end because they have other commitments such as tests in other modules and other projects. They’re not completely dedicated to learn the language; even when I tell them to they say they’ve another test or they have to do this or that. So I don’t like to put more pressure on them because I felt sorry for them to be honest – I don’t pressure them at all and gave them some space (Latifah, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).

Another reason is the fact that some students are not studying English language because they want to, but to pass an exam for the foundation year to progress with their other subject. For example, Wala said:

At the beginning, they were all excited. We used YouTube and Instagram and they liked it. But then, they found it boring. They started saying that it’s enough and that they wanted to focus on the book because they’re here to study from the book. They only wanted to know the main things in the lesson without touching upon other things. They even asked me not to explain things that aren’t in the book – they always just wanted the main points (Wala, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

Another factor that might contribute to the students’ demotivation is their mixed level of English, as teacher Manal said:

Well, the students’ [English language] levels vary. For example, things here in [the name of the town] aren’t like other cities. Here, the students are given a placement test at the beginning but the students aren’t allocated according to their levels, so their levels vary greatly. I mean I have some girls whose levels are a lot higher than the book’s level while other girls have a much lower level. The students are combined into one class, unlike other cities where students are placed according to their levels; this isn’t applied here in [the name of the town] (Manal, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

All the students with their different English language levels study one curriculum, which is for beginners. It is possible this would have a negative impact on the students whose English level is higher than beginner.
Another reason for the students’ demotivation might be related to their lack of digital literacy and not being familiar with some of the tools. There is an argument that this is the ‘digital generation’ (digital residents) but if the students have never experienced these tools, they will not be able to use them effectively; and even if they know the tools, they might not understand how to use them to learn English.

Another impact of students’ demotivation is related to the teachers’ classroom management. Some of the teachers at the beginning of the research were not aware of the importance of class management and to make sure that all the students are actively participating in the learning process. This happened when the teachers did not distribute the laptops equally to the group of students. As an illustration:

Manal did not check if all students are sharing the laptops with each other. I can see two students with two laptops and they are not sharing them with any other students. A number of students are sitting in the corner and do not have any laptop (my observation notes, Manal’s class, 4 Nov. 2014).

There were 29 students and nine laptops in the classroom. The solution for this tension might have been to divide the students into equal groups of three, except one group had four students, and give each group of students one laptop to share. However, Manal asked the other students who did not have laptops to write down the sentences on a piece of paper. Here is another note from my classroom observation with Manal on the 20th November 2014: “Unfortunately, the teacher did not divide the students into groups and check if all of the students are sharing and engaged. One student is sitting there holding an iPad and does not share it with anyone else”.

However, other teachers such as Wala were able to address this from the first lesson; she used digital technology as she divided her students equally and three or four students share one tablet or laptop (Wala’s class, 5 Nov. 2014).

The technical problems and issues with the Internet and technology (e.g., the issue of the stolen and broken devices reported by the students when they left their devices with the security staff, which was discussed previously) were among the reasons for the students’ demotivation. In relation to this, Latifah said:

Even the students were excited in the beginning when I told them to bring their laptops and that we’d be sharing things on Tumblr and so on. They were excited, and then when the Internet didn’t work and we had to postpone the exercise, I felt that the moment was gone and that they got discouraged in class. You know what it’s like – anything that gets told to be completed at home is over when you go home (Latifah, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).
Coping with tensions

The teacher’s agency has a role in trying to solve some of the issues (e.g., students’ digital literacy) by using one tool during the project. For example, Manal used Twitter because she thought that it was simple for her students to use and it is a popular tool among Saudi citizens, which is the reason for the students making this choice:

But for the girls it’s better to use something they’re familiar with instead of something that needs time to explain. It’s time-consuming, it’s hard to explain again how to use a type of technology and this is what I faced at the beginning with Tumblr. They kept asking me how to use it, how to sign up, how to post a picture and how to reply. This requires time; to explain how to use a tool. I found that Twitter was easy for both of us (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

Latifah talked about the fact that she chose various tools that she thought would be more straightforward for the students to use, and would put less pressure on them as they are starting a new stage of their life (university):

YouTube and Tumblr were the simplest tools, the simplest, and also because they’ve just started university and are a bit scared and confused. They’re not used to university life, so Tumblr and YouTube are the most suitable tools at this time. I mean, maybe at other levels they can use other programmes (Latifah, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).

Similarly, Maram thought about PowerPoint to ease the pressure on the students’ use of digital technology. As she put it:

PowerPoint is what they use the most and it’s easy for them, and they have it and are able to handle it. Most of them aren’t that familiar with computers and stuff like that so PowerPoint is the easiest (Maram, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

The teacher also tried to explain and discuss the benefits of using technology to their students at the beginning of the research as a way to motivate them.

The effect of tension on the teachers

Students’ attitudes towards social media in language learning was found to have an impact on what the teachers are trying to do and what they decide to do or not to do. As a result, a negative reaction from the students might lead to a teacher becoming frustrated and not continuing with the implementation. For example, Latifah said:

Their opinion is what gets you excited or discourages you. When you see the girls agreeing to what you’re suggesting and being eager to learn, you feel that this boosts your efforts, and when they completely reject it, you get discouraged (Latifah, Int. 2,
Teacher Ruba expressed similar views about her use of social media in the class:

It’ll depend on the response of the students I have of course. If they interact well, that’ll encourage me to use technology more often with them. If they don’t, I’ll just deliver the lesson and leave (Ruba, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

Frustration is the word that teachers used to refer to their feelings about their students’ negative attitude:

A teacher would feel frustrated if she doesn’t get any reaction from the students. You have seen my students, they might be different from the other group, like you might find students not willing to use technology and they feel forced to use it. On the other hand, you might find another group who like to use it (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

Zahra stated that her students’ negative reaction is the only factor that would possibly make her pause and consider whether to use technology in the class. She said:

I don’t think that there is anything else that makes me hesitate to use the technology; it is just the students, whether they make me feel motivated to use it or not (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

The teachers also expressed a belief that students’ motivation is crucial to their teaching and their own motivation to teach. Manal talked about this from her own perspective:

Even when I feel like I’m not in the mood to teach, they (the students) change that. In fact, the students are the ones that encourage you to do your best. Sometimes, when they’re not very responsive in a lecture, as teacher you’re no longer in the mood to teach, so they help you more (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

From the teachers’ statements we can see that the students’ willingness to use the technology is perceived by the teachers as an important matter that affects their decision making about using technology in the classroom. The teachers’ concerns about the students’ reaction might additionally be due to the fact that they are inexperienced teachers. On the other hand, the teachers are young having just graduated, which possibly made them more understanding of their students’ needs, as Wala reflected:

I was a student once so I know what the girls are going through and at the same time, I wanted to reassure them and make them confident about their university experience. The girls are fresh high-school graduates and they’re terrified of university, so I always liked the idea of reassuring them a little bit (Wala, Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014).

Similarly, Manal stated:
Their opinion is important because I was a student just like them, so I would definitely ask them about the things which they like... Because if you give them and provide them with what they enjoy, they'll understand it better. If they're not comfortable with what you're giving them and the way you're teaching them, they won't be responsive. That's it, they'll completely ignore it. They won't make an effort to understand because they don't like the topic. But, even though their opinion is important to me, I don’t undermine my tasks (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

This was evident when the teachers asked their students about their opinions regarding the social tools and then gave them the freedom to choose the tools that they liked.

6.2.2.5 Summary

Using social media for language education in Saudi women’s higher education created a number of tensions within the activity system, which revealed some of the underlying contradictions. One of the contradictions was related to the rules imposed by the University that restrict the subjects from achieving their object. The other contradiction is related to the tools element of the activity as it caused tension between the teacher’s motivation to use social media and the limited availability of resources at the University. The third contradiction is within the subjects themselves and between their motivation to use social media and their worries about their ability to use it. The fourth contradiction is between the teachers’ and students’ objects. Under each contradiction, there were discussions on the sources of these contradictions and how the subjects with their agency coped with these tensions. Those contradictions were the source of development within the activity system. Although some of those contradictions were transformed, most of them remained unresolved.

6.2.3 The possibility for transformation

Although the activity system faced a number of contradictions between and within activity systems, and there were moments of discouragement among the teachers and the students, there were positive outcomes in the form of transformation. These transformations happened over three months (one term). Although fundamental matters may not change due to the constraints of the limited amount of time, some aspects of them changed and caused personal, collective and systemic transformations. The teachers hold positive beliefs about the use of social media due to their prior experiences and their frequent use of these in their leisure time. The
division of labour in the activity system creates different positions for the participants in the activity system, which in turn help in transforming themselves and the activity. The community in the main activity system includes the teachers in the technology group, and the researcher. Each one of them has their own position within the activity. The community has a mediational role towards achieving the object of the activity. There was support from the group of teachers, the management and the University. So, all of these played significant roles in the activity system as they mediate each other towards meeting the object of the activity, which in turn caused transformation in the activity system.

During the data analysis, I identified teachers’ goal-directed actions and object-oriented activity. Goal-directed actions are short-term in nature and it might be considered as a step that the teacher can take when participating in the object-oriented activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The examination of these two helps to identify the systemic contradictions within the activity system that creates tensions for the teachers and the students (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The contradictions that were evident during social implementation and the study participants’ agency within these tensions became driving forces for the activity to expand (Engeström and Sannino 2010).

By analysing and examining the teachers’ goal-oriented actions, I was able to identify the teachers’ collective activity system, which has a communal object. The discussion here will be around how teachers implement technology and how their objects transformed during the term, and what kind of transformation happened in the activity system as a result of the introducing of social media in the women’s Saudi context.

**6.2.3.1 Teachers’ actions and objects**

The research participants’ collective object and actions went through different stages during the research project and this caused transformation within the object and within the subjects’ practices. To understand how the transformation in the activity happened, I will present the findings under this theme in three stages. The first stage presents the actions and the objects before the implementation. The second stage
involves the early stage of the implementation, and the last stage presents the final stages of the implementation.

6.2.3.1.1 Stage 1: Questioning and analysing

After I introduced technology and the use of social media in education to the study participants, they appeared to be enthusiastic to use the social media but they started to question, criticise and reject some aspects of the current practice saying that that technology is not where it is supposed to be:

Here at the University, I’ve seen that very little is provided to be honest. Nothing is available. Even the girls have a programme called Education First, which they’re supposed to implement here at the University and access it here, but there aren’t any labs available. It’s a programme with listening and speaking exercises with trainers online. This is supposed to be used here at the University, but we don’t have Internet access or devices so the girls have to do it at home … this is so sad, the University should provide technology for the students and hopefully they will (Maram, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).

The study participants were against the rule of preventing the students from having their devices inside the University. For example, Zahra was particularly critical of the current University rules:

It is not permitted to bring anything to the University unless you have formal permission. The University is supposed to provide the technology and it should be expected and normal for the University students, not high school students maybe, to bring their laptops, iPads or tablets to University. This is the situation in [the name of a town] whereas bringing technological devices to university is not banned in [the name of a city] (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Then, the study participants started to analyse the situation by eliciting their students’ views of using digital technology in the classroom (which includes portable devices and social media):

I asked them [students] are you for the use of technology in the class or against it? Some were for the idea and others were against it. Then, I asked them, which tools would you be OK with us using? They said Twitter and Facebook. I then started to use Path and I asked them to sign up and communicate with each other using Path (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Zahra next talked about her students’ reactions after she asked them to use Path and showed them how to use it:

They were really really excited about it. When I told them about Path, I asked them is there any one who is against this idea? They said no we all want to use it, to the extent that one student got upset because she doesn’t have a smart phone and she is
living in students’ accommodation with a Blackberry which doesn’t support the app. I really wanted to help her by getting her access to a tablet or anything that will help her to communicate with us. She sat there really upset because she saw all her friends were going to be using technology to learn. The University should provide this to students for education purposes because teaching with just materials is not going to help the students to learn as much (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

From the extracts above, we can see how Zahra’s started to analyse the situation to determine her students’ attitudes towards technology. As it has been discussed before, the teachers are concerned with their students’ opinions more than anything else. She talked about one student who was not able to have a device like everyone else and expressed her dissatisfaction with the current situation at the University and the need for technology to be provided for the students to use, which also shows her firm belief in the value of educational technology.

Moreover, the study participants tried to analyse their students’ needs and the issues they have that may be addressed by using digital technologies (more discussion about that was in section 6.2.1.4). For example, Zahra wanted to address her students’ needs by using social media to motivate them to write and this will help them to overcome recurring mistakes in grammar and make them practice writing:

> When the term first started, I asked them, I would like to use technology for teaching [English] language as I feel it will be very useful for the students. It will help them improve their skills, especially in grammar. They’re struggling with grammar, they’re making mistakes and the technology might help them and, later on, they will get more used to writing (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Manal also stated that students wanted to use social media to improve their writing skills:

> They said from the beginning that they have to get used to writing, because there’s an entire question on writing in the test so they need to get used to it. (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

This may explain why the study participants focused on writing when they used social media in their teaching.

The study participants’ objects were diverse especially at the beginning of the research (more discussion on this was in section 6.2.1.1). Some participants in the study are only teaching to gain experience as a step towards another future, not as an end in itself. For instance, Zahra considers her job as a way to improve her English language and the use of social media will help in that too, besides her students. Similarly, Latifah wanted to gain experience in order to plan for another future. On
the other hand, Maram and Manal had planned for this job and see it as an end. Although some of these objects are not related to social media, they may affect the study participants’ motivation to use digital technology in their teaching. Because if the teachers consider teaching as a long-term job, they would put effort into improving their practices and thus use digital technology in their teaching. Therefore, the cultural history of the study participants had a role in their current activity system. This is because they bring their prior experiences to the activity and this may facilitate or constrain them from attaining their object.

6.2.3.1.2 Stage 2: Using social media

After analysing the situation, understanding the tools, and the purpose of using them, the study participants started to apply what they had learned and prepared in the classrooms. At the very early stages, they appeared to have their own individual responsibility for their implementation although they were more dependent on me. Therefore, their collective object of using social media in their classrooms was unfocused and they had a strict view of what social media is and how it can benefit the students and themselves. In general, their object was towards the social media itself and every teacher had her different goal-oriented actions. As a consequence, the teachers were fascinated with the idea of using social media and they used a variety of tools without a specific shared object, and their focus was on the technology itself more than the pedagogy.

To illustrate, Ruba’s and Latifah’s early use of social media was more to support their current activities. They used mainly YouTube and PowerPoint to present information or as a brainstorming activity. Their current use may be because of their cultural history as when they were learners their tutor at the University used the same tools with them, which they found useful in understanding the lesson (see previous discussion on this in section 6.2.1.4.1). Social media tools encourage constructivist approaches to teaching and learning (Poore, 2016). However, the study participants used them to support their traditional ways of teaching.

To show an example of that, we can look at Ruba’s first use of social media. She did not ask her students to bring their devices, thus she only used her own laptop, projector and speaker. Ruba was the controller of the classroom environment where
she played the role of lecturer (who gives lectures) and the role of the decision maker; she is responsible for the content and the outcome of the lesson. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that she followed the curriculum and the lesson objectives that were set by the English department. She used PowerPoint to show them slides with pictures on them and let the students say and repeat the new vocabulary. She asked questions and picked students to answer them. Occasionally, she used Arabic language to explain grammatical rules or to teach vocabulary.

When I observed Ruba’s first classes, the classroom environment was more competitive as the students were sitting in rows and waiting for their teacher to ask questions. Most of the time, a group of students answered verbally while they are sitting or they raised their hands to be selected to answer the question. The students did most of the activities individually and read the answers aloud after that. Therefore, the classrooms appeared to be teacher-fronted and the students were not involved in the lessons as they were sitting and receiving the information. When I asked Ruba about the reason for not asking her students about bringing their devices, she replied that the students were not enthusiastic about the idea because of the rules imposed by the University.

