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### Digital Inclusivity Matters: Media Selection Among Arab English Teachers

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DIGITAL INCLUSIVITY MATTERS: MEDIA SELECTION AMONG ARAB  
ENGLISH TEACHERS

A Dissertation Project  
Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Education

By  
Nur Masara

May 2024

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## **Abstract**

This qualitative, phenomenological study investigates the impact of culture on media choices in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms within an Arab region in Israel. In addition to traditional grammar-focused instruction, EFL instructors in Israel integrate technology and media to expose students to authentic English pronunciation and cultural communication. However, this technological integration not only facilitates global material transfer but also triggers shifts in different life dynamics. The EFL curriculum, shaped by Western and Jewish ideologies and overseen by the Ministry of Education, faces a critical gap: the lack of representation of Palestinian Arabs. This absence results in conflicts related to teaching methods and identity formation within the Arab sector. Guided by the frameworks of technological and cultural determinism, this research poses a pivotal question: How do Arab EFL teachers in Israel teach authentic English using media and navigate the potential cultural differences that may arise from this exposure? Through semi-structured interviews, data from seven Arab EFL teachers reveal that culture significantly influences their pedagogical choices regarding media integration. Despite recognizing the potential of technology, teachers employ strategies such as avoiding certain media or editing content to preserve their own culture and religion, which may inadvertently impact implicit language acquisition. Furthermore, the absence of Arab representation in media and textbooks perpetuates Western cultural superiority, affecting Arab students' perceptions of their own culture. Consequently, this study advocates for a comprehensive curriculum design and an inclusive digital educational environment that emphasizes diverse cultural perspectives.

*Keywords:* EFL Pedagogy, Cultural Determinism, Technology Determinism, TAM

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Culture is a dynamic concept that has failed to gain a consensus definition. Some researchers view culture as doing a collective activity (Biesta, 2011), while others see it as a changing concept by individuals (Gunawardena et al., 2001). Culture can be personalized and internalized based on different variables such as ethnicity, faith, and gender, which may manifest in both explicit and implicit lenses (Diaz-Rico & Lynn, 2012). Explicit components encompass external traits including traditions, arts, and artifacts, while the implicit components, which can also be individualized, consist of values such as philosophy and religion (Diaz-Rico & Lynn, 2012). Therefore, the concept of culture evolves based on individuals as well as external factors of their surroundings.

The emergence of technology as an external factor has enabled global interconnectedness and given rise to the concept of “Technological Culture.” This concept highlights the increasing connection between culture and technology, and how they have become intertwined throughout history (Slack & Wise, 2015). From the use of simple tools like stones to advanced modern technology, its integration into society's norms and culture has led to inevitable transformations (Webster, 2017). These changes manifest in shifts in values and perceptions (Collis, 1999) which are affected by graphic design, symbols, sounds (Chen et al., 1999), and the interpretation of texts (Marcus, 2002). Yet, culture and cultural characteristics may stand as an obstacle in system rejection or its acceptance (Kyriakou Lis & Zaphiris, 2016). For example, it has been found that technology can impact the usability of websites and digital tools when encountering different behaviors and cultural differences (Downey et al., 2005). These



findings highlight the need for developers to design software that is culturally appropriate (Ameen & Willis, 2015).

Cultural differences as a result of technology usage are particularly evident among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who utilize technology to expose students to authentic language and facilitate communication (Palsied & Pathan, 2013). It is imperative to acknowledge that cultural awareness and linguistic dynamics of language acquisition are intertwined (Esraj & Savarabadi, 2020). As illustrated in a study conducted by Angelova and Zhao (2016), the inclusion of cultural information pertaining to the target language within lessons and exercises led to enhancements in both students' language acquisition and cultural awareness. The study also revealed technology was pivotal in facilitating effective cross-cultural learning experiences. Yet, when it comes to the effects of culture on teachers' use of technology, little research has been done (Adam, 2017).

Teachers recognize digital technology and internet use as crucial tools for the development of English language skills across nations (Xiaohong & Zeegers, 2010). However, some teachers find culture as a driving force which would influence the acceptance of technology or media usage. During EFL teaching, two cultures are presented to learners through media and technology for educational purposes, yet it potentially increases cultural clashes and misinterpretations. These clashes can manifest across four levels: values, heroes, rituals, and symbols (Kyriakoullis & Zaphiris, 2016). Differences in values could also exist between two cultures like the Western and Middle Eastern cultures. English-speaking countries tend to be individualistic and self-expressive, while Middle Eastern cultures often prioritize collectivism, conservatism, and

hierarchical values (Sharabi, 2014). These beliefs and values manifest in various external traits, traditions, and behaviors that become evident through media and information exchange. This exposure helps diverse cultures interact with one another, fostering cultural sensitivity. For instance, symbols on the web may carry cultural interpretations, and those icons with fewer details tend to be more effective and less likely to evoke unintended and potentially harmful cultural interpretations (Knight et al., 2009). In Morocco, unlike in the U.S., the magnifying search icon and the under-construction symbol were interpreted as secret and confidential material due to the high value of power-distance (Knight et al., 2009). Consequently, visual, and digital interpretations can be identified based on culture, history, and politics among countries and societies.

Cultural differences can also be evident between ethnic groups within the same country, such as Arabs and Jews in Israel. Arabs in Israel are considered a minority residing in separate settlements, with only 6% living in ethnically mixed cities alongside Jewish individuals (Sharabi, 2014). Arabs in Israel do not necessarily share the same lifestyle or religion and are intricately connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reflecting collectivist values which differ from the Jewish individualism (Shapira et al., 2011). Although there are differences in cultural values, rights, traditions, and traits which significantly shape the ideology of English learners, the English curriculum in Israel remains unified for both Jewish (the majority) and Arabic (the minority) students (Awayed-Bishara, 2020). This uniformity can be viewed as culturally inequitable, as it provides the same EFL content that often carries Western-centric ideologies to students who may not share these cultural backgrounds. In response to this, Awayed-Bishara (2020) proposed the development of a more holistic curriculum with unified strategies to

create an effective learning process for non-Western cultures. However, one of the study's limitations is the absence of a focus on EFL learning through media. Ultimately, adopting materials or content from Western sources without considering cultural characteristics can inadvertently lead to cultural sensitivity or identity loss. Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to investigate the influence of culture on media choices in EFL classrooms within an Arab region in Israel.

To gain a deeper understanding of how EFL teachers approach media selection, navigate cultural differences, and perceive the influence of media on culture, this study focused on the intersection between technology and cultural values. The study adopted two different viewpoints as its theoretical framework: 1) Technology drives changes in culture and values (technological determinism) 2) Technology emerges based on societal needs (cultural determinism).

By using these technological and cultural determinisms as the theoretical framework, the study's goal was to answer the following research question: How do Arab EFL teachers in Israel teach authentic English using media and navigate the potential cultural differences that may arise from this exposure? Through this question, the study highlights the complex interplay between EFL teachers, media, and culture while providing insights on the effective educational practices in EFL learning and media literacy.

To achieve this goal, the researcher used a phenomenological qualitative research approach. This study adopted a systematic approach centered on collecting and analyzing textual data gathered through interviews. A qualitative semi-structured interview method

was essential for this study, as it allowed a comprehensive exploration of cultural differences and attitudes.

### **Cultural Dimensions in the Digital Era**

In philosophy, people often seek ways to understand the truth behind the world they live in, their relationships, and even themselves. Therefore, philosophy encompasses a vast range of topics, such as the structure of reality and the nature of human activities and behaviors (Taylor, 2010). With globalization and development, philosophy has introduced a branch called the philosophy of technology. This concept explores how technology transforms society and its norms, leading to inevitable changes (Webster, 2017). Such evolution has turned society into an adaptive and dynamic system with its societal norms and behaviors. Within this dissipative and nonlinear system, complexity theory has emerged. In the realm of complexity theory, which examines irreversible changes in systems and behaviors within communities, cultural distinctions continue to appear among different nations due to the growth of global communication and technology (Ruhl & Ruhl Jr., 1996; Hofstede et al., 1990).

These cultural distinctions differ between societies as they are influenced by various concepts. Culture is perceived as part of a discourse community that shares a common social context, historical background, and shared conceptualizations (Kramsch, 1998). Additionally, it contains collective cognitive patterns that differentiate members of a particular group or category from others (Hofstede, 2011). However, it was not enough to define what culture is due to its complexity. Hofstede (1990) developed a national cultural model that consists of four dimensions: collectivism and individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and gender role orientation.