Ruba, Latifah and Maram were somewhat hesitant to use digital technology in the classrooms and this is may be because of their lack of confidence and experience; as a result, they used what they already knew such as PowerPoint and YouTube. In fact, in the early stages, most of the study participants used PowerPoint and this is because they and also their students were familiar with it. As an example, Maram said that using new tools would be challenging for her students except for PowerPoint, which she considered an easy tool to use:

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\text{It’ll be too difficult for the students. PowerPoint is what they use the most and it’s easy for them; they have it and are able to handle it. Most of them aren’t that familiar with computers and stuff like that so PowerPoint is the easiest (Maram, Int. 1, 21 Oct. 2014).}
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The teachers even asked their students to give presentations using PowerPoint and YouTube. Wala, for example, asked her students to deliver presentations using these tools in a number of the lessons she taught.
YouTube was used frequently and it was mainly utilised in brainstorming activity. As it was mentioned before, the teachers’ use of this tool is because of their positive experience when they were learners as their tutors used to present YouTube videos to introduce the topics of the lessons (see earlier discussion of this topic in section 6.2.1.4.1). From classroom observation and the interviews with the participants, this tool could minimise the chance of using Arabic language in their teaching as it facilitates explaining the new vocabulary by showing pictures and videos of the topics, thus allowing the teachers to explain the lesson without the need to use Arabic to translate vocabulary. Therefore, this maximises the exposure to English language and the more exposure they receive, the faster they learn (Ellis, 2005). Manal talked about the benefit of YouTube:

YouTube is the most useful tool I have used. Even if they don’t understand what is being said they can understand it from the video they’re watching – they can comprehend the meaning. If they don’t understand a word, they can link it to the image they’re seeing (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

Manal believes that YouTube could help her students to develop their speaking skills. She suggested YouTube channels for her students that could help them to speak as she complained that their pronunciation was not good enough and so they needed to practise their language through conversations. On YouTube they are able to watch videos by a native speaker of the language and this will help them to pronounce words correctly.

The study participants also used YouTube as a way to introduce the students to another culture such as a class when Wala used videos of celebrations, birthdays and weddings from different countries. Similarly, Latifah used YouTube to depict sightseeing of different countries. And during that activity, she asked questions such as what is this place? Where is this place? Do you now? What is the Netherlands? She also presented a video of breakfasts worldwide that showed examples of breakfasts from various countries. The students were then asked to relate the video to their local context and write sentences using the new words they had learned from the video.

On the other hand, the teachers (i.e. Zahra, Manal and Wala) who are more motivated to use social media asked their students from the start to bring their
devices and even their tablets, although this idea is novel at the University. As it was discussed before, due to the infrastructure at the University as a whole, it was the norm for the teachers who want to use technology with their students to ask them to bring their laptops. However, some study participants asked their students to bring their tablets, which was something unconventional in this context as it has been discussed previously that the devices that include cameras (e.g., mobile phones and tablets) are forbidden inside the University premises, except laptops that are strictly permitted.

The vignette below describes Zahra’s implementation of social media in the middle of the project, which shows how she started to use them in ways that I considered more effective, based on the constructivist approaches that these technologies can support, as they can encourage students’ collaboration and “active participation in knowledge construction and in the learning process” (Poore, 2016, p. 11), although the class still had some elements of traditional ways of teaching. Nonetheless, it shows the beginnings of expansive learning as the teachers started to share their experiences and work collaboratively towards the object of the use of social media.

**Vignette 1 (a visit to Zahra’s class 2)**

It was 8:00 am on the morning of 6th November 2014 when teacher Zahra entered the classroom carrying her laptop and a portable projector. Thirty-five students were sitting in rows waiting for the teacher to set up the projector and six of them brought their own tablets. A few minutes later, Zahra started her lesson by revising the previous lesson. She then introduced the topic of the lesson and wrote on the whiteboard, “Two ways of shopping: online and mall shopping”. Next, she asked the students to open their books to answer some questions about shopping. After that, she told the students that she was going to make a call with a female friend of hers from the United Arab Emirates via the Facebook messenger call feature, and the phone call would be about shopping in the UAE. She used her mobile phone and speakers and made the audio call:

Zahra: Good morning

Emirati friend: Good morning Zahra

Zahra: Could you introduce yourself to my students?
Emirati friend: My name is.. and I am from United Arab Emirates. I live in Dubai

Zahra: Could you talk about shopping in Dubai?

Emirati friend: Yes, sure. Dubai mall is considered the largest mall in UAE. There is also a Dubai festival …..

Then, the Emirati friend continued to talk about shopping in Dubai. After that, the Emirati friend asked Zahra, “What other things would like to know about?” Zahra asked her about the prices, the weather and so on. A few minutes later, Zahra ended the call and moved to ask the students questions about the information that the Emirati friend shared. The students were excitedly answering the questions. Next, Zahra presented a mind-map about shopping and asked the students to build up the mind map. The students called out the vocabulary of the advantages and disadvantages of online and mall shopping. The teacher listened to the students’ answers and wrote them on the mind map. After that, Zahra turned to the course book and asked the students to find some answers in the book about the advantages and disadvantages of online shopping. Then, Zahra gave examples of shopping from the local context, for instance, “When do shops close in (the name of the town)?” She then revised the completed mind map with the students and asked them to read it.

Zahra played a video about a summary of online shopping. There were some Internet connection issues. Therefore, I turned on my personal WIFI hotspot for the teacher to connect. She managed to play another video about the things to keep safe while shopping online. Zahra asked questions about the rules to shop online and the students raised their hands to answer the questions. Following that, Zahra asked the students to do the activities in the course book. After finishing the activities, Zahra posted pictures on Path and asked her students to describe them, using “colour + adjective” describe the clothes. She explained the rule using Arabic language so the students could understand the task. The teacher went around checking if all students managed to access Path. However, the Internet disconnected every few minutes. I tried to deal with the problem by moving and fixing the antenna of the router. Finally, the Internet connection was improved and the students managed to access their accounts in Path using the tablets. Every five students shared one tablet and they worked together to write the sentences, which described the clothes in the pictures using adjectives. They took some time to write the sentence. After that, the teacher
read the sentences and gave them feedback and corrected their spelling mistakes. It was 9:30 am, which indicated the end of the class.

This vignette shows an example Zahra’s implementation of social media during the middle stages of the study. She sometimes appeared to control the class while students were sitting there and receiving the information without their involvement in the learning process. For example, when Zahra made a phone call with a friend of hers, she did not involve students in the speaking task although the students appeared to enjoy the activity. As another example, Zahar used mind mapping and presented it to the students using a projector. She then asked her students to call out the answers instead of letting them work on their own to build the mind map so they could then share their mind maps with their friends or work in groups to build their mind maps. Nonetheless, her use of Path and asking her students to work together and write the sentences shows the teachers have come to know the benefits that these social media can offer to language learning. It is worth pointing out that Zahra changed her classroom into the other building where the Internet signal was better than in the previous building and the room was a regular room, not an English lab. Securing this room shows Zhara’s agency within the activity system and her desire to achieve her objectives as she tried to use a variety of tools in one lesson, in addition to her innovative use when she called a friend from another country. Yet, at this stage, the issues of infrastructure and the Internet were sometimes preventing the teachers from attaining their object and my role in this was important – to help the teachers in confronting any issues regarding this matter.

6.2.3.1.3 Stage 3: Using social media

Contradictions as a source of development

The contradictions related to the rules and the infrastructure were evident during the early stages (more detailed discussion in section Contradictions); however, these issues were partly resolved. The study participants were allowed to use the classrooms in the other building, which had a better Internet signal. They learned how to tackle various issues with the Internet by having another plan or activity in case the Internet did not work. In addition, the other issues with University rules were partly resolved when the teacher suggested taking responsibility for their
students’ devices, and thus to minimise the issues related to this matter. While these contradictions were partly resolved, the contradiction between teachers’ and students’ objects became evident towards the end of the research (full discussion on that in section 6.2.2.4). As a result, the teachers’ goal-oriented actions fluctuated between using social media in their classrooms and at the same time coping with the issues that happen around them that may affect their use of social media inside the classroom. Consequently, their object was slightly diffused as they focused on the issues more than their technology implementation.

These contradictions played as a force for the development of their practices as they became more collaborative towards facing these challenges. The study participants also became less worried and more comfortable as their worries started to fade away. For example, Ruba talked about how she and her students felt at the start of the study, and their feelings after resolving of the tensions and everything was settled:

I was really excited [at the beginning], but as you saw, we had challenges such as Internet access and so on. You know the Internet connection in the other building was much poorer [the first building]. Also, the students themselves, they were among the challenges that I faced because all of them, well most of them, refused to bring their laptops. I also faced problems from the University; there was a time when laptops were prohibited… But for the last lessons, thankfully the students got excited and I did too. Because most of them agreed to bring their laptops, thankfully, and many of them took part in the lesson (Ruba, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

Ruba explained why the students agreed to participate in technology use and how the resolution of the tensions affected her students’ motivation to use social media and thus affected hers too. Therefore, they became more motivated towards the end of the project. When I asked Ruba why she thought that her students were more motivated than before, she replied:

The students moaned about how they’d carry their laptops and where to leave them and so on. I think that now they’re used to the University rules and the idea of bringing laptops and leaving them with the teachers. So that’s it… they got used to this and they’re comfortable with bringing their laptops now and taking them home (Ruba, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

Below is a vignette of Ruba’s class at the last stages of the study, which illustrates how she engaged the students in the learning process. Ruba reported that she and her students were more motivated towards the end of the study (Ruba Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).
Vignette 2 (A visit to Ruba’s class)

It was 8:20 am in the morning of 10 Dec 2014. The students had just taken their seats and sat in rows. Seven students had brought their laptops and Ruba started to divide them up into groups. Three other teachers came in, one was carrying a projector and another carrying Ruba’s laptop. They started to set up the projector and attached this to the laptop but it was not working. One teacher left to bring her laptop. There were seven groups and each group consisted of five students sharing one laptop. Ruba started the lesson by asking the students to open their books. Then she said, “We will talk about countries today, the world is divided into seven continents”. The teacher pointed to the map of the world in the book and asked, “Where is Saudi Arabia?” One student pointed to the location of the country. Ruba then explained the difference in meaning between country and nationality and wrote on the board: “I am a Saudi Arabian girl”. Next she drew a table that consisted of three columns: “country”, “nationality” and “language”. She wrote under that “Saudi Arabia”, “Saudi Arabian” and “Arabic”. While Ruba was writing, the other teacher came in carrying her own laptop and tried to set it up with the help of the two teachers. Then, all three teachers left. Ruba asked the students to give examples of the country, nationality and language. The students raised their hands and one came to front to the class and wrote, “America”, “American”, “English”. Another student wrote on the whiteboard “France”, “French” and “French”. The teacher turned on her colleague’s laptop and gave the instructions for the next task. Ruba had already used Twitter with her students, so the students had their Twitter accounts open and ready for the task. Ruba tweeted pictures of flags of different countries and asked the students to tweet the country, the nationality and the language for each picture. The students worked together and wrote the tweets “Italy”, “Italian”, “Italian”. Ruba read the students’ tweets and corrected their mistakes. She then used the whiteboard to explain the difference between Spain and Spanish and that Spanish is an adjective for someone who is from Spain. Next, Ruba asked a question and posted it on Twitter, “Where do people speak these languages?” She gave them the instructions and told them that they were going to be speed writing for a short period of time. She was going to tweet questions and they had to work together and write the answers. Ruba set a time limit and said, “Let’s see which group will write faster”. The students were smiling and nodded their heads in agreement. They seemed excited about the idea and started
working together straight away. Every three to five minutes, Ruba posted different questions, some of them with pictures: “What is the name of this tower? What is the name of this place?” and so on. The students did not take much time to tweet their answers and Ruba did not post a question until all seven groups had finished their writing for the previous question; then she moved to the next question. Ruba praised the group who completed the task earlier than the others. She accepted the correct answers and paid little attention to the spelling mistakes.

Following that, Ruba asked the students to open their books for the listening task and gave them instructions. As usual in language teachers’ classes, Ruba played the CD using her colleagues’ laptop and speakers. After they finished the listening task, they returned to Twitter and the teacher posted more questions. She then went around the class to help the students writing their answers. The students engaged in the task and were discussing. In each group, one student was responsible for taking notes and writing the sentences. The other four students were in discussion and trying to find the answers. Ruba read their answers aloud and then she gave them feedback. Ruba, then announced the winning group, “Batool group is the winner”. The group members clapped their hands in excitement. Ruba explained the homework, which was to write a paragraph about any country and its culture, customs and traditions. At the end, Ruba thanked the students for their work and praised them. The class ended at 9:30 am.

From the vignette above, we can see how Ruba’s practices changed from her first use of the tools. She had generally used the tools to present information or for brainstorming. Here, she used Twitter for vocabulary and writing tasks and the students looked more engaged with tasks in comparison to her first implementations. As has been discussed, the previous issues made Ruba’s students unwilling to bring their devices to the University; however, when these were resolved and the teachers’ practices changed as she involved students in the learning process, they became more engaged and seemed eager to use these technologies. Perhaps, as Ruba suggested, “The girls are young so they’re into these things” (Ruba, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014) and were more likely to engage in the learning process (classroom observation of Ruba’s class, 16 Dec. 2014).
The Internet connection was not an issue at that time but there were still some technical problems such as when the teacher could not connect her laptop to the projector. Nonetheless, the other teachers helped in solving this matter straight away by bringing another laptop, which belonged to another teacher. The teachers’ object was reconceptualised throughout the research from first criticising the current practices through analysing the situation, to facing the different tensions and working together to solve them. Then, by starting to work together as a team, sharing experiences and developing the knowledge of how to use these technologies and therefore engaging their students more in the learning process. By the end of the research, the teachers began to share one communal object, which is to focus on improving their students’ writing skills.

This section discussed the findings regarding the transformation that occurred in teachers’ practices and objects during the research. The next sections will provide the findings regarding the systemic, collective and individual transformations.

6.2.3.2 Systemic transformation

Systemic transformation is related to the transformation of the organisation itself and the learning outcomes. Although there were issues related to bringing devices into the University that contain a camera, and there were strict rules about that, the University became more flexible about the matter regarding tablets. Students are now allowed to bring their tablet but need to leave them with the security staff or their teachers, and are only permitted to use them inside the classroom for educational purposes. Miss Norah talked about the plan of including more technology in the department:

I wish we could have computer labs under supervision; with an IT person who helps the students and teachers and to support technology use. We sent a request to the University administration to ask for computer labs in the department. This is under procedure now and they promised us that they will provide the department with computer labs and an Internet connection (Miss Norah, Int1. 25 Dec. 2014).

This extract shows how the Head of the Department was inclined towards the use of technology. She made a request to the University to provide the department with the essential technology to make the use of social media possible.
With regard to the students’ learning, social media tools support the constructivist theories of learning. The teachers used the tools mainly for group work. One of the aims of using these tools by the teachers was to encourage the students to write, and the teachers found that micro-blogging tools such as Twitter, Tumblr and Path were beneficial tools for the students’ level of English. For example, Manal talked about the fact that the curriculum is simple and Path is suitable for the curriculum because the students can do simple activities such as taking pictures of the weather, posting them on their account and writing two or three sentences describing what the weather looks like in the picture.

Therefore, throughout the final stages of social media implementation the students were working in groups (after they were divided into small groups by the teachers), which in turn helped in increasing their motivation and improved their interaction when they worked together during the lesson and produced their writing. In each group of students (three to four students), one student was responsible for bringing her device and sharing it with her classmates, and this shows how the students collaborated with each other. In some of the classes, where the study participants (i.e., Zahra, Manal and Ruba) used Twitter with their students, they asked the students a question via Twitter and the students then worked together to find the answer, which they subsequently posted on Twitter. Then, the teachers revised the answers using the projector and provided feedback.

Manal employed a similar approach to Ruba in her classes regarding the use of Twitter with her students. She tweeted a link of a website explaining a grammar rule (present simple and continuous). Then, she asked her students to tweet three sentences using the present simple and the continuous tenses. The students worked together and wrote the tweets. After reading their sentences, the teacher then gave them feedback. The students seemed to enjoy their discussion and writing the tweets. Next, the teacher asked the students to tweet and write sentences about their reaction to bad and good news (use that’s + adjective). By the end of the task, the students said that they enjoyed the task and would like the teacher to continue using Twitter for classroom activities. The students appeared to enjoy the activity when they worked together (classroom observation notes, 4 Dec. 2014).

Working with social media enables students to use the language and practise what
they have learned straight away. Consequently, social media allowed students to become more active in the classroom, to use the language and work collaboratively in completing the tasks. Manal’s students stated that they liked the technology because it made more them engaged in learning rather than being passive receptors in the classrooms. We can therefore say that digital technology helped the students to mediate their learning and achieve their object:

One thing I did was to ask the students what was so special about it [digital technology]? I asked them about what they liked during this experience. They said that when I asked them a question or something… instead of them being distracted and lacking concentration in the lesson, they had a means which enabled them to research things during the lecture. So, when I asked them about a word or something, they could research it. So, sometimes I’d ask a question, and I’d know that they didn’t know the answer so they would tell me that they researched it during the lecture itself. This is the highlight of this tool; that it benefits them in the lecture itself instead of them being idle and non-responsive. The language isn’t their native language and if the subject was different, then the students might know more about it (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

Writing skills was one of the skills that all teachers emphasised might be developed through the use social media, especially at the end of the research when they saw substantive improvement in their students’ writing. Latifah talked about her students and how they were able to write about themselves clearly using Tumblr, as compared to the early stages when they first used the tool. Similarly, Ruba talked about her students when they were able to describe and discuss what the picture (she posted) was about. Zahra was impressed with her students’ writing in the exam:

I saw what they did in the exam. They wrote exactly what I taught them when I used wiki and Path… They really got a lot out of using technology (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

Ruba also talked about the improvements in her students’ writing skills:

I felt that they benefited from writing on Twitter… yes they benefited the most in writing and in expressing pictures, so they would express what the picture was about (Ruba, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

The reason that the teachers might focus on writing when they used social media with their students is because of the rules of the English department, in that the students need to practise their writing skills and will be assessed by a question in the final exam concerning their writing skills (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014; document analysis).

The teachers used a number of tools to support their students’ interactivity and
creativity. For example, they employed mind mapping such as Mindomo for vocabulary lessons. Mind mapping is a useful tool for building vocabulary, visualising, organising and presenting information. It is a good way to support higher order cognitive skills such as analysis and evaluation (Poore, 2016).

The teachers also used podcasts. Podcasting is a useful tool for students’ language learning as they can work together collaboratively and create their own podcasts. However, it was problematic for the teachers to ask students to record their voices and publish them online, so the teachers preferred to source ready-made podcasts about a specific topic and then ask the students to listen and share it on their accounts. As in the class when Manal shared a podcast on Twitter.

Towards the end of the research, each teacher tried to focus on one tool and considered that was less complicated for both themselves and their students. Twitter, Tumblr and Path were amongst the tools that were frequently used by the teachers. Because these tools can encourage students to write and at the same time have a number of features such as sharing audio and visual materials. Zahra talked about the functions of Path and how this media can be used in teaching:

I can give them things and topics to write about and ask them questions or to describe something or talk about themselves. They can upload a picture and describe it. In Path, you can share music, movies or books. I can upload sections of text from books, write my reviews and ask my students to read them and write their reviews in three days’ time. Then, we can critique and talk about them together (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

Social media did not only benefit students’ English language learning but also benefits the teachers in terms of communicating with their students, their peers and it is also a good platform to share materials and exchange ideas.

Although the availability of the technology is crucial for successful implementation, the study participants considered that students’ engagement is the most important factor that will affect their willingness of using social media. To illustrate, Zahra said:

The students are the most [important] of all… because you can provide devices like we did previously but the students’ engagement, that’s the most important thing… whether they like it or not… But the most important thing is the student and above all and again, the student (Zahra Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).
6.2.3.3 The role of the community

The community had a significant role in the activity system as they help in attaining the object of the activity. The community here comprised of the researcher and the group of the study participants (as we call them, the technology group). Implementing technology in a place where it lacks proper infrastructure is demanding. Therefore, my role at the beginning of the study among the community was prevalent. The study participants needed my help in terms of facilitating the permission for having devices inside the University and facilitating their implementation of technology. As the Wi-Fi was not available for the teachers to use, I brought a router for the teachers to be able to connect to the Internet. However, the Internet signal was not reliable in some of the classes. As a result, I tried to change the position of the router to catch a signal or even to move it to another room. In addition to my role as technical support, I used to give teachers advice on their use of technologies, what tools were recommended to be used, and how to use them to support the activity in the course book and so on.

At the beginning of the research, the study participants in the group were not really working collaboratively to implement technology or to share ideas and knowledge. In spite of the help I gave the teachers, each one of them had her solo responsibility to act and to prepare for the lesson. Although I asked the teachers to participate in the Facebook group we had at the beginning of the study, they did not participate until they became more engaged in their implementation.

After that, collective transformation was seen when the study participants started to work together, especially when contradictions became evident. The teachers reported how participating in the project opened up opportunities to have new experiences of using unfamiliar tools. Those tools enabled them to be able to work in groups, to exchange ideas and share their experiences (informal meeting, 8 Dec. 2014). The teacher technology group had a significant role in facilitating the attainment of the object. Through face-to-face interaction, a WhatsApp group and Facebook, the teachers used to share their experiences, exchange ideas and help each other. WhatsApp was mainly being used by the teachers for discussing issues related to their classes, such as who was going to use the projector and the speaker, as they all share one projector and two speakers. The study participants did not start working in
a Facebook group until the last month of the study, which was a good opportunity for them to share and exchange ideas. Wala, Ruba and Zahra were among the others who were more active in the Facebook group. The teachers shared articles about teachers’ professional development and technology, and the role of technology in personalising the English language experience as well as useful resources such as a number of websites and tools they used with their students. Wala reflected on being in a Facebook group with teachers who share the same interests and how the information they shared in the group benefited her in terms of her lesson preparation:

It’s an interesting idea – I really liked it, especially using Facebook. I could use technology with the information I get from Facebook (Wala, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

In addition to the study participants’ collective transformation, there was individual transformation among the subjects of the activity system. Ruba was a good example of an individual transformation during the research project. At the beginning of social media implementation, she had less knowledge of how to use them in the classroom but after her experience of using them and working in the technology group exchanging ideas with the other teachers she was able to use different technologies to achieve her aim of the lesson. Ruba reflected on her experience:

I got in touch with my friend Zhara and the others in the [technology] group… Manal and Latifah and the others helped me a lot, because sometimes I needed certain things but didn’t know how to use them or apply them in the lesson, so they’d advise me to do this or that and I’d go on the website and check what they had said – and use the same tips they gave me. This allowed me to discover new things as well. I really benefited from their help, to be honest (Ruba, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

Moreover, Ruba talked more about the teachers’ technology group and how Zahra encouraged her to use new tools, which she was not familiar with:

Zahra is the one who encouraged me the most to use these new tools. Also Manal, gave me an idea that she used in her lesson. It was about the top ten foods, which lead to obesity. She inspired me to use different types of food and the students had to look up the ingredient from the video (Ruba, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

What is interesting about this community of teachers is that those who knew more than the others, offered to help the less experienced ones. Teacher Wala reflected on her experience when her colleague helped her:

Latifah told me about Tumblr and I really liked it. It’s really good for the students as well, more than Instagram and YouTube. It has more features, like using a variety of pictures and it allows you to complete paragraphs by adding words, and to post
pictures and videos. It is very useful to have all these features in one tool (Wala, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

Some teachers attended more successful teachers’ classes to observe how they implemented social media in their classrooms and benefitted from them. Teacher Maram reflected on her experience:

I attended a class by Wala in which she and the students used YouTube and saw that the students enjoyed it. So I thought to myself I’d use it… I was able to attend Wala’s class, observe… and see the students’ reaction. They really liked it and were excited, and I enjoyed the class a lot (Maram, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).

The teachers not only helped each other on how to use different social tools in the classroom, but they also supported each other by carrying the equipment (e.g., projectors, speakers, laptops) to the classrooms and setting them up such as in the vignette of Ruba’s class.

6.2.3.4 The role of cultural history

Although the research was conducted during one term, teachers’ cultural history appeared to have a role in attaining the object of the activity system. The positive experiences of using social media in the study participants’ language learning made them willing to use them for their own teaching, to improve their students’ learning and address the issues they have regarding the English language. The study participants’ lack of adequate teacher training made them motivated to use social media as an opportunity to develop their teaching by searching for materials through the internet, asking more knowledgeable colleagues, and exchanging ideas as well to improve their English language at the same time.

Their motivation contributed to their determination to face the challenges and worked together to make the implementation possible. Therefore, the contradictions were sources of the teachers’ development as well as their agency that played a role when they tried to work, face and handle the contradictions that existed within and between the activity systems. For example, during the period when students were forbidden to bring their devices inside the University, this did not stop the self-motivated teacher Zahra from using social media in the classroom. Consequently, she brought her own devices, laptop, tablet and smartphone, distributed them to her students and delivered her lesson, and was thus able to achieve the objectives of her lesson. This shows how teachers with strong belief can handle situations even if
implementing technology seems to be impossible.

Another reason that may contribute to the study participants’ motivation is the positive reactions of their students. Maram, for example, was not enthusiastic to use technology before the project:

At the beginning to be honest, I don’t know, I wasn’t too keen on it [use social media] because I was used to using my books and pens and felt ready to deliver the lesson without using any technology (Maram, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).

Nonetheless, after her first technology implementation and her students’ positive reaction, she said that she was pleased because her students liked the technology although she did not support the idea at first, and she became willing to try other tools in subsequent lessons (informal meeting, 17 Nov. 2014). Maram believed initially that using technology in the classroom is more of a distraction than a benefit and that she preferred to use them outside the classroom. Yet, her belief had changed during the end of the research; when I asked her about her experience, she replied:

I would use technology if the University provides good infrastructure and this is because of my experience of using it throughout this term. I enjoyed this experience and would like to use technology again in the future (Maram, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).

Generally speaking, the study participants hold firm beliefs about the value of social media for English language leaning and teaching. However, their beliefs can be described as being somewhat traditional beliefs at the beginning of the research, as some of them preferred the old ways of teaching such as using Arabic to explain grammatical rules. As an illustration, Wala reflected on her own language teacher’s practices when she was in secondary school as she used some aspects of grammar translation method, and this is how her method of teaching made Wala understand English:

She explained grammar to us in Arabic, that’s why I understood English and grammar. She explained it in Arabic then repeated it in English. That’s why I understood it. For example, she would say “in present simple, is only comes after he and she or it” in Arabic, then explain it again in English. We understood better when she used Arabic because without it we weren’t able to understand much (Wala, Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014).

Their cultural history was reflected in their current practices; for example, Wala talked about her experience at the beginning of her teaching and how she used some aspects of grammar translation method to teach vocabulary:
Telling the time in English, for example, this really confuses the girls so I wrote it down for them in Arabic and they had to translate it in the correct order, because in Arabic it is the opposite order. So, I told them what the correct order in English is. It then becomes easier for them (Wala, Int. 1, 20 Oct. 2014).

Similarly, Ruba used Arabic frequently to explain grammatical rules and explain vocabularies. Although from the classroom observations, I noticed that the use of Arabic was minimised as the study participants used videos or pictures to explain the meaning of a new vocabulary for instance.

Another example of traditional beliefs is that the study participants were generally against the idea of collaborative learning and believed that group work is not effective for language learning (as discussed previously in section 6.2.1.4). When I asked Manal about her belief of group work, she replied, “I dislike group work” and when I asked her why, she explicitly referred to her own negative experience of group work when she was learner. It appears that the teachers felt disappointed following their experience of collaborative learning when they were students and this was possibly because their tutors did not apply collaborative learning strategies in an effective way. Thus, that experience made them believe that collaborative learning is not useful in learning and that it will limit the students’ own abilities.

Nevertheless, from the classroom observations, social media was used by the study participants primarily to promote collaborative learning, which may show that their stated beliefs are not aligned with their practices. This might be because these tools encourage the use of group work, or that their belief may have changed and become more constructivist as they found the value of collaborative learning for students’ engagement in the learning process when using the social media.

The study participants’ beliefs about their abilities to use social media in their teaching (self-efficacy belief) have affected their implementation in the classroom. Teachers at the beginning of the project said that they did not feel confident enough to use the technology with their students, but this is mainly due to their lack of knowledge of how to use them. However, towards the end of the project their confidence had increased and they were more capable of using them in the classroom. Indeed, Zahra reflected on how she became more confident as time passed by. This is partly due to the study participants working with other teachers and sharing their
experiences and also how towards the end of the project the teachers became more independent of me regarding their use of the technology:

We used to ask each other questions like, what did you use, what did you do, or what tools did you use? Have you noticed that we are using similar tools? [Asking the researcher]. To be honest, we discussed it more at the beginning, as it was something new to us but when we started to get used it, that was it, we all knew what to do and how to do it. It was more at the beginning that we were discussing what are you going to use or what did you use? (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

Zahra talked about how they worked together a lot at the beginning of technology implementation, but towards the end they become more capable to use them on their own, which could be argued that this is the reverse of forming a community of practice.

The study participants commented that those technologies are simple to use and they do not need proper training because from their experiences of using them, they had already gained an understanding and were then able to explore the tools themselves:

As a teacher I don’t need a training session as such because the technologies are easy to use, anyone can learn how to use them. It’s not too difficult for the teacher – unlike how it is for a student – because if there’s something in English, you’re able to deal with it. The students do need to have someone to guide them and teach them step-by-step. But the teacher can learn by herself (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

This extract shows a view on the digital immigrant argument, although these are, of course, young teachers who have grown up surrounded by digital technologies.

Issues with the study participants’ low self-esteem in terms of their English language were also evident in the study. For example, when I asked Zahra about the benefits of social media for her teaching, she replied:

The same benefits as for the students. We are not native speakers of English so we can’t say that we’re top in English. We’re still in the process of learning, and especially as I’ve just graduated. So I can learn from it, whether in writing in terms of structure, learning idioms and for vocabulary (Zahra, Int. 1, 19 Oct. 2014).

From the extract above, we can see that the first response in Zahra’s mind is improving her language, which may show that her object of social media in her teaching is to improve her language in addition to her students’ language.

Latifah expressed similar beliefs when she reflected on her own language development as a result of using social media in her teaching:
When I brought materials for them about breakfast, it contained vocabulary that I heard for the first time, so I benefited a lot as well. It was my first time using Tumblr and there were blogs for language teaching that I benefited from as well. I don’t think my knowledge is good enough just because I’m a teacher. No, I also continued to learn and benefited from many things. For example, in grammar and vocabulary there are things that I’ve forgotten, so when I watch a clip I’m also refreshing my memory and increasing my vocabulary (Latifah, Int. 2, 24 Dec. 2014).

Manal, Ruba and Wala expressed similar beliefs about themselves and their language proficiency after their implementation of social media in their classrooms and they believed technology is a good opportunity for them to develop their English skills. Teachers’ lack of self-confidence in their language may relate to their lack of practice in English outside the classroom when they were learners, “We mainly used it in class and amongst teachers and students. The moment we leave, we start speaking our mother tongue, Arabic” (Latifah, Int.1, 21 Oct. 2014).

Future

Due to the contradiction that occurred during the final stages of the research between teachers’ and students’ objects, teachers’ expectations for their future were not promising as they seemed not very enthusiastic to use technology with their group of students in the coming term. Essentially, this is as a result of the issues they had during their implementation and the lack of University support in relation to the technology in general. Nevertheless, they said that they will continue using them as activities outside the classroom. When I asked Manal if she is going to use the technology in the future, she explained that it would be determined by the group of students she ultimately teaches:

I don’t know, it depends on the students I am going to teach because the groups are going to change, they won’t remain the same. I might use it more at home – I will carry on. I mean I might keep the account and give it to the students as homework to work on, which is easier for both of us. But I don’t know if I’ll use it in the class, I’m not sure if… Just because of the difficulties. If the Internet access is good, I have no problem (Manal, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

Some of the study participants agreed on the idea that it would be better if they use technology with students specialised in English language rather than students who are studying English as a general subject. This was despite the fact some groups of students, especially from the science strand, appeared to be more motivated to use technology for learning. As Zahra replied when I asked her about her expectations for
the future:
If I’m teaching students majoring in English language, I would use it as English language students wouldn’t specialise in this field unless they are really keen to learn. They are different from the foundation year students who are studying different subjects – eight courses that include English language. They wouldn’t get so much out of it as they wouldn’t only be concentrating on learning English. Students majoring in English language would interact with me more, so it makes a big difference for me between teaching students who are studying English as an only subject and students on a million other courses. Students majoring in English are willing to learn and use technology because they know that this will be useful for them. So, if I am teaching this sort of group, I would definitely use it (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

The teachers believe that using technology in the foundation year is not going to help the students to learn and this is due to having to study different subjects and skills, such as thinking and scientific skills, and the main goal of the foundation year is to prepare the students for their university life and help them to choose their majors. Therefore, the students have different interests; some like to learn English because they will specialise in English language, or they need to be proficient in English to specialise in science. Others prefer to major in Arabic language or religious studies. However, it may be that the digital skills that they gain in the English classes might be helpful generally.

Despite the contradictions within the context of the study and the tensions that occurred during the research period, the study participants were broadly positive about their experience of social media implementation in their teaching. They reported how participating in the project opened up opportunities to have new experiences of using unfamiliar tools. Those tools enable them to be able to work in-group, to exchange ideas, and share their experiences. Zahra reflected on her experience:

From my point of view, I have got a lot out of the information I have gained from the technology I have been using. I learned things that I had no knowledge about (Zahra, Int. 2, 23 Dec. 2014).