Collectivism and individualism refer to societies which can be differentiated based on two types of connections between individuals (Kaba & Osei-Bryson, 2013). Collectivism emphasizes communal interests and actions that are not based on personal choices, but on familial or communal aspects (Muriithi & Crawford, 2003). On the contrary, individualistic culture is focused on personal desires, providing freedom to act without significant concern for societal restrictions except for legal boundaries (Kapoor et al., 2003).

Power distance refers to the way individuals perceive the unequal power distribution within a hierarchy between the highest and the lowest power levels (Bonjeer & Vonkova, 2024). In low levels power-distance cultures, people expect to be treated with respect and equality. This disparity in hierarchical positions can significantly influence individual behaviors (Kaba & Osei-Bryson, 2013).

Uncertainty avoidance relates to the tolerance degree in which culture can accept or show concerns over future events (Kim et al., 2013). Societies that exhibit high uncertainty avoidance tend to follow rules and seek the guidance of high-ranking positions to avoid risky situations or experiences (Özdemir et al., 2023). On the contrary, societies with low uncertainty avoidance demonstrate more tranquility and freedom of opinion; hence, businesses tend to invest considerable effort in seeking methods to manage the uncertainty arising from future circumstances (Özdemir et al., 2023).

The gender role orientation aspect is built upon the distribution of societal roles. Societies that are masculine-oriented show a tendency to seek material goods, societal status, and development opportunities (Wang et al., 2023). In contrast, societies that fall

under the femineity spectrum prioritize security and harmonious interpersonal connections (Kaba & Osei-Bryson, 2013).

Building of Hofstede's dimensions, these categories validate cultural differences in different socio-cultural contexts. For example, the case of the United States and Saudi Arabia exhibits these disparities as Saudi Arabia holds a higher value on uncertainty avoidance and power distance but lower regarding the individualism compared to the U.S. (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007).

Hofstede's cultural dimensions also reflect the societal developments related to technology. Research has found that there is a significant link between culture and the adoption and transfer of technology (Kim et al., 2013). For example, these dimensions can explain different user interfaces like the shift in internet usage from collectivist cultural tendencies to more individualistic ones (Marcus & Gould, 2000; Knight et al., 2009). The rapid advancement of technology has led to other complex changes including changes in societies' norms that cannot be ignored. Tenner (1997) describes the paradox between technology and society in his book "Why Things Bite Back" as follows: "...in attempting to control catastrophic problems, we expose ourselves to even more elusive chronic ones that are even harder to address" (pp. 11). While technology offers advantages that enhance human problem-solving and creativity skills, it also brings risks to society, which can manifest in environmental issues such as air pollution or health problems like diseases. On another spectrum, technology changes the dynamics of society and its culture. For innovation purposes, societies have recognized the need to transmit information instantaneously across channels, workforces, and global organizations (Downey et al., 2005). Simultaneously, technology's role is shifting within

schools, with extensive use of instructional applications that are integrated into the educational curriculum (Dede, 2007), thereby contributing an additional dimension to societal transformations.

The change of the educational curriculum is translated through various learning and teaching strategies such as virtual tours, simulations, and connecting with different communities (Shapley et al., 2011). These experiences foster effective learning by actively engaging students in tasks that are relevant to their lives, nurturing intrinsic motivation (Bransford et al., 2003). Intrinsic motivation arises from within individuals and is characterized by inherent satisfaction and enjoyment, rather than being tied to external rewards (Cerasoli & Nicklin, 2014). Consequently, for the new ideology of technology to be implemented in the new curriculum, Wester (2017) emphasizes the importance of educators' values and beliefs regarding technology usage. Webster's (2017) opinion correlates with McLoad's (2015), stating that the purpose behind the technology choice in the classroom should be highlighted and summarized in a learning activity and purpose protocol. Through this approach, educators use technology in the classroom as a tool rather than a novel amenity (Webster, 2017). In this context, teachers prioritize the effective application of technology, upholding the basis of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

### **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**

The progress of technology imposed material betterment that makes life more comfortable and moral betterment where individuals treat each other better and with tolerance (Slack & Wise, 2015). Due to this progress, the transfer of culture, traditions, and materials from one place to another has become instantaneous. These transformations

require people around the world to cultivate cultural awareness and appreciate the differences. The era of rapid globalization has emphasized the imperative need for inclusivity to ensure all cultures are presented in the most authentic way for users worldwide. In the realm of technology, different software and website functions, colors, and graphics can be interpreted differently across different cultures influencing technological usability and cultural behaviors (Downey et al., 2005). In the U.S., blue is often used in businesses because it conveys a sense of responsibility and security; it holds a different connotation in the Iranian culture where blue is associated with death (Nahai, 2012). Additionally, green, and black colors represent an Islamic historical era in the Islamic beliefs (Alsswey & Al-Samarraie, 2020). Thus, the digital design made researchers face challenges in designing software across different cultures (Ameen & Willis, 2015).

The progress of technology proposed by Slack and Wise (2015) line up with Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) that was proposed by Davis' (1989). Accepting new technology concept consists of two factors: its usefulness and ease of use (Masrom, 2007). TAM was also described as an individual's mental disposition toward the deliberate or intended adoption of a particular technology (Hendrick et al., 1984).

Although TAM theory contributes significantly to understanding e-learning acceptance, TAM explains only 15% to 45% of perceived usefulness and ease of use (Granić & Marangunić, 2019; Al-Gahtani et al., 2007). Furthermore, because most TAM studies have been carried out in Western countries, it highlights the need for additional research to explore the impact of culture on technology acceptance in the Middle East (Kaba & Osei-Bryson, 2013). A quantitative study carried out by Al-Hawari and



Mouakket (2010) involving undergraduate university students in the UAE demonstrated positive outcomes related to the use of Blackboard technology. The study revealed that Blackboard usage led to time and effort savings, as well as increased perceptions of usefulness, enjoyment, and satisfaction. However, this research still does not extensively explore the connection between Middle Eastern cultural backgrounds and technology, highlighting the limited research on the subject (Adam, 2017).

In response to the limitations of the original TAM, Venkatesh and Davis (2000) expanded it to TAM 2, including social influence as a factor other than the usefulness and ease of use. However, the social influence within TAM 2 examines the context of personal behavioral intention with the focus on the usefulness component (Alshammari & Rosli, 2020). To address this limitation, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) was developed by integrating eight different theories and adding factors such as effort and performance anticipation (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This expansion explains 70% of technology usage intention using UTAUT (Alshammari & Rosli, 2020).

Nonetheless, UTAUT lacks adaptability when applied to different cultural contexts, resulting in lower explanatory power for behavioral intention in non-Western cultures (Alshammari & Rosli, 2020). In Rabaa'i (2017) study, 39.1% of behavioral intentions was related to e-government services in Jordan. Therefore, while the theory demonstrates strong predictive capabilities, it may not be applicable in non-Western cultures. To address the impact of culture on technology and media, frameworks like cultural and technological determinism are utilized for this study.

## **Cultural Determinism and Technology Determinism**

Culture and technology determinism provide insights into how they shape society and behaviors. Cultural determinism interprets society as an influential force that can shape technology. According to this perspective, technology is developed in response to societal needs and demands (Tessema, 2021). Othman (2014) continues the argument by not blaming technology, but rather the fall of civilization due “to losing its values of humanity, and morality as well as its humanitarian identity, through emphasizing physical and materialistic progress...” (Othman, 2014, p. 111). In contrast, Apriani et al. (2021) argue that humans, inherently, are directed by values that guide them to self-improvement. These values, whether they are religious, spiritual, secular, or profane, serve as the foundational driving forces behind development and discoveries (Apriani et al., 2021). In education, society's purpose for using technology is often rooted in the hope of benefiting from media literacy, innovation skills, and other 21st-century skills (Bardakci & Kocadağ Ünver, 2020).

When it comes to technological determinism (TD), it considers technology to be the driving force behind societal change and its values into various aspects like communication, politics, or economics (Tessema, 2021). Bardakci and Kocadağ Ünver (2020) extended the concept of technological determinism by presenting two perspectives: utopia and dystopia. Utopia claims that technological development and modernization facilitate a better and happier society. Dystopia represents a critique of utopia and highlights the destruction and dehumanization that technology can bring to society (Rambe & Nel, 2015). This perspective aligns with Tenner's (1997) view that while technology offers advantages to society, it can also have negative consequences.