Similarly, Ruba and Wala reflected on their experience:

It was enjoyable and I discovered things that I wasn’t familiar with; they were new to me. I also found things related to the lessons, I mean things that could benefit the students and me even more. So it was a means of getting new information and refreshing my knowledge and so on. I honestly tried [many tools] and that in itself benefited me in finding many useful things, some of which I’ll hopefully use with my students in the second term (Rub, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).
I’ll explain the lesson and then they’ll [students] have to bring their own choice of clips and explain them the following day. It won’t be like the first time [her current use of technology] where I just went straight into explaining the lesson in general terms; no we’ll all cooperate. We’ll explain on the first day and incorporate technology in the lesson on the following day, because I really liked the idea. I felt it was useful and it benefited the girls (Wala, Int. 2, 22 Dec. 2014).

6.2.3.5 Summary

This chapter started by providing a discussion of the rules and the context of the study to contextualise the subsequent themes. Then, it presented the broad themes that emerged from the data analysis. The first theme is about the cultural history of the subjects of the activity system and its role within the system. This subtheme consists of four subthemes, each of which gives a detailed account of the subjects’ prior experiences and their re-mediation in the current activity system. The second broad theme is around the topic of contradictions. This theme shows how the contradictions became evident when social media was introduced in women’s educational context. The theme provides discussion of four different types of contradictions and the way that these contradictions became sources of development in the activity system. The last theme concerns the outcome of social media implementation and the kind of transformation that happened as a result. The next section will provide a discussion of the findings of this study.
7 Discussion

This chapter presents the discussion according to the themes that emerged from the findings as well as the research questions. In this research, my objective was exploring the extent to which social media can be integrated into language education in a Saudi women’s section of a regional University. The study focuses on EFL novice teachers and aims to investigate their perspectives and potential development as well as how those teachers understand, function, and engage in activities by using social media in their classrooms. As there is limited research on using social media in language education in Saudi Arabia, this research aimed to fill the gap and explore this in the context of Saudi women’s higher education. It was also proposed to explore the possibilities and challenges of using Western-built technology in the context of Saudi Arabia. The rationale for a female college being the focus of this study is because of gender segregation throughout the education system in Saudi Arabia, and as the nature of this study required direct contact with the participants it was impossible for me as a woman to conduct research in a male college. This study addresses the following questions:

1) What role does the cultural history of EFL teachers play in the activity system?
   a) In what way can teachers’ beliefs be described as a part of the cultural history?
2) What are the contradictions that emerged as a result of the use of social media in Saudi women’s English language education?
3) What kind of transformation occurs to the activity system as a result of using social media?

In this chapter, I will first summarise and discuss the two stages of the main activity system, which is the teachers’ activity system in the study. Secondly, I will present the research questions with a discussion of the related findings. The first section is related to cultural history and its role in the current activity system of social media implementation. The second section concerns the systemic contradictions within and between activity systems in the study. Lastly, the outcome of the activity and the possibility for expansive learning among the group of teachers will be discussed.
### 7.1 The activity system

The study was conducted during one term (3 months) and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) has been used as the main analytical lens (see chapters 3 and 5 for a more detailed discussion of CHAT). CHAT has enabled me to explore the case as a whole, as a dialectical process in which the teachers interact with the environment, with other teachers in the college, with the head of the department or with various different artefacts. Moreover, CHAT allows a controlled analysis of the data looking at different aspects, but maintaining a holistic viewpoint. Those processes between the environment and the teacher with her cognition can cause transformation in the individual (Vygotsky 1987) or ‘expansive learning’ in Engeström’s terms (2001) of the teachers’ group or the larger activity system. Potentially, a study like this could have impact on the way that Saudi women teachers in general begin to use these mediating artefacts in their practice. It can also help us understand more generally how a cultural historical development taken from the west can be adapted and used in a new environment.

The activity systems discussed below represent multiple processes of mediated actions that help in explaining the teachers’ learning activity as intricately structured experiences among the individuals’ cognition, practice, object or motive, artefacts, social norms, local communities, and the larger cultural context (Yamagata-Lynch 2010: 28). The use of CHAT here helped in identifying how teachers transformed, or did not transform, and how teachers’ learning is an on-going process identified by both their psychological as well as social and cultural factors. This section provides an overview of what will be discussed later in the chapter.

The central activity system that is being explored here is the *Use of social media to facilitate English language teaching and learning*. This system is explored as it ‘expanded’ over time. The first analysis is drawn from the early stages of social media implementation and the second during the last stages of the study. Presenting the system in flux will show how the group of teachers learnt, how the activity system transformed and how contradictions in the system were handled during the project. Other activity systems interacted with the teachers’ activity system, such as the activity system of the students.
7.1.1 Activity system A: early stages

Activity system A, in (See Figure 7-1), represents the activity system of EFL novice teachers at the early stages of the research project. After having two short courses on the use of social media in language education, the participant teachers started to implement social media in their classrooms. The collective subject in the activity system was a group of self-motivated teachers who were enthusiastic about using social media in their classroom because they had strong belief that technology could be beneficial for their professional development as well as the students’ language learning. Teachers’ beliefs were presented in the subject position in the activity system. The cultural history is reflected in the above triangle of the activity system. Although the subjects held positive beliefs of social media, it was difficult for them to implement technology in the classroom because of the infrastructure at the University. There were limited resources available to the teachers, which included limited technology as the classrooms were not adequately equipped, and there was no Internet connection as this was mainly used by the administration at the University. Then, a router was provided for the teachers to use; however, it was unreliable in some cases. The teachers’ previous positive experiences of using these technologies when they were learners helped in motivating them to implement the technology in their classrooms. The social media tools that teachers used in their classrooms (such
as Twitter, Path and Tumblr) and the lack of resources, and their technological skills, are reflected in the tool element of the activity system A. The essential feature of these artefacts is their mediational role to achieve the object of the activity (Kuutti 1996). The object of the activity system was for the teachers to use technology in their classrooms in order to improve the language skills of the students.

The rules element in the activity system includes implicit and explicit norms, conventions and social relations within the wider community (Kuutti 1996: 28). Here, the University had firm rules that restrict the use of the Internet for the students and the teachers, and forbade students from having their devices inside the University without permission. The teachers also had personal aims that they set for themselves on what technology to use and how to use it. Furthermore, the teachers had to follow the rules laid out by the curriculum and cover all of its subjects, assignments and assessments.

In this initial activity system, the community is an important element because teachers need support when they embark on their professional life and as they continue to develop within the profession (Buehl and Beck 2015). The community at the early stages of the research included the group of EFL teachers who participated in the project because they shared the same object; however, the group of teachers did not have a role in attaining the object of the activity system. This is because each self-motivated teacher had to put her own effort into using digital technology without any support from the other teachers. The community also included me, the researcher, as a facilitator and my role in initiating the implementation of social media in English language classrooms providing on-going support to the teachers in implementing these technologies. Additionally, the community included the Head of the English Department (although she also sits within other external activity systems too, as an administrator and manager). The division of labour refers to “the explicit and implicit organisation of a community as related to the transformation process of the object into the outcome’ (Kuutti, 1996: 28). Here, the division of labour was the shared responsibilities between the teachers, the researcher and the management.

There were contradictions evident during the early stages of the teachers’ implementation (which are shown by the dashed curved lines (a, b and c) in figure 7-1). The first contradiction was between the artefacts and the subject (a) and this
caused tension between the lack of resources at the University and the teachers trying to sustain their enthusiasm while confronting these challenges. Another contradiction was between the rules element and the teachers’ object (b), as the strict rules imposed by the University very often stopped the teachers from attaining their object. The third contradiction was within the subjects themselves (c), as the teachers were enthusiastic to use social media but at the same time they were anxious about how they were going to accomplish this.

The outcome of the activity at the beginning of the research was most of the time discouragement among the group of teachers and the students because of the rules imposed by the University and the inadequate infrastructure. The rules and tools elements mainly hindered the teachers from achieving their object. The community did not have a significant role in the activity except for the researcher who played a major role as a broker (boundary crosser) during the first implementation of technology.

7.1.2 Activity system B: last stages

Figure 7-2: Teachers’ activity system at the last stages of the research (B)
Activity system B (See Figure 7-2) represents the last stages of social media implementation. The subject is still the group of self-motivated teachers, however, now demonstrating their agency, which is reflected in the tools element. The teachers still hold positive value beliefs and the cultural history plays a significant role. Changing the classroom where the teachers used to teach to another building was beneficial because the students and the teachers were more able to access the Internet. So, the Internet connection was not an issue at that time. The teachers used different mediating tools to achieve their object such as projectors, speakers, laptops and different social media tools. In addition, teachers’ agency played a significant role within the system, which included their action as brokers. Teachers’ agency is reflected in the tools element of the activity system as well as the other mediating artefacts. The object was more focused and shared by all teachers, which was to use social media to improve students’ writing skills.

The rules are the same as in the activity system A; namely the University rules and the teachers’ goals, and the curriculum. The community was the group of teachers exploiting technology in various ways, the researcher (although withdrawing from the scene), the students and the University staff. The role of the students in the teachers’ activity system varied between helping and hindering the teachers from attaining their objective. Their position in the activity system was important because they collaborated with their teachers in terms of helping them by bringing their devices, helping their teacher to set up the technology, and so on. The University staff included the Dean and Deputy Dean of the foundation year college and the Head of the English Department. Moreover, with their support the University staff had a significant role in attaining the object of the activity system. Within this community, the participants in the activity shared the responsibilities. And this sharing of responsibilities during social media implementation helped in having a common object and at the same time attaining this object. The teachers identified their teamwork as a benefit of being in the technology group. Through participating in the technology group, these teachers worked jointly toward the object of implementing social media in their classroom. They still have limited resources but the opportunities to share ideas with other teachers made it easier for them to attain the object.
Although the contradictions that were evident in the activity system A were not completely resolved, their existence was not an issue to the teachers because they got used to the situation and were more capable of handling these issues by using their agency. However, towards the end of the term a tension became evident (which is shown by the dashed curved line (d) in figure 7-2) between the objects of the two activity systems teachers’ and students’ (d). The students became passive and non-responsive compared to their motivation at the beginning of the study and this tension caused frustration among the group of teachers.

The outcome of the activity system at the end of the research was positive although there were still moments of discouragement among the teachers and the students. The positive outcome is because of the mediational roles of the tools, community and rules. The cultural history of the teachers had a role in encouraging them to use social media. Similarly, their agency played a significant role when they faced challenges. The community also played a major role in achieving the object of the activity system. There were therefore possibilities for individual, collective and systemic transformation. The next section will answer the first research question about cultural history.

7.2 The role of cultural history in the activity system

1) What role does the cultural history of the EFL teachers play in the activity system?
   a) In what way can teachers’ beliefs be described as a part of the cultural history?

This section will answer the first research question regarding the role of cultural history of the subjects in the current activity system. The cultural history can be represented by the above triangle in the activity system model as Cole (1999) suggested “the core of what we mean by consciousness” (p.80). When the subjects were introduced to the use of social media in teaching, their cultural history that includes experiences and beliefs was remediated in the current activity system of social media implementation. The concept of re-mediation described by Cole (1996) was useful in understanding and conceptualising how the cultural history of the teachers was remediated through their practices inside the classroom and also caused
transformation in their practices and beliefs. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that the cultural history of the subject can mediate or be a constraint that obstructs achieving the object of the activity system (Cole 1996, 1999).

In this thesis, I am examining teachers’ belief through the lens of CHAT and this was useful in understanding the subject in the activity system because it is not well understood in CHAT research. Therefore, it can be argued that belief is a part of the cultural history and can be considered in the subject position. In fact, belief can be seen as a process of mediating practices through artefacts (Cole 1996). Those artefacts include as Cole named them, ‘ideal’ and ‘material’. When the teachers started their implementation, they brought their cultural history (ideal artefact) to the current activity and used the tools (material artefact) that were available to them. Different material artefacts used by the teachers during the research such as physical tools (e.g., portable devices, projectors and speakers) and this was to mediate their social media implementation. Semiotic (or ideal) tools were also used, for example, contacting the Dean of the College to ask for his support in what I was trying to achieve.

Other material artefacts that the teachers used to support their teaching are social media tools. Those tools were originally invented for different purposes such as social networking and content creation; however, they became cultural tools as the teachers used them to improve their English language because they gave them the opportunity to communicate with native speakers of English, and this increased their exposure to authentic material that is not usually found in the context of Saudi Arabia. Thus, their experiences of using social media either in their leisure time or for the purpose of learning English language – and the benefit they obtained in terms of their language – contributed to their motivation to use them with their students. This therefore supports the findings in Loch, Straub and Kamel (2003) study where they found that teachers decide to adopt the Internet when they observed its benefits, and this is also true with social media.

Teachers’ motivation to use social media in their teaching may be due to the fact that they are young and more willing to use these kinds of technologies. These teachers are what are described as ‘millennials’ or ‘21st-century learners’ who are more
inclined to use digital technologies in their lives. Indeed, they were also working with a student community who are more inclined in this way. Although there has been debate about the validity of this argument (Bennett et al. 2008), recent research showed that younger teachers and academics in higher education are more likely to use technology during leisure time and also in their teaching compared to their older counterparts (Manca and Ranieri 2016a, 2016b).

Ideal artefacts include the experiences of the teachers that were remediated when the subjects were faced with new situations such as in my research the introduction of social media. Teachers’ early lived experiences as learners were found to have a strong influence on the way they teach (Bailey et al. 1996) as these experiences were remediated when the teachers started their teaching (Cole 1996). This happens when teachers’ experiences establish their belief and knowledge about language learning and these cognitions form the basis of their initial understandings of language teaching during their years in learning the second language and also during the teachers’ education programme. The influence of these initial conceptualisations might continue throughout their professional lives (Borg, 2003). When they were learners, the participants had watched their teachers for numerous hours and in turn had internalised many of their own teachers’ behaviours. This has been referred to as “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie 1975: 65) and in CHAT terms this can be described as a process of re-mediation (Cole 1996). This was also evident when the participants said they tend to imitate the teachers whose teaching they liked when they were students. In addition, from classroom observations, the study participants appeared to adopt some of the practices of their previous teachers and this also includes their practices of using technology in teaching. It seems the teachers’ positive experiences of using social media when they were learners at the University made them realise that these technologies motivated them to learn and, in turn, it will motivate their own students.

On the other hand, the cultural history can be a constraint that can prevent the subjects from attaining their object. So, the teachers’ lack of knowledge in teaching because of their previous education in English or in teaching affects their belief and their confidence. However, teaching was perceived as a way or we can say as a tool to improve their practices as well as their English. Therefore, the teachers had their solo responsibility to improve their practices by learning and reading about language
teaching. Another way of learning to teach is by trying to use technological tools or teaching methods and if their experiences are successful, they will continue using them. Teachers’ experiences of what works best for them was one of the sources of their current belief system (Richards and Lockhart 1996).

One of the surprising findings of this study is that the teachers reported that teaching and using social media helped to improve their English language that shows their lack confidence in their English language. Teachers’ low level of English was also raised in other research in the Saudi Arabian context such as the study of Alshahrani and Alshehri (2012), in which they found that Saudi English learners at the University do have few opportunity to practise English outside the classroom, which has a knock on effect into the teachers’ low level of English as they also had rare opportunities to practise their English when they were learners.

Teachers’ schooling and technological experiences formed their current beliefs of social media. Those experiences can be described as sources of the participants’ current belief system (Richards and Lockhart 1996). In fact, how novice teachers respond to using social media does appear to be related to their previous beliefs and experiences (Kagan 1992), as Ertmer (2005: 30) noted “early experiences tend to colour later experiences”. We can therefore say that teachers’ beliefs are shaped by the context where the teachers grew up and now work, and their beliefs are heavily influenced by the context (Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich 2010).

This study showed that the sociocultural context, on the other hand, could be shaped by teachers’ beliefs. For example, the University began to allow tablets, which were forbidden as they contain cameras, and this happened after the teachers asked their students to bring tablets inside the University. Another example was when the teachers were allowed to give permission themselves for the students to bring the devices inside. This happened when the teachers collaborated and asked the Head of the Department to give them the authority on technological matters. This shows how the teachers used their agency, built on their beliefs and which affected the rules and made them more flexible to the needs of the teachers and the students. Thus, teachers’ strong beliefs helped them to learn and address the challenges and tensions they encountered. Indeed, their belief remains positive but their enthusiasm has been
affected and this is due to a number of factors such as the students, the infrastructure and the University rules. We can refer to all of that (history, prior experiences and beliefs) as teachers’ cultural history and its re-mediation process in the current activity system.

In general, all teachers held positive beliefs about the value of social media in language education. Yet, teachers’ beliefs about the role of technology for teaching and learning may affect their decisions to implement them in their classrooms (Hermans et al. 2008; Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich 2010). As Pajares (1992:307) argues, beliefs are “the best indictors of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives”. The findings of this study are aligned with the aforementioned arguments and teachers’ beliefs were found to mediate social media implementation. Therefore, we can say that this study shows that there is a relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices. Although there is debate in the literature about whether beliefs should precede behaviour or not (Gusky 1986; Pajares 1992; Buehl and Beck 2015), the findings of this study nonetheless show that teachers’ beliefs do have an impact on their classroom practices and it has a strong influence on teachers’ thinking and behaviour (Pajares 1992; Ashton 2015). For example, Zahra and Manal had firm positive beliefs about the value of social media and this was evident in the way they used the technology inside their classrooms. The findings of this study support the findings of Vongkulluksn, Xie and Bowman (2018) as they found that value belief is a predictor of teachers’ technology integration. The stronger the value belief of technology, the more they use it to support student-centred instruction; and this also aligned with the findings of this study.

Furthermore, the findings support Guskey’s (1986) argument in that it was evident that if the teachers’ actions were successful they will have an impact on their beliefs; for example, Maram was hesitant to use technology in the classroom. She did not believe at the beginning of the research that those technologies would have benefits for her students’ learning. However, when she tried to use these technologies with her students, their positive reaction affected her belief towards the end of the study. In fact, her belief appeared to have changed as she said she would like to use technology in the future. It can therefore be argued that teachers’ beliefs are an integral part of the activity system because they have an impact on their actions and
then in turn on the system itself, which is the implementation of social media in language classrooms.

However, in the activity system it is not always the case that the cultural history of the subjects alone can mediate or obstruct the subjects from achieving their object and enacting their beliefs, because there are other sociocultural factors that may intervene and cause contradictions within this system and between the teachers’ activity system and other external systems (Buehl and Beck 2015). The sociocultural factors in this study can be categorised into three levels as Buehl and Beck put it, “classroom-context factors” (e.g., students’ digital literacy, students’ attitudes, classroom management and class size), college-context factors (e.g., administration, parental support, colleagues, available resources), and “district-level factors” (e.g., education policies, curricular standards, culture) (p. 76-78). These factors can be either facilitators or impediments to the subjects to achieve their object of the activity (more discussion on that will come later in section 7.3). Nonetheless, the findings of the study show that teachers’ strong value beliefs became a driving force to face the contradictions that happened in the study (Ertmer et al. 2012). This finding supports that of Vongkulluksn, Xie and Bowman's (2018) study in which they found that when the teachers’ hold value beliefs about technology, they can overcome the first-order barriers. For example, the teachers brought their own devices when there was lack of resources which placed “value belief not only as a predictor of classroom technology integration practice, but also as a variable that influences the complex process of how resource availability is translated into effective teacher practice” (Vongkulluksn et al. 2018: 80). It can therefore be argued that the cultural history of the subjects in the activity system plays a role in negotiating the context and facing the contradictions within that context. As subjects’ practices are defined through the interaction between their beliefs and the situational factors both inside and outside the classroom (Borg 2006).

7.2.1 Summary

This section has provided a discussion of the findings to answer the first research question. In this section, I argued that teachers’ belief could be a part of their cultural history as it can be a process that mediates actions through their prior experiences (Cole 1996). As a consequence, the subjects in the activity system remediate their cultural history in the current activity system. Those experiences of the teachers
formed their current value belief of social media use; therefore, we can say that the sociocultural context can shape their current beliefs and likewise their beliefs can shape the context. In this section, there is also an argument that teachers’ value beliefs are the best indicator of their use of social media in their classroom. However, various sociocultural factors can prevent the subjects from enacting their beliefs, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

7.3 Contradictions

2) What are the contradictions that emerged as a result of the use of social media in Saudi women’s English language education?

In this section, I am going to answer the second research question about contradictions. Contradictions are a crucial aspect of CHAT and represent tensions that have been in place for a long period of time within one system or between different activity systems (Engeström 2009). They are described as reified or crystallised practices. Although the unit of analysis in my research is the central activity system (the teachers’), this system is never isolated because the components of one activity system are in one way or another related to the neighbouring activity system (Engeström 1987; Gedera 2016). Therefore, when studying contradictions, it is important to study the activity systems that are found to be related to the main activity system (Gedera 2016). However, due to the limited time available to do my research it was impossible for me to include and investigate in more depth the other activity systems such as the students and the institution. Yet, analysing the main activity system brought insights into the other activity systems that helped in understanding the contradictions that happened as a result of introducing social media into women’s education in Saudi Arabia.

My role here in this study as a broker triggered contradictions in the system as well. This is aligned with the interventionist approach used by researchers in expansive learning whereby contradictions were used as a tool to make the teachers question their existing practices and led to transformation in themselves and the system (Engeström et al. 1996). Introducing social media in the context of this study created such as an intervention where the participants began to question their own practices and the system, and how these are different from other universities. My aim in this
research is not to bring attention to the problems and challenges in such a context, as in the Change Laboratory method used by Engeström, Virkkunen, Helle, Pihlaja and Poikela (1996), but rather to encourage the implementation of new technology and explore how the participants learn to implement and face the challenges they may encounter. In the Change Laboratory method, for instance, they present the problems to develop new practices that can overcome the current problems in an organisation.

The inner contradictions or we can say the historically accumulated contradictions that were evident in the research were related to the University, to the English department, to the rules of the University, to the culture of the context, to the infrastructure, to the subjects themselves and to the students.

Moreover, there was a contradiction between the subjects’ motivation to use social media and at same time their concerns about their ability to do that. The source of this tension is possibly due to the fact that the teachers were novice and they lacked proper teacher training, which caused tensions in the form of anxiety and fear of failure. This finding is aligned with the study by Manca and Ranieri (2016a, 2016b), in which they found that teachers who had between 10 and 20 years’ teaching experience used social media in their teaching more than their colleagues with less than 5 years’ teaching experience. They suggest the reason might be that seniors are less afraid to apply and use new approaches because of their high number of years in teaching.

One of the contradictions that is discussed in the findings is the one that is related to the rules of the University, which caused tensions. This contradiction was between the rules element and the object of the activity as this very often stopped the teachers from achieving the object because it also had a negative impact on the students, and ultimately on the teachers. The source of this tension is the culture of Saudi society and because of that the University imposes strict rules that prevent students having their devices that contain cameras inside the University.

The other contradiction that was evident in the research is related to the infrastructure at the University, which lacks some essential facilities such as the Internet and updated language and computer labs. Very often, this contradiction prevented the teachers from achieving the object of the activity system. This finding supports previous research in the context of Saudi Arabia as the limited availability of
resources and the Internet have been reported by teachers to be an obstacle for the adoption of technology (Al-Alwani 2003; Saqlain and Mahmood 2013). Moreover, class size (Al-Asmari 2005) as well as technical difficulties (Saqlain and Mahmood 2013) were also considered one of the hindrances to technology adoption.

The contradictions mentioned above developed another contradiction between the objects of the two activity systems; namely the teachers’ and the students’. This contradiction became a source of teachers’ frustration and their unwillingness to use social media in the future, although some of them enjoyed the experience and stated that they would continue using them outside the classroom, which will be more convenient for them and the current sociocultural context. This misunderstanding between teachers’ and students’ object of using social media is aligned with the findings of the research by Wiebe and Kabata (2010) in which they found that teachers’ and students’ perceptions of technology use do not match and they suggest that the teacher do not always understand their students’ use of technology nor do the students understand the goal behind teacher’s use of the technology.

The source of the aforementioned contradiction in this study was due to different reasons such the students’ object for studying English as some of them, especially the ones who were not going to specialise in English or science, found acquiring English language skills unnecessary as their sole aim was to pass the exam. This is partly explained by the previous education of the majority of the students, which was based on memorising information to pass the exam (McMullen 2014); therefore, the students developed an “exam-centred attitude” Javid et al. (2012:65). This affects their future education and their perception of what learning a language should be, and thus they became unresponsive as the use of social media may require them to become more creative and interactive and acquire more knowledge than is expected in the curriculum.

Students’ low level of English generally can be a source of their demotivation for using social media in their English language classrooms. The issue of the low level of Saudi students’ English language, like those who enrolled at the University, was raised by Javid, Farooq and Gulzar (2012) and McMullen (2014). Javid, Farooq and Gulzar (2012) considered this issue as an aspect of ineffective language teaching in higher education.
Using CHAT was useful to identify the contradictions within the data and it also aided in tracing the sources of these contradictions. It can be argued that these sources are primary contradictions in the teachers’ activity system, as the system is not the whole world of capitalism and that the other ones that were evident when the research started were secondary contradictions. Indeed, it may not be the whole world of capitalism, but it is where Western global capitalism meets Islam and is the way that activity needs to be re-constructed to make the introduction of social media possible.

This primary contradiction is transferring ideas from one culture to another. Therefore, the tensions that happened during the research project were brought about by trying to bring Western ideas of social media into the Saudi context and particularly in the specific context that I am focussing on here immediately causes tensions. So, there is the localised activity system and its own inherent tensions and contradictions, and then the relationship between this system and the system of social media or CALL in the world in general. As Engeström argued:

> Activities are open systems. When an activity system adopts a new element from the outside (for example, a new technology or a new object), it often leads to an aggravated secondary contradiction where some old element (for example, the rules or the division of labour) collides with the new one. Such contradictions generate disturbances and conflicts, but also innovative attempts to change the activity (Engeström 2001:137).

This contradiction that occurred in my research is in agreement with those obtained by Loch, Straub and Kamel (2003) when they found that the moral and religious cultural issues can be barrier to well-educated Arabic participants’ use of the Internet. However, the participants reported that when they received the benefits from the Internet, this made them inclined to adopt the Internet. Therefore, it can be argued that when implementing such tools that were designed to be used in a different culture, there is a need to be sensitive to the social and cultural aspect of the Saudi context (Mwanza 2002).

When the participants started to realise the contradictions, they became the force for making change and development within one system and between different activity systems (Roth and Lee 2007). As a result, the teachers’ agency was revealed when the contradictions occurred or when historically accumulated contradictions made teachers’ implementation of social media complicated. Their agency started to have
an influence on their actions and then made transformations in themselves and the system. Thus, teacher’s agency was evident during the research process and it had a significant role in attaining the object of the activity. More discussion on teacher’s agency follows in the next section.

7.3.1 Teachers’ agency

Teachers’ agency was found to have a mediating role in making the teachers work towards the object of the activity. Seeing agency through the lens of CHAT was useful to understand how the teachers confronted the contradictions in different situations that needed them to take actions. The contradictions very often stopped the subject attaining the object of the activity, which caused in many cases discouragement in using technology. However, this was an opportunity for the teachers to learn how to confront and deal with these challenges (Haapasaari et al. 2016). For example, the teachers could not themselves overcome the contradiction of the technological constraints but they found ways to confront them and consider them as learning opportunities, which shows the role of teacher’s agency and this also happened when they shared their experiences with each other (Johnson 2009).

So, as time passed, on the basis of my classroom observation, the teachers had a Plan B to resort to, where they downloaded any video they wanted to use in class before the class started and then presented the video to the students from their laptops. Or they brought extra devices with them in case their students needed them. They wanted to persist, they were focused on the object of the activity, and were prepared to find ways of reaching this through their agency as digital residents (Yong and Gates 2014). The teachers were prepared to address these contradictions by other means in the event of technical problems (Dexter et al. 1999; Johnson 2009). Therefore, they could continue their teaching and achieving the goal of the lesson. In this case, their practices ‘expanded’ (Engeström 2001).

Being in a group with teachers who share the same object helped the teachers to enact their agency as they interacted, discussed and worked to resolve the contradiction (Haapasaari et al. 2016). As an example, when the Head of the English Department prevented the students from having their devices, teachers’ positions within the activity allowed them to use their agency to achieve the object of social media implementation (Kayi-Aydar 2015). Consequently, the group of teachers was able to take action to resolve the contradiction by asking the administration to take
the responsibility for their students’ devices (Stetsenko and Arievitch 2010).

The teachers also developed their sense of agency as a result of their experiences when they were students, and their experiences of using social media themselves. As previously mentioned in the cultural history section regarding how the teachers’ beliefs formed through their experiences, these contributed to their agency and also to their decision-making. Indeed, teachers’ agency played a significant role in addressing the object of the activity system and this is because of their motivation to use social media, which is seen to involve a degree of control over the object (Roth and Lee 2007: 214). This finding supports the study of Feryok (2012), as the events that the participants experienced made them more knowledgeable and prepared for any obstacle when they became teachers.

Teachers’ agency was also revealed when they complained that the curriculum did not give them enough information on a specific topic and they needed to search for additional materials for teaching their lessons. The teachers also said that they had to use their agency to read about teaching methods and learn more about it. Moreover, they complained that their teacher training was inadequate and they were anxious about teaching. Although the teachers were able to use their agency for their own learning and implementing the social media in the classroom, their agency was restricted by the people of higher status, such as the Head of the Department. However, social media may in fact play a role in teachers’ agency because it provided the opportunity to use their agency when they found restrictions through using social media as they could then seek opportunities for learning and raise their confidence.

Identifying contradictions helped in looking for the possibilities for transformation in the data. Therefore, the contradictions are essential for transformation to happen but they are not sufficient unless they are dealt with (Engeström and Sannino 2010), which shows the key role of teachers’ agency in the transformation process.

7.3.2 Summary
This section has discussed the main contradictions that occurred as a result of introducing social media into the Saudi women’s education system. This section aims to answer the second research question in the study. In this study it was revealed that the main primary contradiction that occurred concerned using Western-
built technology in the Saudi context. This primary contradiction triggered secondary contradictions that very often caused tensions within the activity system. There were different kinds of contradictions, the first one being related to the rules of the University. The second type of contradiction was related to the tools component, which is the infrastructure at the University. The third and fourth types of contradictions were related to the subjects of the activity system, one within the subjects themselves and the other between the teachers’ activity system and an external activity system (i.e. the students’). These contradictions revealed teachers’ agency and its role within the activity system, and the interplay between those two (contradictions and agency) caused transformation of the activity system. The next section will discuss the transformation that happened as a result of this study.

7.4 The possibility for transformation

3) What kind of transformation occurs to the activity system as a result of using social media?

The concept of expansive learning was useful in understanding how the transformation happened as a result of introducing social media into the language education in Saudi Arabia. Teachers’ learning here can be perceived as having expanded by their practices of using social media in their classrooms; the subjects’ cultural history, the community and the contradictions also played a part in the expansive learning both individually and collectively. Teachers’ learning happened within interconnected activity systems that were boosted by their inner contradictions (Engeström 2001). Those contradictions were the force for the teachers’ professional development (ibid). This study shows that the interaction between the teacher, social media and the environment caused transformation of themselves and the system. This section discusses the findings that are related to the third question. The first two sections discuss the findings related to the transformation of teachers’ actions and the object.

7.4.1 Towards collaborative action

The process of teachers’ expansive learning went through different phases that can be understood through analysing their actions (Rantavuori et al. 2016). Some of the teachers’ actions throughout the research can be described as expansive learning actions (Rantavuori et al. 2016). Their first expansive actions that were evident at the
beginning of the study, were questioning and criticising the existing practice (Engeström and Sannino 2010); for example, comparing the practices of this specific University with others in the same country. It is worth noting that my aim was not to raise the contradictions, but the situation inside the University caused the teachers to question the current practice.

After questioning existing practices, the teachers started to analyse the current situation (Engeström and Sannino 2010) by eliciting their students’ attitudes towards the use of social media in the classroom and trying to find social media tools suitable for their activities and their students’ needs. In general, students’ attitudes were positive and these motivated the teachers to start the implementation. When the teachers started to use the digital technology they brought their cultural history into the current activity system, such as their experiences of using social media when they were learners, and these experiences mediated their practices towards achieving their object.

As discussed in the previous section, the contradictions that occurred especially during the early stages of social media implementation, very often caused discouragement among the teachers and the students. However, they became the driving forces of teachers’ practices to expand (Engeström 2001; Engeström and Sannino 2010). As they caused the teachers to question and try to develop the current practices by redesigning the activity or solving the problems (Engeström 2009). This happened when they began to resolve a number of the issues related to the limited resources at the University.