Slack and Wise (2015) illustrate the concept of dystopia by quoting Plato, who warned that excessive reliance on technology could lead to opposing effects. For instance, when a society heavily depends on writing technologies, it may negatively impact memory skills, ultimately affecting people's ability to make judgments about the world (Slack & Wise, 2015).

Utopia and dystopia play a role in the integration of technology into teaching, especially in EFL classrooms, through multimedia. Multimedia is defined as web-based production which includes videos, photos, and audio (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). The development of technology has made multimedia in the classroom essential for exposing students to authentic language and facilitating comprehensive learning (Wan et al., 2016). Furthermore, it has a positive impact on students' active engagement, fostering communication (Rambe & Nel, 2015). However, the emergence of such technologies can also impact socio-cultural contexts (Ng'ambi, 2013).

### **Middle Eastern Cross Culture, EFL and Multimedia**

With the scientific and technological progress comes societal advancement, as Othman (2014) advocates: “No one denies that science and technology have made great and significant contributions to the development of nations and civilizations... without the efforts of no other being than the one known as a man” (p.110).

This claim may explain the increase in immigration, job opportunities, and access to education forcing students to learn both linguistics and sociolinguistics to communicate effectively (Estaji & Savarabadi, 2020). Learning takes place based on interactions between learners and those who possess greater knowledge (Wright, 2019). This approach aligns with Vygotskian social-cultural theory. Social constructivists see

that understanding and interpretations are derived from individuals' interactions with each other (Adam, 2017). With technology being added in the societal development, it has called for language learners to have a well-rounded understanding of language and sociocultural contexts. Such understanding is becoming essential for navigating the cultural and linguistic differences resulting from worldwide technological development and for facilitating effective communication. Learners are expected to grasp the language code, background knowledge and paralinguistic skills, which refers to the connotations and intentions behind speech (Clouet, 2005). Additionally, language acquisition has expanded beyond grammar and syntax to encompass the culture of behaviors and values (Berger & Packard, 2022). Through language usage and composition of sentences, people communicate ideas and thoughts, revealing aspects of their own culture, identity, and attitudes (Berger & Packard, 2022).

While English language is spreading worldwide and creating opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds, its acquisition can lead to cultural conflicts (Gao, 2002). Heffernan et al. (2010) present a compelling case for the idea that one size does not fit all; to ensure the effectiveness of transnational education programs, it is crucial to understand learners' needs and their learning styles. Different cultural backgrounds and social contexts can lead to varying interpretations of words and expressions, which can affect comprehension and potentially result in misunderstandings and communication breakdowns (Wan et al., 2016). Gao (2002) provides two examples of potential miscommunication between English and Chinese speakers. The first example examined how some phrases and sentences in the Chinese language lack direct translations and interpretations into English, as seen with the phrase "I am concerned about you" in the

Chinese context. Gao (2002) brings up another example that relates to the different distinctions between the native and the target language culture. In China unlike the Western culture and English language, the norm of politeness can be translated through interactions with adults of similar age to one's parents, who are often addressed as "uncle," "aunt," "grandpa," or "grandma," regardless of familiar connections.

Xiaohong and Zeegers (2010) also confirms the fact that there is an integration of language and culture, particularly in EFL education while technology. They shed light on how instructors perceive the importance of technology and internet usage, considering them a crucial tool in English language development. Teachers often expose their students to authentic language from various sources, including books, movies, and radio (Kramsch & Hua, 2016). Through these tools, technology has enabled students to acquire language effectively within a contextualized learning environment and the norms of English language speakers' culture. Yet, the decision to embrace or reject learning technology may be a critical consideration due to the differences in cultural values (Granić & Marangunić, 2019).

The acceptance or rejection of technology in EFL learning can also be observed within the context of Middle Eastern culture, specifically in Arab regions. English plays a crucial role in Arab culture as a lingua franca and a universal language used in various domains such as arts, politics, and technology (Bayyurt, 2006). With globalization, Arabs are no longer isolated and seek engagement with the world while also preserving their own cultural identity (Mahmoud, 2015). EFL teachers in this context face a significant challenge related to the heavy emphasis on Western culture in many English Language textbooks. For instance, when a topic of culture is brought up in English language

teaching, it often revolves around American lifestyle or British history rather than the learners' culture (Clouet, 2005). In this situation, there are concerns that lead to the potential loss of cultural identity among learners, as there is often limited focus on learners' cultural backgrounds (Mahmoud, 2015).

### ***Differences Between Western and Middle Eastern Cultures***

Linguists and educators in the Arab world cannot overlook Western culture when educating EFL students as there exists a plethora of differences with the western communities (Mahmoud, 2015). English is an international language that transmits Anglo-Saxon values (Kramsch, 1993). In Western nations, these values are characterized as individualistic (Bollinger & Hofstede, 1987). For example, the U.S., the U.K., and Australia, are considered as highly individualistic cultures that value self-respect who speak their minds (Goodall, 2014). In the American culture, the "I" subject pronoun is more emphasized while other countries from the Middle East who follow the collective values are centered around teamwork and community (Johns et al., 2003). Rather than saying "I did the assignment," a person of Arab background would use the phrase "we did the assignment."

The Middle Eastern culture has gone through modernization, showing some movement towards individualistic tendencies in terms of self-orientation and identification, yet it is still widely viewed as conservative and hierarchical (Sharabi, 2014). Despite the considerable diversity within Arab Middle Eastern societies, they continue to exhibit numerous commonalities such as their geographical location, environmental conditions, and a shared historical heritage (Al-Krenawi et al., 2009). The most common values in the Arab Middle East often include collectivism, conservatism, a

strong emphasis on tradition, and a hierarchical social structure (Sharabi, 2014). Additionally, family plays a crucial role in establishing a homologous connection between individuals and the group; it can significantly impact individuals' social and economic standing (Al-Krenawi et al., 2009). Collectivist culture calls for elderly respect, the absence of confrontation, and loyalty to the group as opinions are determined by the group rather than by individuals (Goodall, 2014). The collectivist culture also exists in the Arabic language. The subject in Arabic can be erased and implied to the verb, seen with “Adrus” in Arabic translating to “I study” in English (Ajami, 2016). This comparison shows that in the Arab culture, people tend to reduce and identify themselves to social groups and not possess social power (Ajami, 2016).

Another aspect that plays a role in the Middle Eastern culture and its Arabic language is the Islamic religion (Patai & DeAtkine, 1973). In language, both Benkharafa (2013) and Ajami (2016) agree that Arabic is the soul of Islamic culture, and they are intertwined together. For example, Arabic language is past-oriented from the Islamic era with words like “Lasto” indicating the present tense while being conjugated in the past tense (Ajami, 2016). In culture, the book of Arab Mind (1973) states that religion plays a significant role in controlling everyday life behaviors through guidelines and restrictions as well as the base of customs, traditions, and rituals (Patai & DeAtkine, 1973). Many Islamic views also addressed technology and media, acknowledging both advantages and disadvantages (Islam, 2019) that can be tied to cultural and technological determinism.

From the cultural determinism and utopia perspective, it is undeniable that Islam has advocated for progress and development, two concepts that were discussed by two Muslim pioneers, Al-Ghazali and Al-Farabi (Apriani et al., 2021). During the Golden

Age of Islamic Civilization, knowledge, ideas, ethics, ideals, and other important aspects in humans lives other than religious beliefs were emphasized (Faruqi, 2006). Islam has major inventors, scientists, and engineers from the ninth century to the 21st century. Unfortunately, many of these contributions remain underacknowledged in the Western world. For instance, the Banu Musa brothers excelled in mechanical and control systems, inventing the self-trimming lamp. Engineer Al-Jazari made notable contributions to robotics, specializing in the development of pumps and clocks. Lastly, Taqi AdDin gained recognition for his work with steam turbines (Nordin & Ramli, 2020). These progresses were not noticed because Muslim nations are often associated with corruption, terrorism, and the birth of Islamophobia, making the status of Muslim countries low and poor (Nordin & Ramli, 2020).