At this stage, the teachers were socialising with me most of the time as I facilitated their practices and offered help if needed. I introduced the teachers to simple uses of social media to initiate the adoption process through two short training courses on how to use these technologies in their classroom. The introduction to social media and questioning the current practices were productive paths towards changing teachers’ practice (Ertmer 2005). Moreover, the teachers started to internalise what they had learned from me, their practices and the contradictions (Engeström 1999a). The teachers then tried to change their practices to determine whether they could work with the new situations, and their practices expanded and become more collaborative (Engeström 2001) as the research process developed.
Teachers’ collaborative work and the benefits they gain from working with a more knowledgeable person can be seen as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is one of the Vygotskian concepts. ZPD can be defined as “the difference between what a person can achieve independently and what he or she can achieve working in collaboration with others or with someone more expert” (Johnson 2009: 19). ZPD was evident throughout the research when the teachers worked with me as an expert in technology use and gained benefit learning from the knowledge I shared. Another form of ZPD in the research was observed when the more expert and knowledgeable teachers were helping the others who lacked the knowledge to use these technologies. Ertmer (2005) refers to this as ‘vicarious experiences’ to mean that when a teacher observes successful people’s practices, this will in turn increase the observer’s confidence to generate the same behaviour. Observing other teachers who successfully implemented technology helped the novice teachers to recognise effective technology use and they subsequently adopted these new practices (Ertmer et al. 2015: 412). This was evident in the research as some teachers were reluctant to use technology. However, when they observed their peers’ practices they became more encouraged to use social media in their teaching; for example, when Maram attended Wala’s class to observe her use of social media.

The collaboration between the teachers during the research revealed another form of ZPD. These practices have the potential to contribute to teachers’ cognitive development (Johnson 2009: 19), which is basically a result of being in a group who share the same interest. Especially they are novice teachers, and being in a group or a part of a community is crucial for their professional development. Alshahrani and Alshehri (2012) called for the necessity of Saudi teachers in higher education to be self-motivated to integrate technology into their teaching. In this research, I found that working in a community of teachers who share similar interest could have a crucial impact on motivating teachers to integrate technology into their teaching.

Ertmer (2005) emphasises the importance of a professional learning community for teachers to change their practices and beliefs as they are discussing and exchanging ideas, creating new materials and developing new strategies for the deployment of their ideas. Although the teachers in the study worked with each other for a relatively short period of time (one term), collaborating and exchanging ideas cultivated their enthusiasm and made them more creative in their teaching. While implementing the
technology, the teachers needed support from me to embark on their implementation and facilitate it, which was emphasised by Ruba when she said that she needed my help and feedback on her practice. The need for a trained person to support teachers in their implementation of new technologies has also been raised by academics in the most well-known universities in Saudi Arabia (Colbran and Al-Ghreimil 2013).

Towards the end of the study, the teachers reflected on their experiences and evaluated them in the interviews that we subsequently conducted. Although not all of the teachers’ actions were expansive, there were elements of transformation within individual teachers and in the activity.

7.4.2 Towards a shared object

The concept of object was a used as analytical tool to interpret my data (Kaptelinin and Miettinen 2005) and to understand teachers’ motives within the study. At the beginning of the research, the teachers had different objects from teaching at the University; some of them considered teaching as a way to obtain experiences whereas others planned to be teachers. These different objects of teachers may have affected their subsequent use of social media in their teaching. As some of them, for example Latifah, were not enthusiastic about using social media in their teaching and this may be related to their object of teaching only to gain experience and plan for another career.

With regard to the teachers’ object during the study, we can say that their object was dynamic and had been changing and became reconceptualised throughout the research (Rantavuori et al. 2016). Moreover, the teachers’ object of social media implementation went through different phases, which can be considered through the expansive learning perspective. When the teachers started implementation, their object was fragmented and each teacher had her own goal-oriented actions (ibid).

The teachers were fascinated by the educational adoption of social media tools, and so experimented with many of them for different educational purposes. However, their focus was on the technology itself more than the pedagogy. This is because some study participants valued technology more than teaching and they considered teaching a failure when technology is not used. Yet, this belief may be the result of their lack of teaching the language, which might lead them to overestimate the value of technology for language teaching.
The reason for the diffused object is due to different factors. The first is the students’ negative attitudes towards social media, which made the teachers reconceptualise the object and try to motivate their students to use social media. Another factor is contradictions such as the infrastructure; therefore, their object was to ensure that they had sufficient resources to make the implementation possible. Their object subsequently changed as the demands of their students increased and they then worked together to find a solution that worked best with their students. Their object was therefore redefined to meet any new constraint or contradiction (Kaptelinin 2005). In fact, the teachers’ object during the research was not only concerned with the use of social media but also addressed other issues to make the implementation possible.

At the beginning of the research, the teachers tended to work individually but through working together and sharing their experiences, they became more collaborative and shared a common object – their desire to incorporate technology into their teaching. Towards the end of the research and after working together and sharing ideas, the teachers’ object was focused on one skill (writing) that they thought could be improved by using social media. It is therefore the teachers’ object and motive that drives the activity forward and makes the activity meaningful (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016). These objects are historically embedded throughout the study (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016) as the teachers brought their cultural history to the current activity and thus affected their object. Thus, the activity of social media implementation brought collaborative relations among the participants in the activity whose actions were oriented at objects.

7.4.3 Other transformations

The transformation of the system, or institution, where I conducted the research was beyond the scope of the study because of the time that was defined for the fieldwork and my limited authority to have a significant impact on the institution to change their practices. However, some systemic transformations were evident in the research. For instance, allowing electronic devices that contain cameras inside the University buildings was among the system transformations in the Department of English Language. Another systemic contraction is related to learning outcomes. The findings of this study show that the majority of students hold positive attitudes towards social media in language education. The learning outcomes appeared to be
improved, as the students seemed to be more engaged in the learning process compared to the early stages of the study. Furthermore, the teachers believed that there could be slight improvement in students’ writing skills as a result of using social media in the classroom.

Although the aim of the study was not to investigate the changes in teachers’ beliefs per se, it appeared that among the individual transformations within the activity system, slight changes in teachers’ beliefs occurred as the activity transformed. The teachers came into teaching with their own cultural history, which was re-mediated through the development of their practices of social media implementation. Because these new practices that teachers experienced and learned with social media made their associated beliefs start to change as well (Ertmer et al. 2015; Levin 2015). This was evident in the slight changes in teachers’ beliefs as some of the teachers had somewhat negative beliefs about social media in language education, however, their practices caused changes in their beliefs as well (Ertmer et al. 2015). What contributed to the changes in teachers’ beliefs are their actions throughout the research when they were introduced to small but meaningful aspects of practices. Furthermore, their beliefs may change because they observed other teachers who successfully implemented technology, which helped the novice teachers to see what effective technology use looks like and they subsequently adopted these new practices. Moreover, sharing ideas with other teachers may also have contributed to effectively changing their practices and thus changing their beliefs (Ertmer et al. 2015: 412). These actions were suggested by Ertmer (2005) to promote changes in beliefs about teaching and learning in general and about technology in particular. In fact, teachers’ beliefs about the value of technology are likely to change when they participate and socialise with their peers. This will make them think differently about technology use (Ertmer 2005). These actions were referred by Ertmer (2005) as strategies for initiating and supporting technology implementation and are also aligned with expansive learning actions that cause transformation.

7.4.4 The role of brokering
My role as researcher in this study was significant and it was varied throughout the project. At the beginning of the study, my role was both investigator and broker. I considered myself an investigator because I came to the research context with an aim to achieve, which is the implementation of social media in language education; and a
broker because it was an intervention, which is transferring Western ideas to the Saudi context. Therefore, I found that the term ‘brokering’ (Wenger 1998) was appropriate to describe myself in this study, and especially during the initial stages. Having gained a master’s degree in TESOL in a Western country, I am a PhD candidate with ideas for using social media as an educational tool. My ambition has been to apply and incorporate all I have learned into my context, which is different from the Western context in many ways historically, culturally and religiously. I introduced the use of social media in education, which is not very well-known in Saudi education. The familiarity of these tools among Saudi citizens was more for non-educational use rather than education, and especially language education. The teachers were introduced to these technologies in regard to language education by attending two courses run by myself. I worked at the same university where I conducted my study, but am currently abroad as I am doing my PhD research at a specific Western University. Therefore, I have some authority as a member of staff at the University. So, my roles ranged from an insider who gained a job at the University to an outsider as I am currently completing my PhD in the UK.

As my role remained broker throughout most of the research period, I became a full participant and fully engaged with the participants’ activity (Yamagata-Lynch 2010). I supported the teachers throughout the study in social media implementation in the classrooms by first buying a router and facilitating formal permission for bringing the devices into the rooms. Then, I tried to resolve the tension that occurred because of the University rules by communicating with the Dean and thus I used my position in the University to manage change (brokering). In fact, I succeeded in moving teachers’ classrooms to another building with a stronger Internet signal. There, I sat in with the teacher, helping them to set up the equipment, check that the students were able to connect to the Internet and ultimately gain access to websites. Moreover, I had meetings with the teachers to discuss any issues they would like to raise and gave feedback on their use of these tools in their classrooms. Towards the end of the research project, my role became minor when the teachers started to work together and find their own solutions. Therefore, I assumed the role of observer who observed the teachers’ actions without really intervening with their actions (ibid). What is more, the roles I had during the research were the reverse of the participant observer continuum introduced by Yamagata-Lynch (2010) where she suggests a gradual
change to the role of CHAT researchers from observer to observer as participant, then to participant as observer, and finally to full participant. The gradual change in my role throughout this research was from broker to full participant, then to participant as observer, then ultimately to observer when the teachers became fully independent of my help.

7.5 Summary
This chapter has presented and discussed the findings of the study to answer the research question. The chapter consisted of four parts. The first part is an overview of the findings of this study, which discussed the focal activity system (teachers’ activity system) and showed how the system transformed during the study. The second part concerns the cultural history and its role in the activity system. This part answered the first research question and provided an argument regarding teachers’ belief and its position in the activity system. The third part of the chapter discusses the findings in relation to the second research question. This question addressed the contradiction that emerged as the study developed. The section also discussed the role of agency in the transformation process. The last part answered the third research question regarding the kind of transformation that occurred as a result of introducing social media in women’s language education.
8 Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore the use of social media in women’s language education in Saudi Arabia. Taking novice EFL teachers as its focus, the study sought to investigate their perspectives and their potential development as well as how the teachers understood, functioned, engaged in activities and developed their practices through using social media in their classroom. The study aimed to address the following research questions:

1) What role does the cultural history of EFL teachers play in the activity system?
   a) In what way can teachers’ beliefs be described as a part of the cultural history?

2) What are the contradictions that emerged as a result of the use of social media in Saudi women’s English language education?

3) What kind of transformation occurs to the activity system as a result of using social media?

This chapter will discuss the conclusions reached from this research. The chapter will start by providing the key findings of this study and its contributions. Secondly, the implications of this study will be discussed. The chapter will conclude by a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

8.2 Key findings and contribution to knowledge

8.2.1 The role of cultural history

The findings of this study suggest that the cultural history of the collective subject in the activity system plays a significant role in achieving the desired object of the activity. It was found that subjects’ prior experiences, their previous teachers and previous education can have an impact on the activity, and they are considered as sources of their current value beliefs (Richards & Lockhart 1996). Therefore, the subjects of the activity system carry their past into the present through their beliefs (Cole 1999). This way of looking at teacher beliefs is an important contribution, because it shows the way researchers can, within an accepted conceptual framework,
deal with a range of social-cultural elements, but not exclude what teachers bring to the activity. Borg (2003) and Johnson (2009) have called for more emphasis on the broader context and in this thesis I have shown how this can be achieved. The use of cultural history is an important element of this contribution. It also finds a potential solution to deal with the closed nature of the subject position in CHAT for which it has been criticised.

In this thesis, I am arguing that all of the subjects’ experiences and their beliefs constitute the cultural history of the subject. The cultural history can be represented in the basic activity system model and as Cole suggested (Cole 1999) is “the core of what we mean by consciousness” (p. 80). The teachers beliefs can be positioned within the subject element as it can be seen as a process of mediating practices through artefacts (Cole 1996). Therefore, through a CHAT perspective, I am arguing that teachers' belief can be seen as a filter, that carries different forms of artefacts, through which they make their decisions and engage with the object.

As the teachers started to use social media in their classrooms, their cultural history started to re-mediate in the current activity system and this caused transformations in their practices and beliefs; change started to occur. The teachers held positive value beliefs about social media and this is mainly because of their positive experiences of using them when they were learners and the impact they found from using them on their English language development. Therefore, these beliefs had an impact on their practices and thus on the object of the activity.

On the other hand, the cultural history can be a constraint that may obstruct the subjects from attaining their object. For example, their lack of self-confidence in teaching and in their English language made them anxious and reluctant to use social media, despite the fact that they held positive value beliefs. This is due to their previous education in terms of lacking proper teacher training and their low level of English language. However, they believed that teaching and using social media would improve their practices and their English, which may have contributed to their motivation to use them for teaching.

This research also makes a contribution by adding to the current literature on teachers’ value beliefs of technology by investigating beliefs through the lens of CHAT, which helps in situating belief within the broader context. As scholars in the
field of teachers’ beliefs called for the importance of investigating the sociocultural context when studying teacher beliefs, CHAT was therefore found to be a fruitful interpretative framework to investigate the relationship between belief and the sociocultural context and between beliefs and practices. At the same time, this research aimed to contribute theoretically to the CHAT perspective on how to conceptualise teachers’ beliefs within the activity system, as it is constituted in the cultural history of the subjects in the activity system. Belief is seen as process of mediating behaviour through artefacts. Therefore, it can be positioned within the subject element in the activity system.

8.2.2 Contradictions within the Saudi education system

Beyond teachers’ control, other sociocultural factors were determined to have hindered teachers’ use of social media in their language classrooms. Those factors can be recognised as historically accumulated contradictions, which became evident as the study developed. However, it was found that teachers’ cultural history, which includes their value beliefs, can become a driving force to challenge those contradictions (Ertmer et al. 2012). Different types of historically accumulated contradictions between the techno-infrastructure, management-rules, and students have been identified. Some of the technical problems can be dealt with for example, through the application of funds and resources. Nonetheless, some of the contradictions that are related to the students are hard to resolve because the resolution of these issues needs be initiated in school education as they have a significantly negative impact on the students’ subsequent learning at the University.

Other contradictions that are much more difficult to resolve are related to the cultural norms and this is because of the possibility that ‘changing the rules’ would have ramifications in wider society and its power structures regarding gender more widely. Indeed, those social media tools were designed and developed with certain Western cultural assumptions about how they could be used, which ultimately brought about cultural contradictions in the Saudi women’s context. This way of looking at the introduction of tools produced in the west and finding ways of bringing them into the Saudi context, particularly the Saudi women’s context, can be considered an important contribution. I have shown how CHAT theory can possibly help us to understand what is happening and then re-mediate these practices to make them to
some extent acceptable in the context of Saudi women’s education. This has possible implications for any context where trying new practices might raise objections.

Introducing social media into language education in a women’s university has caused a number of contradictions within the activity system. Therefore, the purpose of unpacking contradictions is likely to understand how to develop better English language learning and teaching and, moreover, how the teachers could overcome some contradictions (through their own reflection and innovative action and agency) while being unable (as yet) to change others (e.g., stymied by the University rules, etc.). The purpose of a correct analysis of the structural contradictions is presumably to understand where and how these structures might be changed or developed. In some cases, it may be necessary for alliances to reach beyond the teachers’ group to the wider university power structures, or even to agencies across Saudi society at large. Therefore, the use of CHAT as an interpretative framework could help in investigating beyond the social media implementation to discover the possible contradictions and the challenges of the context, therefore, CHAT “allows us to open [the] issues up outside the confines of a classroom and perhaps exploring this way the fact that these struggles are not simply the limitations of teachers and students, but much broader societal struggles” (Ploettner and Tresseras 2016: 92).

The use of CHAT in the Saudi context is under-researched; therefore, this research enriches Saudi literature on the use of CHAT in the field of technology and language education. Furthermore, it helps in investigating the underlying historically accumulated contradictions behind the issues of language education and between language education and technology in Saudi Arabia.

8.2.3 The possibility for transformation

The lens of expansive learning theory aided in understanding the different types of transformations that happened as a result of introducing social media in women’s language education in Saudi Arabia. There were individual, collective and systemic transformations. With regard to the collective, it was found that being in a community of people who share similar interests may have an impact on developing practices and also in sharing one’s communal object. Among the individual transformations were the changes in teachers’ value beliefs towards the end of the research and this may be due to the development in teachers’ practices.
With regards to systemic transformations, it was found that there were slight changes in the University rules as they became more flexible as compared to the early stages of the research. Furthermore, the students became more engaged in the learning process when their teachers used the social media tools to support constructivist learning and there were slight improvements in their writing skills as teachers reported.

There are a number of other factors that contributed to the transformations that happened in the research. Among these factors are the cultural history of the teachers and the contradictions, which became driving forces for the activity system to transform. My role in this study as a broker also contributed to the transformation in the activity system, especially at the beginning of the study, as the ideas of social media were initiated by myself and I supported the teachers in their implementations. Again, this need to understand the role of brokers has implications for the wider community of practitioners interested in exploring the use of digital technologies in education.

These findings may contribute to the research in the Saudi context on the importance of having a professional community, especially when initiating new technology. Another contribution suggests that social media may address some of the issues in language education in Saudi Arabia. For instance, Javid, Farooq and Gulzar, (2012) and McMullen (2014) called for the necessity in changing students’ behaviour from “exam-centred” to “learning-centred behaviour” (Javid et al. 2012: 65). Therefore, this study suggests that social media may transform teaching methods to become more constructivists and thus address some of the current issues of language education in Saudi Arabia.

This research also makes a methodological contribution by providing a data analysis approach that helps in analysing research where theory is applied in the analysis. The approach I used combines abductive, deductive and inductive strategies for enhancing interrogation and interpretation. This section has covered so far the key findings of the research and its contribution to knowledge. The next section will discuss the implications of the research.
8.3 Implications

This study has a number of practical implications for teacher training and professional development. It also has further implications for students’ learning. Although the participants in the study were teachers in the higher education sector and there is no requirement for them to have qualifications in teaching, as the focus of higher education is more on research than teaching, the research clearly shows that there is a need for teacher training before teachers take up their post. Indeed, teachers need training in contemporary teaching methods and instruction in using technology to gain the skills to use them effectively in the classroom. The lack of teaching skills of higher education university staff in Saudi Arabia was also raised by Al-Ghamdi and Tight (2013) who proposed the need for more professional development.

Thus, there is a necessity for teacher training in both language pedagogies and the use of technology. Most training nowadays in Saudi Arabia is concerned more with basic technological skills (e.g., how to use Microsoft Word). So, teachers need to have training on how to use the latest forms of technologies in teaching, to understand the pedagogical purposes of using these technologies and also how to use them in accordance with contemporary language teaching methods.

After addressing the first order-barriers of technology implementation, teacher educators and policy makers, especially in the Saudi context, need to be aware of the importance of addressing the internal barriers to technology implementation. Because a teacher’s belief is behind the decisions that a teacher makes throughout her working life (Pajares 1992). Consequently, teacher training in teaching and technology should not only be directed towards acquiring the necessary skills but also in addressing an understanding of and a change in beliefs. This can be done by the following strategies:

When initiating a new technology, there is a need for someone to support the teachers in their technology implementation and also in their professional development (Buehl and Beck 2015). Therefore, when training the teacher to use technology, the trainer should be someone who has a background in language education and technology to be able to support the teachers in their use of technology. They also need to be someone who has an understanding of the specific contexts that they are working in. The idea of having someone who can act as a broker between
the different activity systems is a good starting point. Another strategy is the importance of having a professional community for teachers’ learning. As Ertmer (2005) argues, being in a professional community can make changes to teachers’ practices and beliefs.

The study revealed that there are issues regarding students’ English education in schools, which in turn impacts their English learning when they become university students. Scholars claim that English language in the foundation year was set up to address these issues (Alnassar and Dow 2013) and this may explain why the curriculum is directed to beginner level in English. There is a need to look closer to the issues regarding English teaching in schools and these issues may be the result of inadequate teacher training, which in turn affects the students’ learning. Another issue to be addressed is that students need to have a sufficient level of digital literacy before the teacher should consider implementing technology in the classroom.

Lastly, the use of social media in Saudi women’s context has revealed a contradiction related to the cultural norms of the context that is hard to be resolved. Therefore, it is crucial when implementing such tools, that were designed to be used in a different culture, to be sensitive to the social and cultural aspects of the targeted context (Mwanza 2002).

8.4 Potential for further research

This section presents the limitations of this study and provides suggestions for further research. The first limitation is the small number of participants. Although this is in line with the case study design and I provided an audit trail (Bassey 1999) in which I presented a record of the research process from first collecting the data to presenting the findings, generalising the conclusions to another setting should be treated with caution.

Conducting research with more experienced teachers might yield more insights into teachers’ experiences and the knowledge they acquired during their years of teaching. Experienced teachers are more knowledgeable of their subject area than novice teachers. Thus, they may be more ready to integrate social media in their teaching, as they are more confident in their teaching. Moreover, further research investigating building a professional community of experienced teachers would be interesting.
Having more than one case and conducting the study for a longer period will undoubtedly yield more insights into teachers’ beliefs, their practices and transformation. However, this was impossible due to the limited time I was given by my sponsor to collect the data. Findings of this study highlighted the contradictions that emerged as a result of introducing new technologies in the Saudi context. Yet, there is a need to conduct longitudinal research to obtain in-depth understanding of the teachers’ beliefs, practices and changes that occur to them as well as a deeper examination of historical development that leads to “the differences in cognition across cultures, social groups and domains of practice” Engeström (1999: 25–26).

The concept of use value and exchange value may yield a good understanding of the contradictions within the University, the foundation year and the English language department. The concept of teachers’ agency was drawn upon in this research to some extent. Further research could investigate teachers’ agency and identity in more depth through the lens of CHAT. It could therefore add more insights to understand the subject’s position in the activity system.

The use of social media in higher education is not a well-researched area and there is a need for further research into its use and to investigate how to sustain the practices of using such technologies, as Manca and Ranieri (2016) argue “social media do not seem to easily fit within pre-existing instructional practices and their adoption would require investment of time in a situation where teaching is less valued than research for professional career development” (p. 73). This is particularly true in the context of Saudi women’s language education.

8.5 Summary

The use of CHAT in this research proved to be effective for exploring the factors that support and hinder the use of social media in language education, focusing on novice female teachers, their perspectives and potential development. This final chapter has discussed the key findings of the study and its different contributions to knowledge. This study has made a conceptual contribution in which it advances CHAT by providing a more valuable interpretation of the subject element of the activity system. The study also contributed locally by using CHAT to explore issues in the Saudi education system. Moreover, this study has made a methodological contribution in which a theoretical approach was used to analyse the data. This approach combined
abductive, deductive and inductive strategies to interpret the data of the study. The next section in the chapter has provided a discussion of the practical implications of this research. The chapter has concluded by a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research. Despite its limitations, because this research is exploratory in nature it can therefore be considered a first step for further investigation.
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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Detailed Research activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Month 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Week 1 | 12 Oct | • Getting to know the context and the administration staff  
• Recruiting the participants  
• Meeting the participants and having their consent for participation  
• Collect data before using the technology | • Meeting the Head of English Department  
• Give the teachers hard copies of the participant information sheets and consent forms  
• Observing 2 pre-technology classes |
| Week 2 | 19 Oct | • Making arrangements with the teachers for the intervention  
• Conducting interviews after having teachers’ consent  
• Introduce the technologies to the teachers | • Conducting 6 interviews with the teachers  
• Giving short training course (1) |
| Week 3 | 26 Oct | • Starting the intervention and using social media  
• Working with the teachers on how to implement the technologies in their classrooms  
• Collecting data | • Giving short training course (2)  
• Observing 2 classes |
| Week 4 | 2 Nov | • Collecting data | • Observing 8 classes |
| **Month 2** | | |
| Week 1 | 9 Nov | • Collecting data | • Observing 2 classes |
| Week 2 | 16 Nov | • Collecting data  
• Meeting the teachers for discussion and sharing ideas | • Observing 5 classes  
• Having short informal meeting  
• Start working in the Facebook group |
| Week 3 | 23 Nov | • Collecting data | • Observing 3 classes |
| Week 4 | 30 Nov | • Collecting data | • Observing 3 classes |
| **Month 3** | | |
| Week 1 | 7 Dec | • Collecting data  
• Meeting the teachers for discussion and sharing ideas | • Observing 4 classes  
• Having short informal meeting |
| Week 2 | 14 Dec | • Collecting data | • Observing 1 class |
| Week 3 | 21 Dec | • Conducting interviews with the teachers and the Head of the Department | • Conducting 6 interviews with the teachers and 1 interview with the Head of the Department |
## Appendix 2: The amount of generated data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Activities</th>
<th>Classroom observations</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2014</td>
<td>• Observed 4 lessons</td>
<td>• 6 interviews with 6 teachers (30 m-1 hour)</td>
<td>• Collecting different artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2014</td>
<td>• Observed 18 lessons</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collecting different artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2014</td>
<td>• Observed 8 lessons</td>
<td>• 6 interviews with 6 teachers (45 m-1 hour and 15 m) • 1 interview with Head of the English Department</td>
<td>• Collecting different artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total amount of the generated data</td>
<td>• 30 classroom observations • Two observations before implementing social media • The time of lessons lasted between 90 minutes to 120 minutes</td>
<td>• 13 interviews • Each interview lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes</td>
<td>• Social media tools used in the classrooms • Curriculum • University related documents • Facebook group and informal meetings • Field notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: The first interview questions with the teachers

Introduction

Good morning and thank you for being willing to join me in this interview to talk about your views on social media and its use in language education. My name is Khloud Al Khader and I am a PhD student in Education at the University of Manchester.

Can I first assure you that your identity will remain completely anonymous and no records of the data from the discussion will be kept with your name on them.

I’m going to start off by asking you some questions about you and your teaching to give me some background

Theme: History and belief

- Can you please introduce yourself and tell me how you became a teacher.
- Can you tell me a bit about any training you have had as a teacher?
- How would you describe your teaching? What terms would you use to describe what you do?
- Can you say anything about how you teach in the way that you do? If someone asked you how have you learned to teach the way you do, what would you say?
- Are there particular people who have influenced the way you teach? In what ways?

Theme: Mediating tools, history and value belief

I’m going to move now to ask you some questions about …

- Do you use any of the web 2.0 tools/ social media in your free time?
- Things like: …
- Do you use social media in your class?
- Do you use any other kinds of technology in your classrooms?
- When you were learning English, did the teachers use any technology?
- If yes, what did they use?
- What did you think about it?
- What do you think of using social media for you classroom activities?
  - Prompts …
- Can you tell me your ideas of using this kind of technologies?
- Can you give me an example?
- What do you think of the use of social media as an instructional tool?
  - Prompts.
  a. Do you think it is useful for your teaching?
  b. Do you think it is useful for students’ language learning?
c. What aspects of language learning do you think that social media tools could be used to improve on? (e.g. collaborative learning, autonomous learning)

**Theme: Contradictions**

- What do you think might make you hesitant to use social media tools in the classroom?
- What do you think of the infrastructure at the University?

- Is there anything else you’d like to add?

Thank you very much for your time and participation.
Appendix 4: The second interview questions with the teachers

Thank you very much for your time and participation in the study so far and thank you for being willing to take a part in this second interview. Can I first of all assure that your identity will remain completely anonymous and no records of the data from the interview will kept with your name on them.

Introduction

• Can you tell me your experience of participating in this research?
• What impact had this study had on you? (Negatively or positively)

Theme: Artefact, object and belief

• Can you tell me about the social media tools you have used in your classroom that you are most pleased with? (Why)
• What other tools did you use in your classroom?
• What was your aim of using these tools?
• What are the sources of your information on social media?
• What factors do think that support your use of social media tools?

Theme: Outcome and possibility for transformation

• Has the use of social media changed the way you think? If yes in what way?
• Has the use of social media changed your teaching? If yes in what way?
• What benefits do think that the tools did for your teaching?
• What did your students think about it?
• Is there any impact on your students’ language learning? In what way?

• What benefits do you think that students gained from these technologies?
• How do you think social media might help learners to learn the language?

Theme: Community

• What role did your colleagues play in this experience?
• Did you share your experiences of using these technologies with your colleagues?
• What do you think about sharing your experiences with your colleagues? Was it useful or not? Why?
• What do think about being in a group of teachers who share the same interests of using technology? Does this motivate you? In what way?
• What do you think of your participation in the Facebook group?

Themes: Contradictions
• What challenges have you experienced when you have used some of these tools in your classroom?
• What other things do you think might hinder you when using social media?
• What do you think about the rules of the University?
• What do you think about the infrastructure at the University?

Theme: Clarification and rationale (Questions about specific events for each teacher)

Examples:

• Can you clarify your objective from this activity?
• I noticed you used this tool a lot? Can you explain why?
• I noticed that you have you used a variety of tools at the beginning but at the end you focused on one tool. Can you tell me why and what as your aim of using this tool?
• Can you reflect on your experience when you used YouTube video but it did not work how did feel about it?
• How did the students respond to that?
• Do you have any views about the lesson in which you used this tool? What do you think went well? What would you work on for the next time you teach the lesson?

Theme: Reflection and Future

• Do you think that you will use social media in your classroom in the future?
• What is your ambition in relation to social media?
• What is your ambition regarding your teaching?

• Is there anything else you want to say about your experience, that I haven’t asked you?

Closure: Thank you very much for your time and participation
Appendix 5: The interview with the Head of the English department (Miss Norah)

Thank you for being willing to take a part in this interview. Can I first of all assure you that your identity will remain completely anonymous and I am not going to audio record the interview so instead I am going to take notes. These notes will be kept in a secure place without your name on them.

- Can you tell me a little about your background and your role in this department?
- Can you tell me about the policy of the English department here at the University? (The guidelines, the rules, the regulations, the curriculum, teacher education)
- Can you tell me about the policies of technology? How these policies affect the department?
- What would you like to be able to do regarding technology? What affects your decision-making?
- What issues do you think when using the technology in the department?
- Can you tell me about the use of technology in the department?
- What do you think about using technology in the classroom?
- What do you think teachers need to be able to use the technology in the classroom?
- What are ambitions of using technology in the department?

Is there anything else you want to say about this topic, that I haven’t asked you?

Thank you very much for your time and participation
Appendix 6: Classroom observation schedule

Date:

Location:

Teacher:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Time</th>
<th>Environment (Tools)</th>
<th>The lesson (Objectives, activities, methods)</th>
<th>Observations (teachers, students action, critical events)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 7: Sample of observational notes

**Date:** 16/12/2014

**Location:** The second building (third floor)

**Teacher:** Ruba  
T= teacher, Ss= students, **Bold**= shows critical events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Environment (Tools)</th>
<th>The lesson (Objectives, activities, methods)</th>
<th>Observations (teachers students action, critical events)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8:23 | *Class size: medium*  
*22 students present*  
*Ss set in rows*  
*The teacher brought her own laptop and a projector. She asked Ss to bring their laptops.*  
*3 students brought their laptops. The teacher divided the class into 4 groups and gave her own laptop to one of the groups.* | Preparation | *T asked her students at the beginning of the class would they prefer to use Instagram or Twitter. They choose Instagram.*  
*T wrote her Instagram on the whiteboard*  
*I wrote the name of the internet router and the password*  
*Ss are taking notes and trying to connect to the internet and follow T account in Instagram*  
*One laptop cannot be connected to the network. I tried to help but we couldn’t. I think there is a technical problem with the laptop that cannot be resolved as the WIFI network not showing up on the laptop.*  
*T asked the group with the faulty laptop to join the other groups*  
*Now there are 3 groups*  
Group one = 7 students  
Group 2= 7 students  
Group 3= 8 students  
*The students could not sign in to their accounts in Instagram. Some students forgot the usernames and the password as they use to use it from their phone so the teacher turned to use Twitter instead.*  
*T started teaching*  
*The teacher wrote on the whiteboard verb to be*  
Is, am– was ~ I, she, he it  
Are ~were ~you, we, they  
*Because of the fact that Ss could not access their Instagram accounts, T played the video* |
| 8:45 | *There are 5 to 6 students share one laptop*  
T wanted to put mention in | Revising grammatical rule | |

---

251
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Instagram of a video of a man explaining a grammatical rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practicing grammatical rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introducing new vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class ends at 9:30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* T posted two pictures on Twitter and asked her students to write a sentence using the past tense and use the information from the pictures
* T wrote on the white board “use the past tense with emotions and feelings”. She wrote examples “sad, happy nervous”

* T turn to the course book and ask Ss to read a passage about emotions and feelings

* Then T posted two pictures of faces with different emotions and feelings and asked students to write sentences using the past tense to describe the faces (using emotions and feelings)

* T tweeted a question what was your first day in school, she gave the instruction

“W.H.+was/were+s+..?” “was/were+s+ …?”

* The students seemed engaged as each group of students were discussing and working together and replying to the teacher’s tweet. One group wrote, “It was awful! I was so scared of the teacher” “was she beautiful?” Another group wrote “was Mary’s teacher strict?” Another group wrote “what was your last day”

* T wanted to play a YouTube video but she could not because she didn’t have a cable to connect the projector to her laptop. So, she asked each group to play the video in their laptops. Each group was playing the same video at the same time and the class was noisy and loud. Therefore, T suggested that only one laptop should be used. So all the students were watching the video from one laptop, which was difficult for the students at the very back to watch the video. However, the teacher used speakers for everybody to hear the video. T asked the students to pause the video so she could explain the grammatical rule.