Many Islamic scholars have touched upon the connections between Islam and the media. Media plays a positive role in the Islamic society considering it a source of communication and socialization, a way to spread Islamic references, a source of jobs, and information (Islam, 2019). In contrary, the ease of access to media, in many cases became a place where it spreads prohibited content which are against the Islamic beliefs (Muneera & Fowzul Ameer, 2017). For example, the media became a place for milling to fool girls and boys. Additionally, media may cause gambling, the reduction in face-to-face human communication regarding contacting family, and technology misuse like the vulnerability of emotions in relation to superficial sex and immoral relationships (Islam, 2019). Anderson et al. (1999) further the discussion by stating that media can potentially promote culturally inappropriate content, including vulgar language and corruption. The unrestricted freedom of use may also result in the proliferation of forbidden images,



posts, and advertisements, which can be categorized as technological misuse. These factors are significant enough to warrant the rejection of certain forms of media due to their dystopian effects on technology and Islamic beliefs that negatively influence cultural changes.

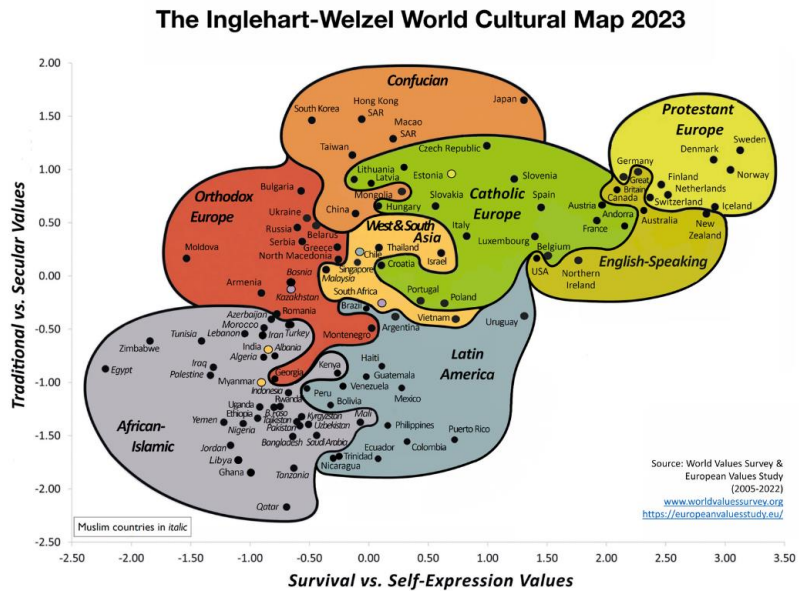
The diverse perspectives within Islam regarding media and technology emphasize the necessity of gaining a thorough understanding of how cultural variations can impact the processes of learning and teaching. This emphasizes the importance of developing and implementing international educational experiences, especially given the lack of cultural awareness within Western educational settings (Goodall, 2014). Therefore, respecting cultural differences and values in enhancing the process of English language teaching (ELT) becomes crucial in addressing this issue and may increase the acceptance of acquiring a new language and technology.

The distinct cultural dynamics between the Middle East and Western countries are evident not only in scholarly work but also in global surveys. The World Values Survey (WVS) is a global research endeavor that aims to study the social, economic, religious, and cultural values of nations worldwide. Conducted every five years, this survey examines the changes and developments in various societies and countries. Based on the survey graph (Figure 1) of the year 2023, the African-Islamic cultures and societies, such as Jordan, Morocco, and Qatar, show high survival and transitional values compared to the western countries that showed high secular and self-expression values. These results were quantified to highlight the differences in values between the west and the east. In the years of 2017 and 2018, Jordan showed -1.57 on the traditional value side and -1.20 on the survival side in comparison to the United States that showed 0.14 towards the

secular value and 1.40 towards the self-expression value. These graph and numbers conceptualize the differences in social and cultural differences between the countries.

**Figure 1**

*The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map - World Values Survey 7 (2023)*



Note. Reprinted from ... <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

Overall, countries on the traditional scale with traditional values, like Jordan, Qatar, and Morocco, emphasize religion and family ties, appreciating collectivism. Countries on the opposite side of the scale, such as the U.S. and UK, exhibit more secular values, with less emphasis on religion and family ties. They tend to prioritize individualism over collectivist values. On the scale of survival versus self-expression, countries like the African-Islamic territories show survival values that highlight economy, physical security, and materialism while showing a low level of trust and tolerance. The opposing side, consisting of the western countries and English-speaking countries, they put more emphasis on self-expression values that refer to prioritizing

environmental protection, equality between genders, and a willingness to participate in political and economic decision-making processes.

Having those cultural differences between countries may lead to cultural conflicts when there is cross-country material and technology borrow. When teachers exhibit movies or digital videos from English-speaking countries to expose students to authentic English, there are conflicts in values, beliefs, and traditions. These differences of Arab and Eastern culture might not be obvious or apparent for the western cultures, yet impact technology acceptance or language transfer (Alsswey & Al-Samarraie, 2020). The differences do not exist only between the Middle East and the West, but also on a smaller scale in the same or neighboring countries like Israel and Palestine. Based on the WVS cultural map, Israel shares self-expressive and secular values while Palestine is more traditional and survival.

### ***The Israel and Arab-Israeli Divide***

What makes the Israeli case unique is that the Arabs, referred to as Palestinian Arab Israeli, face both the cultural differences between English-speaking countries and the West regarding EFL learning, and the westernized lifestyle and mentality of Israel. Arabs in Israel are no different than any other middle eastern culture. The Palestinian Arab Israeli society is a traditional, male dominant, collectivist, unlike the Jewish culture that is more individualized and egalitarian (Arar & Massry-Herzllah, 2016). This claim was also proved by the WVS survey showing that Israel is joining the western countries with secular and self-expressive values, while Palestine is with traditional and survival values.

In Israel, Jewish, the majority, and indigenous Palestinian Arabs, who consist of 20% of the Israeli population, live mostly separated with separate localities (Arar & Massry-Herzllah, 2016). Although the modernization of Arab society is influenced by Jewish culture and media, Arabs and Jews do not share equal civilian rights, leading to an unequal distribution of public resources. This situation has resulted in 53% of the Arab population living below the poverty line (Arar & Massry-Herzllah, 2016). In the educational system, since the independence of Israel, it has upheld two distinct school systems: one catering to the Jewish majority and the other serving the Palestinian minority (Awyed-Bishara, 2021). Although there are subdivisions, EFL education, and education in general, do not accommodate the cultural diversity by perpetuating the ideologies of the Israeli majority group and marginalizing the Palestinian minority (Abu-Saad, 2006). The ideology of Israel plays a role in curriculum material determination (Awyed-Bishara, 2018). English textbooks tend to promote the cultural similarities and history between Israel and the West and the mainstream Israeli views such as the talk about the Holocaust narrative and excluding the culture of Palestinian Arabs learners (Awyed-Bishara, 2021). These controlled educational policies lead to inequality and segregation by silencing their cultures and perspectives. As a result, Palestinian Arabs work in the private sector to avoid the stronger state, where they also encounter regression due to cultural-political issues between ethnic societies (Arar & Abu-Asbah, 2013). Teachers find it hard to express and discuss their side of history in the classroom. They tend to fear consequences from policymakers. In addition, because Arab textbooks and multimedia which are provided by the government lean towards the majority culture, minorities must find different ways to pass similar information in a more culturally

appropriate methods. Hence, “technology...produces different versions of who and what we are” (Slack & Wise, 2015, p.8).

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Techniques used to Examine the Problem**

#### **Research Purpose and Questions**

The research problem addressed throughout this paper is the impact of culture on media choices in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms within an Arab region in Israel. The research problem originated from individual experiences and previous studies. The researcher is an Arab EFL educator among others who carefully uses multimedia resources such as movies, videos, and songs due to possible inappropriateness towards the Arab culture, including gestures, food, and dress codes. Educators often seek videos that are "respectful" to avoid potential complex and negative outcomes, manifesting in criticism from administrators and parents.

Despite the considerable progress in cross-cultural information, there remains a need for further research on the influence of culture on technology (Kaba & Osei-Bryson, 2013). Because culture is intertwined with language acquisition, the introduction of two cultures, beliefs, and traditions might create a conflict which ultimately affects the learning process.

To highlight the purpose statement, the research question of this study is: How do Arab EFL teachers in Israel teach authentic English through media and navigate the cultural differences that may arise from the exposure?