* T turned to the course book and ask the students to read the memories of trips and match them with pictures in the book.

* Then, T wrote on the board to clarify the words in the course book

Go (went) Get (got)
Appendix 8: Sample of Fieldwork notes

12/10/2014

I went to the English department at the college of preparatory year, and I met the head of the English department there. She said she has 30 English language teachers; most of them are novice teachers. I meet the teacher who is responsible for the E-learning and she helped me in recruiting the participants. Now there are 8 teachers who are willing to participate. I had a chance to look around the campus with one of the potential participants, which got three buildings. The first building has the offices of the staff such as the vice-dean, the head of English department, the head of the foundation year, the head of the computer studies and the teachers and academics. The building had also classrooms that the English language teachers are using and a number of classrooms, which has TV screens. I didn’t have time to see the other two buildings but the teacher told me that the internet signal is better in the other building that got many classrooms and the language labs. The use of technology is very limited. They have only one projector in one class, which they do not use it now. They have some English labs, which they no longer use them. There is a Computer lab but without Internet access.

22/10/2014

I opened a group using WhatsApp and I contacted the teachers about the training and we agreed on the lessons I am going to observe next week and the week after. I wanted to observe their lessons and see how they teach before their use of technology but they said they are not teaching any new lessons but instead they are giving revisions, as the examinations will be next week. Only Two teachers (Zahra and Latifah) said they are teaching new lesson on Thursday, so I agreed with them to attend their classes.

26/10/2014

I conducted a short training on how to use web 2.0 technologies in language teaching with the teachers. I divided them into two groups according to their schedules. One from 8:00 to 9:00 and the other group from 12:00 to 1:00. Also I used YouTube videos (blogs in plain English etc.). Because the Internet access is not available in the college, I bought 4G router (with wireless connectivity for up to 32 users). Most of the teachers were not familiar with some of the tools. Two of the teachers said that they are worried about the students and they think that the students will not be motivated to use the technologies in the classroom.
5/11/2014

I agreed with Wala to observe her lesson from 8 to 9:30. The day before, I went with her to the class to check on the internet signal (using my router). I found out that the signal is not that good. I tried the next classroom; the signal is pretty much the same. I thought I will give it a try next day. On the 5th Nov, I went early to the classroom and put the router in a position hoping to catch a good signal. There was a signal but it was not good enough. The students were able to use the internet to search for information using Wikipedia, however, they could not use Instagram. Wala posted some pictures in her account in Instagram and asked the students to post sentences using the comment feature. The students hardly opened their accounts and when they tried to post the comments, they did not delivered. So, Wala decided to leave the task as homework.

19/11/2014

Today, I was supposed to observe a class with teacher Maram at 10:00. The teacher brought her own laptop and a projector. When I entered her class at 9:52, Maram told me that the students did not bring their laptops as the head of the department prevented them from having the devices inside the college. When I asked her about the reason behind this action, she said that she is not aware of the reason. I observed the lesson and after that I went to see the head of the department. The first answer she gave was that bringing the laptops is not allowed anymore as she thinks the students are using them for other things and not for educational purposes. I tried to explain to her that it is necessary for the students to have their laptops in the classrooms but she refused and she said she will allow each class to bring the laptops only once until the end of the term. Then, I spoke to the dean of the college and explained to him the challenges I have faced during my fieldwork and he was supportive and allowed the students to bring their laptops but with formal permission and he told me that I can use any computer lab in the building. Unfortunately the computer labs do not have internet access and I tried to use my router in some labs but there is no reliable internet signal there. So, I looked for a class that has a better internet signal and I found one. I spoke to the head of the English department and I asked her that I need to use this class and she agreed. So the participants were using this class since the 4th Dec.

Notes from informal meeting, 17/11/2014

Finding a time that is suitable for all six teachers was not an easy thing to do. I managed to find time that suitable for everyone. I started the meeting by thanking everyone for what they have done so far and their efforts for using the technology in their classroom. I had an agenda in my mind and I wanted to ask and discuss about
three things. The first is what do they think so far, what are the challenges and what do they suggest to minimise the challenges in the next lessons. The teachers said that are enjoying their using of social media but the challenges they are facing made it difficult to achieve their planned objectives. Maram (who was not enthusiastic to use technology) asked me about my opinion of her class the other day. I said “it was great and I think you need to use it a bit more next time and you will get use to it”. She said “Yes I put only pictures with questions and next time I will try other things” She added “I really was not into this thing but my students like the idea and I am happy”. Maram looked happy and excited when she told me that (with a big smile on her face). Then, the teachers suggested that they could only use the classrooms in the other building with better internet signal and suggested to buy an external antenna for the router to boost the Internet signal.

**Reflections on the Challenges**

Choosing to conduct a study in a University with limited resources was very challenging. At first when I wrote my proposal and presented it to the committee I knew that the Wi-Fi and computer cluster rooms facilities are limited in the university and, therefore, there is a need to use a personal router to be able to conduct my research. In fact, I did not consider that a major problem for me as I planned to by a router and ask the teachers and students to bring their personal devices to use them in the classroom. My aim was to conduct the study in the English language department at the Humanities and Arts Faculty where I conducted my pilot study there and met the potential participants in the first semester 2013/2014. After I passed my Panel in April 2014, I contacted the potential participants and found out that they have had scholarships to study abroad, so I decided to contact other colleges that have enough number of teachers to participate in my research. I contacted the head of the English department in the preparatory (foundation) year college and she welcomed me and said that they have plenty number of teachers and they have e-learning which made me think that the Wi-Fi is available in the college. When I left UK and went for the fieldwork and also bought the router, I was astonished to know that the internet signal is weak in the building and the students need formal permissions to bring their laptops to the University. Therefore, I used what was available there which included finding classrooms with better internet signals and facilitate obtaining the formal permission for the students.
Appendix 9: Short course 1 presentation

08/08/18

web 2.0 technologies in language education

Why technology?
- Easy
- More opportunities for learning
- Increase Creativity
- Connect people
- Time saving

What is web 2.0?
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDnDC8GzF64

Why web 2.0?
- Various educational benefits
- Put education at the center
- Its educational use is backed in the classroom
- Young people use of web 2.0
- Ideal for teachers
When to use web 2.0 tools?

- Determine the broader purpose of the teaching and learning activities.
- Ask yourself the following questions:
  - What is the intellectual or conceptual focus of the lesson (is it comprehension, visualization, application, analysis, evaluation, or something else)?
  - What type of exchange should students be involved in (should it be knowledge sharing, collaboration, networking, dissemination of information, or making or creating something)?
  - How can students best accomplish this (is it in social media or some other means)?
- Choose the right tool that supports your purpose.
- Plan your lesson.

Blogs

- What is a Blog?
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kwov8697 (4:40)
- Educational benefits:
  - promotes critical thinking
  - improves student writing
  - increases student participation
  -facilitates reflective thinking
- Encourage higher order thinking skills
- Tips:
  - Blog questions or problems for students to evaluate
  - Use a blog to share student written work
  - Use a blog to post feedback
  - Use a blog for a flipped classroom (at the end of the unit, they can choose their best blog and share it with their peers)
- Examples:
  - Blogger.com
  - Tumblr.com
  - Wordpress.com

Wiki

- Educational benefits:
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9edR9P2z6Ic
  - Collaborative, participative and interactive
  - Encourage high level cognitive engagement with analysis synthesis and evaluation skill among students
  - Demonstrative, organizational and acknowledgments
- Tips:
  - Classroom management (assignments, instructions, feedback)
  - Not students to build a wiki space around a unit topic
  - Use the teacher to check on the students progress
- Examples:
  - Wikispaces.com
  - Memrise.com

Social networking

- Educational benefits:
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9edR9P2z6Ic
  - Communicational, sharing and connecting
- Tips:
  - Ask students to form a group around class topics
  - Assign students to different groups (class lists, announcements, topics for discussion)
- Examples:
  - Edmodo.com
  - Edg.com
  - Ning.com
  - Google+.com

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Other web 2.0 tools

- Podcasting (online audio)
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dokM5ydjAhs
- Visual media (Flickr, Instagram, Photobucket, Slideshare, Pheed, YouTube)
- Instant messaging, chat, Twitter and Skype
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dol2D0r3x0c
- Wikis
- Weblog
- Vincemapping

References


Thank You
Appendix 10: Links used in short course 1

Web 2.0:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpIOCIX1jPE

Blogs:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NN2I1pWXjXl

Wikis:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dnL00TdmLY

Social networking:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a_KF7TYKVe

Podcasting:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ealcIWFyto

Twitter:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddO9idmax0o
Appendix 11: Short course 2 presentation

09/08/18

Learning community
- What is learning community?
- A group of people with shared values and common interests.
- A community is more important with language learning than any other subjects.
- Online communities can be extended outside the classroom.
- Blogs, wikis, social networking sites and Twitter.
- Connect learners and build community inside and outside the classroom.
- Build a presence online, display talents and personality.
- Support independent learning.

Integrating web 2.0 technology in English language classroom

Task 1
- Work in pairs. Find a web 2.0 tool and discuss how you can use it to build a learning community.

Vocabulary
- Learning vocabulary can be difficult.
- Learners need to learn lots of words.
- Reviewing and recycling words is very important.
- Vocabulary is more memorable if it is presented in an interesting way.
- Thesauruses, visual dictionaries and Twitter.
- Help to acquire new vocabulary.
- Become more autonomous in vocabulary learning.
Task 2

- Work in pairs. Choose a word that you would like your students to learn. Find an online mapping tool or a visual dictionary and try to combine the word with its relevant words.

Grammar

- The use of web 2.0 tasks helps in:
  - Varying the way grammar is both presented and practiced.
  - Increasing engagement and motivation.
  - Noticing patterns and organization of real language use.
  - Increasing opportunities for further.
  - All reading, writing and blogs.

Task 3

- Work in pairs. Try to think of a story. Write the stages of the story in a mind-mapping tool. Then choose a blogging website and write the full story using the past tense.

Listening

- Web 2.0 tasks can help learners in:
  - Understanding spoken language in the real world.
  - Connecting with people from different parts of the world.
  - Giving exposure to comprehensible input while engaging in authentic activities.
  - Becoming more effective autonomous learners.
  - Podcast and YouTube.
Task 4
• Work in pairs. Find a podcast on any topic. Write two sentences, using
  microblogging tool, about the topic you have listened to.

Reading
Using web 2.0 tools:
• Facilitate reading skills development.
• Enhance motivation to practice reading sub-skills (skimming, scanning,
  reading for gist, activating schema and inferencing).
• Engaging and microblogging.

Task 5
• Work in pairs. Access Twitter and read tweets about a topic of your choice
  using the hashtag feature.

Writing
The use of web 2.0 tools helps in:
• Enhancing writing sub-skills (e.g. planning, drafting, revising and
  responding).
• Motivating learners to write.
• Practicing writing.
• Participating in a community of writers.
• Blogs, blogging, microblogging, social networking platforms.
Task 6

- Work in pairs. Choose a photo on your mobile phone and write two sentences to describe the photo. You can share the photo with the description on any web 2.0 tool.

Task 7

- Work in pairs. Record your voice saying two to three sentences about yourself. Send it to your classmate via WhatsApp. Listen to the recordings again and give feedback to each other.

Speaking

The use of web 2.0 helps learners to:
- Improve their speaking skills.
- Record their speaking and thus the teacher can assess their recordings to give them feedback.
- Listen to their recordings, find out how they sound and how well they speak in English and then what they need to do to get better.
- Motivate them to perform at their best and practice what they see so they will share the recordings with others.
- Improve their confidence and quality of output.

References

Appendix 12: Participant information sheet and consent form

Participant Information Sheet (for teachers)

The use of web 2.0 technologies in language education: beliefs, possibilities and challenges

You are being invited to take part in a research study being undertaken by a PhD student at Manchester Institute of Education, the University of Manchester. The aim of the study is to explore how the emerging technologies can be integrated into language education in the Saudi context, seeking to investigate EFL teachers’ beliefs and practices and the potential for the teachers’ development.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?

The research will be conducted by Khloud Al Khader who is a PhD student at Manchester Institute of Education, the University of Manchester.

Title of the Research

The title of the research is “The use of web 2.0 technologies in language education: beliefs, possibilities and challenges”

What is the aim of the research?

This research aims to explore how the emerging technologies can be integrated into language education in the Saudi context, seeking to investigate EFL teachers’ beliefs and practices and their potential development.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take a part in this study because you are a teacher of English as a foreign language.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
You would be asked to attended two sessions with the researcher and participate in interviews and online forum. You would be asked to use the technologies in your teaching.

**What happens to the data collected?**

The data from the interviews will be audio-recorded and then it will be transcribed. The generated data will be discussed in a PhD thesis.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**

The data will be stored in a secure place where no one has an access to it except the researcher. The recorded data will be destroyed after transcribing it. The pseudonyms will be used to refer to the participants.

**Will I be paid for participating in the research?**

No payment will be made for taking part in the research.

**What is the duration of the research?**

I anticipate that the interviews should take a maximum of 45 minutes to complete. The researcher will observe at least 6 lessons with each teacher and the teachers are kindly asked to implement the technology in their classrooms. The research activities will last till the end of the semester.

**Where will the research be conducted?**

The research will be conducted in an English language department at Al Baha University, Saudi Arabia.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

The outcomes of the research may be published in an anonymous form in academic books or journals.

**Contact for further information**

Please contact me by email: Khloud.alkhader@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk
The use of web 2.0 technologies in language education: beliefs, possibilities and challenges

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded

4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

5. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers

6. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.
7. I agree to take part in the above project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of person taking consent</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix 13: an example of summarising data from an interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview question</th>
<th>Summary of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a teacher</td>
<td>Like teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like when other benefit from the knowledge I am sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not a plan but a step forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To gain experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe teaching</td>
<td>Students see me differently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do my best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not always following the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning teaching</td>
<td>Imitate my teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning from the experiences of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts about social media</td>
<td>Means to improve language learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better used outside the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not essential part of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect of learning</td>
<td>Prefer individual work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In individual work, know the ability and skills of each student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is a possibility for free riders in the group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students need first to be taught on how to use social media for their language learning for subsequent effective use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching is 50/50 process, half of the effort on the teacher on the rest on the students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 14: A sample of summarising the observation notes to main points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Available technology</th>
<th>Main points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
* Students were motivated  
* Students not involved in activity  
* mindmapping, to show the difference between shopping form stores and online shopping  
* Students not involved  
* YouTube to show two videos online shopping  
* Students not involved  
* Pictures posted on Path  
* Students involved describing and writing |
| Wala    | 5/11/2014| * Teacher’s laptop and a projector. * The students brought 3 tablets and 4 laptops | * PowerPoint to show pictures of countries flags  
* Teacher control, students not involved  
* Wikipedia, gather information  
* Students involved, collaborative work  
* YouTube, show video, ask question  
* Students not involved  
* Instagram, pictures posted  
* Students involved, collaborative work |
Appendix 15: Sample of memos from MAXQDA

**Code: Teaching preferences/simplify teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>simplify teaching</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>khouzalkhader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation date</td>
<td>26/07/2017 12:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type label</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This code could be named flexibility in teaching or following a rigid rule.

The teacher here wanted to motivate students to learn English, she wanted to make learning English fun to her students.

**Code: Becoming a teacher/Teaching job is what I had after graduation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Teaching job is what I had after graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>khouzalkhader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation date</td>
<td>26/07/2017 14:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type label</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teachers do not feel she is qualified to teach English until she get the master degree, she knows that she does have the pedagogical skills to teach the language.

The Universities when they hire teachers to teach English, they are not required to have teaching experience or have diploma in teaching as the reason for hiring these teachers to get master and doctorate degrees, not to be teachers teachers of the lower levels such as elementary they need to have diploma in English teaching.

**how about the students?**

Becoming proficient in English does not mean that the teachers are able to teach effectively, the Universities should know that any one teaching English should know how to teach English to have at least diploma in English teaching or master in TESOL for example.
There are 30 teachers and each teacher teaches 30 students which means there are approximately 900 students with different levels of English and they are all studying the same level of English.

Although she is young in her twenties she does not like social media but she said that because of our life in Saudi Arabia for women especially we do not have so many activities outside the homes so we use social media a lot in our free time.
Appendix 16: Themes grouped under headings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural history</th>
<th>Contradictions</th>
<th>Transformations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a teacher</td>
<td>Students’ attitudes</td>
<td>Students’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit for teaching</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>My role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching preferences</td>
<td>University rules</td>
<td>Different classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dis-tech</td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>different objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv-tech</td>
<td>Teachers’ worries</td>
<td>Benefits of contradictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior uses of technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits of collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>