#### **Rational of Study**

Teaching EFL involves a set of pedagogies and strategies that teachers strive to implement for effective English acquisition. EFL instructors do not only teach grammar and punctuation but also expose students to history, culture, and social communication

(Levy, 2007). In such contexts, when two differing cultures interact, it imposes challenges and risks of misunderstandings, misjudgments, and cultural biases (Rabotin, 2011). Palestinian Arabs living in Israel, who consist of 20% of the Israeli population, live in a unique demographic, holding different collectivist cultural values and beliefs compared to the individualistic Jewish culture. Although the Israeli educational system is divided into Arab and Jewish systems, the Arab educational system is controlled by the Israeli government to serve its interests (Arar & Abu-Asbah, 2013). Due to a discriminatory budget and unequal educational opportunities, the Arab Palestinian system has experienced poor outcomes (Arar & Abu-Asbah, 2013).

In relation to EFL, although cultures and ideologies are different, both Palestinian Arabs and Jewish students are given a unified English curriculum that is determined by the Jewish educational department (Awyed-Bishara, 2015). Because the EFL materials are ideologically oriented towards the Western world, finding appropriate resources that serve Palestinian Arabs can be challenging. This issue is also apparent in the usage of media that is created by English speakers who are culturally western. EFL material, whether media or textbooks, often perpetuate the Jewish identity and history such as the Holocaust and avoid the use of names of people or places in Arabic, or any cultural belief (Awyed-Bishara, 2021). English narratives often portray non-Western characters as passive agents, implying that their success is a matter of chance or fate (Awyed-Bishara, 2021).

The emphasis on Western and Jewish ideologies in the content makes Palestinian Arabs marginalized with no representation causing conflict in teaching and identity. Therefore, this research aimed to provide insights into how to teach EFL using digital

technology to expose students to authentic language while preserving and respecting local culture and traditions. By doing so, technology developers and schools can benefit from user satisfaction and experiences from different countries, backgrounds, and viewpoints. Future research should explore the potential impact of technology on culture and reevaluate EFL curriculum design.

### **Research Design**

The researcher investigated the impact of the Arab culture over technology and media use in EFL classroom in Israel through qualitative research method using semi-structure individual interviews and cross-sectional design over multiple months. Qualitative research is used to investigate a social phenomenon through a systematic strategy that relies on different methods including text data like interviews (Creswell, 2014). The interviews as a method are done face-to-face with open-ended questions to collect participants' beliefs and opinions (Creswell, 2014). The related interview protocols and discussions were formulated and integrated inductively from the literature review and the findings. This method promoted an in-depth investigation of cultural aspects and EFL pedagogies and were useful in generating themes and hypotheses related to the participants' settings. Due to the study's focus on capturing cultures, attitudes, and teaching pedagogies, it was essential to actively engage in conversations with the participants. Every deliberate or unintentional gesture is considered important and an expression of attitude. Hence, this study aligns with the Social Constructivist Worldview, which relates to people seeking meaning and interpretation to understand the world they live in through life experiences (Creswell, 2014).



In the context of Arab EFL education, the researcher explored the careful utilization of multimedia resources, including movies, videos, and songs. This exploration aimed to describe the phenomenon of educators seeking culturally appropriate content and the challenges they encounter. Consequently, this study is a phenomenological investigation that was supported by factual evidence and an existing framework (Groenewald, 2004). Additionally, the researcher followed the school of Moustakas (1923) of transcendental phenomenology to capture the essence of every experience individually and gain meaningful knowledge. This type of phenomenology was best suited for this research as it searched for the essence of humans' lived experiences and interactions.

### **The Context of the Study**

The researcher conducted qualitative research in an Arab region in Israel because the schools there are part of the Arab educational system. According to Jewish Virtual Library (2020), Arab Israeli consist of 20% of the overall population in Israel who live in different cities with different lifestyles and beliefs. Some cities are mixed with Jews and Arabs living together and others are only Arabs or Jews. The study integrated different EFL Arab teachers from different schools in an Arab region to vary the experiences and ideologies that had only Arab students.

### **Participants**

The study involved Arab EFL teachers who teach in Arab schools and use technology and media as part of their curriculum. In addition, all participants were older than 18. The teachers were recruited using snowballing sampling. Snowball sampling is characterized as a chain in which participants refer the researcher to other participants

who often share homogeneity in characteristics and possess deep, crucial knowledge related to the topic (Emmel, 2013). The researcher reached out to the participants through phone calls or emails. The purpose of contacting them was to arrange a meeting and obtain their consent to participate in the study.

Regarding the sample size, literature does not have a specific number of size; however, for a phenomenological study, a sample size of three to ten can be sufficient (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The number of participants for this study was seven EFL teachers from seven schools who met the study's requirements, as each school has distinct missions and educational philosophies.

After conducting the seven interviews using the snowballing method, the research reached saturation level, indicating that the data did not yield new information that could significantly impact the discussion. In other words, the number of interviewed teachers was sufficient to provide diverse experiences, beliefs, teaching ideologies, and pedagogies. In qualitative research, themes and ideas guide the determination of sample size using the saturation concept, which was originally articulated by Glaser and Strauss (Weller et al., 2018).

### **Instruments**

The interview method was semi-structured to give the interviewee the freedom to ask and express themselves. The researcher prepared a set of questions in advance, with the possibility of asking additional probing questions based on the direction and progression of the interview. The protocol questions were developed based on the insights from the literature review and the research question in the attempt to seek answers and cover research gaps.

The interview protocol (Appendix A) consisted of 13 questions in the Arabic language for the teachers' convenience and translated to English for research purposes. Two questions out of the 13 were work-related questions, and the remaining eleven questions addressed culture, social interactions, and English teaching pedagogical beliefs and instructions. The last question was dedicated to further information or observations about culture and technology not covered. Participants could skip any question if they felt uncomfortable answering.

It was possible that some of the interviews responses were biased because of the community they were from. To overcome this bias, it was essential to carefully phrase the questions. The questions were phrased using third-party situations and formats that disconnected the participants from the questions to make them feel more comfortable and provide honest unbiased and honest thoughts. Additionally, the researcher ensured content reliability by giving the questions to two qualitative expert researchers in a university in Pittsburgh PA. to ensure the questions were not ambiguous, biased, or redundant.

### **Procedure**

To ensure that the study was ethical and met the requirements of integrity, a permission was secured by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at a university in PA (Appendix B). After securing IRB approval, the snowball sampling method began with a researcher's fellow academic, who does not teach in the same school to eliminate any potential conflict of interest. Each participant was informed that their participation was entirely voluntary. The snowballing method has the potential to generate participant biases. Participants may recommend individuals from their own background, potentially

leading to a bias toward a specific background and reinforcing common beliefs in the area, which could be associated with social desirability bias.

The researcher contacted participants suggested by previous ones through phone calls or emails, to seek permission for an interview. After scheduling the meetings, participants were provided with the Consent to Participate form along with a Google Forms link for electronic signature (Appendix C). This form confirmed their participation in the study while acknowledging potential discomforts. Participants may experience slight discomfort when answering questions that require them to recall past classroom experiences and identify cultural differences between the culture of curriculum makers and the target language. The information on the form were also be verbally given to the participants before the interview, making sure they knew their participation is voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time.

The interviews were conducted through Zoom software due to the geographical differences between the participants and the researcher. Participants were asked to turn off their cameras, and audio recorded only through Zoom. Additionally, the researcher took written notes during the interview. All data, including recordings and notes were transcribed with the removal of any identifying information. The time of the interviews was determined based on the participants' preferences. Since the participants were Arabs, the interviews were conducted in Arabic and later translated to English for accessibility purposes. The estimated duration of the interview was ranged from 35 to 60 minutes.

Participants' responses were gathered by collecting the analytical notes and reviewing the audio recordings from the interviews. The objective of this method was to reflect and be reflexive on the data corpus. Thinking critically and writing the ideas on

memos added insights to the research and challenged the researcher's assumption. The use of recordings meant to assure that the quotes and analysis were truthful and authentic. The research followed different guidelines and codes of conduct to preserve ethics, validity, and integrity.

The researcher maintained participants' confidentiality in different ways. Regarding the participants' names, they were anonymized throughout the study. The researcher replaced the participants' names with Participants A, B, and C to avoid any unintentional references. Confidentiality was also granted through the methods of data storage. The interview recordings and the notes were stored in a computer file secured with a password to prevent unauthorized access and will be destroyed four years after the research is concluded. Upon data collection, the data was coded, categorized, and summarized into themes and tables. Each generated theme was supported with direct quotes from the participants' interviews and with previous studies to ensure trustworthiness.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis of this phenomenological study was thematic analysis. The data was summarized into tables to find common codes inductively. After this process, the codes were combined into categories and themes that were generated by the researcher. MAXQDA software was used for coding and data corpus management; lumping codes was used and added to the codebook for more validity, consistency, and trustworthiness of the process. MAXQDA is software for qualitative data analysis. The software stands out with personalized features and a smooth interface, enabling users to customize code colors for improved visualization. These colored codes correspond to relationship and

frequency graphs that are automatically generated by the software. Additionally, the software facilitates indexing multiple codes in a hierarchical structure.

Tables and charts of the codes in this research were created using the software to find a relationship between codes and themes. Analytic coding was employed throughout the process to move beyond mere description and facilitate critical thinking, resulting in an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Rogers, 2018). The generated codes were turned into themes using thematic analysis that captures the essence of the participants' experiences (Saldaña, 2021). During the first cycle of analysis, the researcher used values coding due to the study's nature. Values coding investigates participants' value, attitude, and belief in the exploration of culture, identity, and critical ethnography (Saldaña, 2021). This type of coding correlated with the aim of the study as the goal was to highlight the cultural impacts over technology and vice versa among EFL teachers.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

The trustworthiness of this study was granted in different ways to ensure accurate interpretations. In terms of the study's instrument, the researcher conducted a mock interview with two EFL teachers who were not participating in the study to ensure the validity and reliability of the questions in terms of clarity and redundancy. To increase accuracy, credibility and data analysis, the researcher included quotations from the interviews. Therefore, audio recording was essential for both validating the analysis and creating a constant comparison between the results and theoretical frameworks.

Because the researcher is an Arab EFL teacher from Israel with full data immersion, to avoid bias, the analysis and results were confirmed by an expert in qualitative research in a university in Pittsburgh PA. for more accurate interpretations and

authenticity. The researcher presented the participants' beliefs even if they contradict their own. To increase reliability, the collected data were summarized into tables and codes and generalized into themes using MAXQDA software. Having a systematic codebook will ensure consistency, validity, and trustworthiness of data corpus. Regarding the analysis process, it was informed by the literature to support the explanations. Constant comparison between the data and different studies will ensure the reliability of the data.

Additionally, the researcher bracketed any prior assumption and judgment throughout the interviews to capture pure data, knowledge, and meaning. An Analytic Memo was taken by the researcher to be able to look at the data critically and construct a textual and structural description of the experiences in an unbiased manner. Furthermore, the researcher bracketed their own assumptions during the interview process to listen to the experiences solely and get the essence of the data and be reflexive upon them using thematic analysis. Being clear and open about assumptions increases trustworthiness, validity, and accountability of the data and their interpretations.

While addressing the impacts of culture, beliefs, and media among Arab EFL teachers, two potential biases arose: researcher and participant biases. The researcher is an Arab EFL teacher; such a close relationship with the study created a bias in data interpretation by engaging personal beliefs and data selection of what reflects the researcher's experiences as a teacher. Therefore, a qualitative expert researcher or professor was needed to confirm the data and interpretation to reduce the bias and to be subjective.

## **Role of the Researcher**

The aim of qualitative research was subjective rather than objective. Therefore, due to the researcher's background, the biases were not removed completely from the research; rather, the personal experiences and values were used during the analysis with the awareness of how far those thoughts can impact results. The total immersion in data and study context allows critical thinking and in-depth interpretations of the corpus and themes. The researcher is a Muslim Palestinian living in an Arab city in Israel and has been teaching EFL for six years starting in an Arab junior high school from 2018. As an EFL teacher, the researcher realized that many enrolled students come from different cities with different socioeconomic status and different ideologies and beliefs. Therefore, the researcher is immersed with the data and experiences informally through their interactions with students and other English teachers. For example, the researchers often found themselves hesitating to play certain videos in the classroom because they were considered culturally sensitive in relation to dress and inappropriate words.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study was to investigate the impact of Arab culture on media choices among EFL teachers within an Arab region in Israel. Effective EFL acquisition requires language exposure through various channels, encompassing key skills such as listening, writing, and cultural understanding. However, when a language carries a different cultural baggage, it can present challenges for students. Palestinian Arabs in Israel uphold distinct cultural values that differ from those of English-speaking Western countries, as well as from the values embedded in the EFL curriculum in Israel. The study aimed to answer the research question: How do Arab EFL teachers in Israel teach authentic English through media, and navigate the cultural differences that may arise from exposure?

After obtaining IRB approval, the data collection process occurred during the first two weeks of December, 2023. The researcher conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews via Zoom with EFL teachers. Using a snowballing technique (where participants suggested additional potential interviewees), ten Arab EFL teachers were reached out, of whom seven agreed to participate. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was conducted in Arabic or English, as preferred by the interviewees. The participants were from the same Arab region in Israel, teaching in different schools to diversify teaching philosophies and pedagogies.

To ensure the anonymity of the seven EFL teachers interviewed, the researcher assigned them pseudonyms, Teacher A through G. These pseudonyms were used throughout the research process to eliminate any unintentional reference to personal

details or affiliations revealed during the interviews. The participants were informed about the use of pseudonyms in the informed consent form. It is important to note that the pseudonym sequence does not correlate with the order in which the interviews took place.

### Participants' Background

**Table 1**

*Participants' Background*

| <b>Name</b>      | <b>Gender</b> | <b>University Degree</b>                            | <b>Grades Level</b>   | <b>Teaching Experience</b> |
|------------------|---------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Teacher A</b> | Female        | Bachelors in ESL; Master in Multiculturalism        | 7 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup>                  | 3 years                    |
| <b>Teacher B</b> | Female        | Bachelors in ESL; Masters in Archology              | 7 <sup>th</sup>   | 24 years                   |
| <b>Teacher C</b> | Female        | Bachelors in ESL                                    | 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup>                   | 31 years                   |
| <b>Teacher D</b> | Female        | Bachelors in ESL                                    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> | 31 years                   |
| <b>Teacher E</b> | Female        | Bachelors in ESL                                    | 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup>                   | 29 years                   |
| <b>Teacher F</b> | Female        | Bachelors in ESL; Masters in English Linguistics    | 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup>                                     | 23 years                   |
| <b>Teacher G</b> | Female        | Bachelors in ESL; Masters in Educational Technology | 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup>                                     | 7 years                    |

Teacher A has the least teaching experience but one of the highest academic achievements. Her teaching philosophy revolves around fostering cultural awareness among students and reshaping the educational landscape to be more inclusive and interactive. Teacher B shares a similar teaching philosophy, emphasizing the integration

of extracurricular activities to make learning engaging and enrich the EFL curriculum with cultural topics.

Throughout Teacher C's career, she firmly believes that a teacher's deep connection to their work and genuine passion for language are the seeds of creativity, ultimately reflecting on students' positive learning experiences. Teacher D expresses a similar teaching philosophy to Teacher C's. During the interview, Teacher D emphasized the critical role of a teacher's loving personality, genuine passion for the subject, and a strong connection to their young learners. Among the seven interviewed teachers, Teacher D is the only educator teaching English to 3rd through 6th graders. When it comes to Teacher E's educational philosophy, she thrives on the principle of bridging classroom content to students' lives through critical thinking, emphasizing real-world connections and fostering deeper understanding.

Next, Teacher F holds the position of the head of the English staff in her school. Her teaching philosophy centers around the principle of "where there is a will, there is a way." She emphasizes the necessity for teachers to stay up to date with new teaching methods, tools, including technologies, and ongoing professional development to bridge the gap between classroom learning and the students' world.

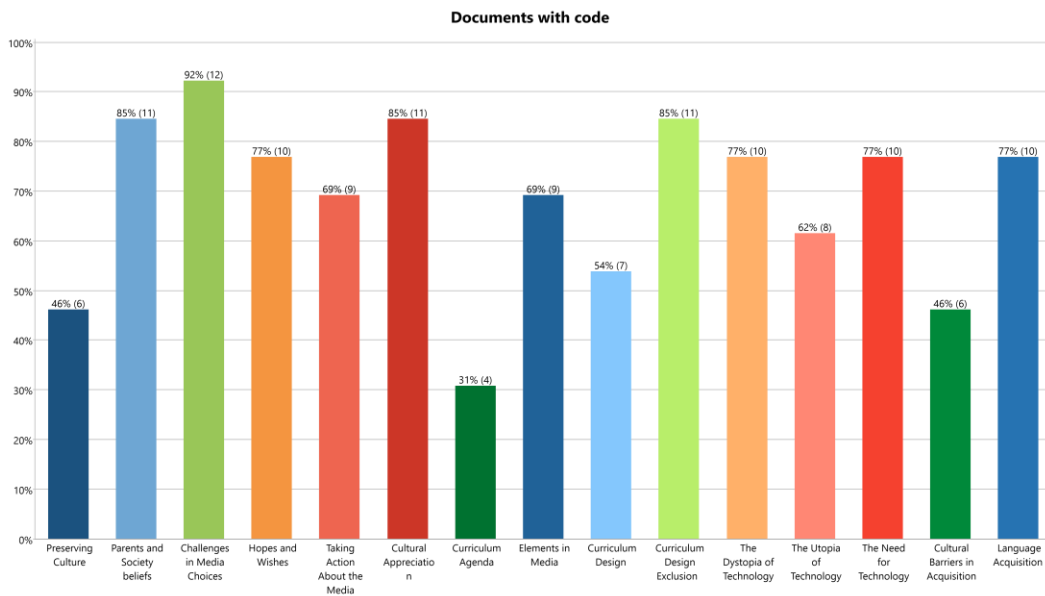
In a distinctive dual role, Teacher G serves as both an EFL teacher for 7 years and a computer lab teacher. Teacher G's educational philosophy prioritizes authentic language experiences and informal learning, empowering students to become active participants in their own education.

## Data Interpretation

To address the research question, the qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to uncover patterns and themes using MAXQDA software. The analysis process involved two coding cycles. From the seven interviews, the initial analysis cycle yielded 15 codes with 577 coded segments and quotations.

### Figure 2

*1<sup>st</sup> Analysis Cycle: Codes Frequency In Percentages In All Interviews*



**Table 2***1<sup>st</sup> Analysis Cycle: Codes Frequency In All Interviews*

|                                  | Frequency | Percentage (valid) |
|----------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Preserving Culture               | 6         | 46.15              |
| Parents and Society beliefs      | 11        | 84.62              |
| Challenges in Media Choices      | 12        | 92.31              |
| Hopes and Wishes                 | 10        | 76.92              |
| Taking Action About the Media    | 9         | 69.23              |
| Cultural Appreciation            | 11        | 84.62              |
| Curriculum Agenda                | 4         | 30.77              |
| Elements in Media                | 9         | 69.23              |
| Curriculum Design                | 7         | 53.85              |
| Curriculum Design Exclusion      | 11        | 84.62              |
| The Dystopia of Technology       | 10        | 76.92              |
| The Utopia of Technology         | 8         | 61.54              |
| The Need for Technology          | 10        | 76.92              |
| Cultural Barriers in Acquisition | 6         | 46.15              |
| Language Acquisition             | 10        | 76.92              |

Based on the frequency table and chart, the first coding cycle unveiled several prominent themes among the interviewed Arab EFL teachers in Israel. Ninety two percent of interviewed teachers highlighted the challenges encountered in media selection. This was followed by concerns about the EFL curriculum excluding the Arab sector, the impact of media on society's beliefs and culture, and the importance of cultural appreciation, all at 84%. Additionally, 76% of participants discussed the negative cultural implications of media, captured under the code "The Dystopia of Technology," while simultaneously acknowledging the need for technology integration in teaching (76%).

**Figure 3**

*1<sup>st</sup> Analysis Cycle: Relationship Between Codes*

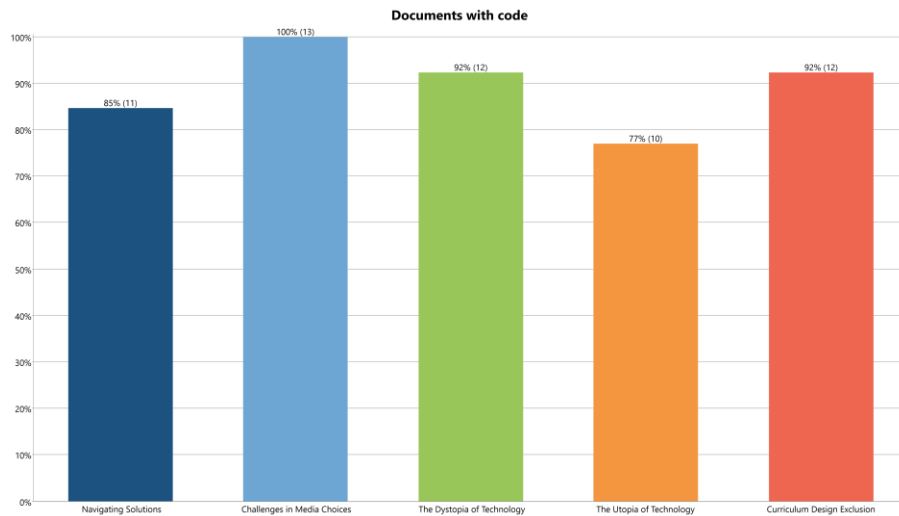


Based on the code relations graph, the data indicated that Arab EFL teachers experience tensions in their perspectives during the selection of media for their lessons. While they strongly advocate for integrating technology and media into English language learning, believing it to be an effective acquisition tool, they simultaneously express significant concerns about media's potentially harmful impact on culture and its ability to reshape societal and parental beliefs.

During the second cycle of coding, redundant coded segments and quotations were removed. Additionally, the researcher followed the lumping coding process by collapsing the number of codes to generate themes. Although lumping process may cause superficial analysis, the conceptual use facilitated in classifying themes and ideas to the phenomenon (Saldaña, 2021). The 577 coded segments were reduced to 298, and the 15 codes were collapsed into five major codes.

**Figure 4**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Analysis Cycle: Codes Frequency In Percentages In All Interviews*



**Table 3**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Analysis Cycle: Codes Frequency In All Interviews*

|                             | Frequency | Percentage (valid) |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Navigating Solutions        | 11        | 84.62              |
| Challenges in Media Choices | 13        | 100.00             |
| The Dystopia of Technology  | 12        | 92.31              |
| The Utopia of Technology    | 10        | 76.92              |
| Curriculum Design Exclusion | 12        | 92.31              |

The frequency chart and table revealed that media selection poses a universal challenge for all seven interviewed Arab EFL teachers with a high frequency of 13. Additionally, 92% of teachers (represented by a frequency of 12) highlighted the EFL curriculum's lack of inclusivity for diverse learners and cultures in Israel, potentially explaining the negative impact of technology on learning and culture, a theme captured

under the "The Dystopia of Technology" code. Despite these concerns, 84% of teachers remain actively engaged in finding solutions to navigate this complex situation.

**Figure 5**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Analysis Cycle: Relationship Between Codes*

| Code System                 | Navigating Solutions | Challenges in Media Choices | The Dystopia of Technology | The Utopia of Tech... | Curriculum Design E... |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Navigating Solutions        |                      | ■                           |                            | ■                     |                        |
| Challenges in Media Choices | ■                    |                             |                            |                       | ■                      |
| The Dystopia of Technology  |                      |                             |                            |                       |                        |
| The Utopia of Technology    | ■                    |                             |                            |                       |                        |
| Curriculum Design Exclusion |                      | ■                           |                            |                       |                        |

The second cycle's code relations graph reinforced the thematic analysis woven through the first cycle, highlighting the dominant themes of “Challenges in media choices,” followed by “Navigating Solutions” and “EFL Curriculum Design Exclusion.” While Arab EFL teachers acknowledge the potential of technology and media to enhance English acquisition, they face challenges in selecting media that align with both their cultural and religious values. One of the reasons behind these challenges is the lack of inclusivity for diverse cultures in the EFL curriculum design. Hence, teachers advocate for a more embracing pedagogical landscape that includes all cultures, including theirs.

Digging into the narratives of Arab EFL teachers in Israel, two dominant themes emerged in the attempt to investigate the impact of culture on Arab EFL teachers’ media selection in Israel. One central theme, “Conflicting Streams in EFL Instructions,” explored the complex dynamics and tensions woven into EFL education in Israel. These complexities related to conflicting approaches and methodologies employed in EFL teaching. While educators embrace media as a powerful tool for English acquisition, they simultaneously get challenged by the limitations of the EFL curriculum and the potential



for media to wear away cultural identity. Another central theme could be described as “The Pursuit of Synchronization” connecting how teachers manage media that may not align with cultural contexts while maintaining a commitment to promote cultural appreciation. Additionally, it highlighted what teachers’ desires to include media and resources in the curriculum.

### ***Conflicting Streams in EFL Instructions***

To acquire English effectively, all interviewed teachers emphasized the crucial role of four key domains in effective English acquisition: access to information from written and spoken texts, written presentation, and oral presentation. This pedagogical approach highlights the significance of in-context learning, as “students tackle grammatical patterns and gain a holistic view and knowledge” (Teacher C).

Building on the foundation in-context learning, for oral and spoken skills, all teachers emphasized the necessity of integrating technology and media, including videos, movies, and engaging songs, to immerse students in spoken English from native speakers. This immersion fosters not just accurate pronunciation, but also exposure to diverse accents (Teacher E). Additionally, the use of media and technology allows for potential content and learning personalization, connecting the learned material to students' lives and interests (Teacher A; Teacher G). The online landscape, from streaming platforms and websites to interactive games, offers great accessible resources that cater to diverse preferences (Teacher B).

Five out of the seven interviewed teachers use media to address cultural awareness and appreciation. Fluency in English is not solely about writing and speaking but also about “living the language itself” (Teacher A). This pedagogy is reinforced by

Teacher C and Teacher G who claimed that through media selection, Western cultural representations in videos are not simply presented, but critically discussed and compared with the students' own cultural background. Hence, through discussions, they encourage students to infer meaning, voice their opinions, and connect the media content with their own personal experiences. Six out of the seven interviewed teachers pointed out that this dynamic interplay between media, discussion, and personal reflection fosters not just language proficiency but also cultural sensitivity and critical thinking skills.

While embracing media's potential, Teacher B and Teacher D perceive media and technology in education as complementary and enrichment tools that spark students' interest and active participation. Yet, its excessive use can lead to a loss of effectiveness. Teacher E expressed this concern, highlighting the importance of the traditional “frontal teaching” method, where teachers guide EFL students by providing explicit language instructions. Additionally, all teachers shared concerns about the potential negative impacts of unrestricted media use, particularly regarding cultural appropriateness.

One major aspect all teachers align with is that, despite the positive impacts of media in EFL education, there are crucial and serious issues that teachers and society face because of media. The complexities begin with the EFL curriculum design and continue with identity loss. All teachers indicated that the EFL curriculum focuses solely on Western countries' culture along with the Jewish culture. This limited focus, they argued, can lead to a disconnect between students' lived experiences and the learning materials, potentially hindering engagement and understanding.

**Curriculum Exclusion.** EFL teachers in Israel acknowledge the importance of teaching cultural appreciation and diversity and English Western roots. However, they find the

current EFL curriculum marginalizes Arab culture. Teacher C, Teacher B, and Teacher F asserted that the Ministry of Education, which controls and develops the EFL curriculum, is composed of only Jewish educators. This claim raised concerns for Teacher A, who pointed out that the EFL curriculum in Israel is unified for everyone including all minorities and sectors, by stating that the curriculum and materials prioritize the Jewish and Western sectors, effectively marginalizing Arabs and other minority groups within Israel.

The underrepresentation of Arabs, constituting 20% of the Israeli population, in EFL educational materials raises concerns about inclusivity and diversity. The texts and media offered by the Education Ministry predominantly focus on foreigners and Israeli figures, with names of cities and people being either Western or Israeli (Teacher A; Teacher C; Teacher E). Additionally, the texts primarily focus on non-Arab historical figures and events, alongside themes like the Holocaust and WWII, emphasizing only foreigners' successful figures in history (Teacher A). Teacher G echoed this concern and added a political dimension to further limit the Arab representation "many book activities I avoid due to current political issues. For example, when students create a fact file about their country, I wanted them to focus on their city, but due to our political situation, none of the students agreed to do it about Israel." Teachers D and Teacher B supported this argument by mentioning an observation they had where every time the word Israel is in a text, students cross it out and replace it with Palestine. Additionally, teachers themselves hesitate to mention the history of Palestine because everything that happens in class is being watched by the ministry controlled by the majority (Teacher C).

The neglect of Arab culture in Israel and media has led Arab learners to perceive “Western countries and Israel as better” (Teacher D). Additionally, the lack of inclusion within EFL materials reinforce dominant narratives and limit opportunities for students from different backgrounds to connect with their own identities and backgrounds (Teacher A). The emphasis on Jewish and Western contexts while excluding Arab culture led some students to internalize negative self-concepts, feeling unable to relate to or identify with the perceived success stories presented claiming “I cannot be like them because they are smarter and better” (Teacher F).

**Cultural and Identity Loss.** For Arab learners, whose English is a third language and have limited exposure to native speakers, integrating media like songs and videos is valuable for language learning, particularly considering their limited exposure to native speakers and multilingual contexts (Teacher A). However, ongoing exposure to Western culture with limited representation of their own culture could contribute to a disconnect from students' heritage and a sense of cultural dilution (Teacher B).

Learners' engagement with technology and media has influenced students' perceptions of themselves and their identities (Teacher A; Teacher F). Western culture and the English language have become linked to concepts like success, wealth, respect, creativity, and modernity with Western lifestyles and values (Teacher E). This perception manifested in students' behavior and attitudes, with statements like “Knowing English and watching Western media makes you like us, so we like you and you are the best” (Teacher F). This influence can sometimes lead to the uncritical adoption of trends and behaviors, potentially disregarding their beliefs, religion, or traditions (Teacher D). Teacher C agreed with this observation, stating that “nowadays students imitate media,

and they see the West as smarter and hardworking people, so the imitation is blind.” However, she was the only teacher who also raised a potential implication of EFL teachers using media that reinforces these perceptions “Now when a teacher, who is supposed to be a role model, shows these things to students, he implies that the West is indeed smarter and more developed, so it is okay to borrow and imitate” (Teacher C).

Teachers B and Teacher G observed a dynamic shift at both societal and school levels. Teacher B began noticing a shift in family dynamics, from a collectivist and caring nature to a more individualistic one. Additionally, individuals who still uphold religious values and prioritize family and societal teachings, such as refraining from relationships before marriage, are now labeled as “old school” and not modern (Teacher B). Teacher G expressed similar frustration within the classroom environment, highlighting how exposure to media and movies can influence students’ behaviors. It has been noticeable that students mimic behaviors from movies and social media. For instance, students use headphones and earbuds excessively in school, which is increasingly seen as acceptable, although it may be viewed as disrespectful in Arab culture (Teacher G). Moreover, students are reconsidering the status of teachers in society in a way that deviates from traditional Arab cultural norms. In Arab culture, teachers hold a noble rank in society and education, but this perception is slowly disappearing as students observe and emulate behaviors from movies, such as entering and leaving the class without permission (Teacher G).

Three teachers out of seven claimed that the ongoing exposure to Western and Jewish cultures has not only impacted students but also their parents, who express confusion and a sense of losing control over the influence of media. The frustration in the

school is evident in the partial disconnect between the school's emphasis on traditional Arab values and the evolving perspectives of parents at home (Teacher B; Teacher D). While the school believes in respecting all cultures, creating a safe space for everyone, and emphasizing their identity and culture, the parents reinforce the adoption of new values (Teacher B). This is illustrated by Teacher C's example of parents questioning school dress codes, arguing for the acceptability of clothing styles like wearing tight ripped pants to school that may clash with traditional norms. Teacher A further expanded on this by suggesting that technology, with its unlimited reach and immediate influence, can sometimes play a larger role than parents in shaping the habits and beliefs of the younger generation.

### ***The Pursuit of Synchronization***

Recognizing the significant impact of media on cultural identity, all interviewed teachers emphasized the importance of schools and education prioritizing students' own language, religion, and cultural heritage. This presents a unique challenge for EFL teachers, as Teacher G expressed, “we are being cornered.” On the one hand, EFL teachers reinforce appreciation of culture and cultural awareness through the EFL curriculum standard “Appreciation of Culture” in texts and media. On the other hand, because the English language is intertwined with the Western culture that is different from the Arab one in most aspects, finding an appropriate media piece that can be played in the lesson is nearly impossible (Teacher B).

All interviewed teachers discussed the elements that lead them to restrict or eliminate the use of media in their classrooms. These elements included characters with short clothing such as tank tops, skirts, or shirtless, scenes involving kissing, the use of

inappropriate language, and physical intimacy like inappropriate touching. Consequently, the teachers often found themselves critically reviewing every video and every song, word-by-word, and scene-by-scene. Six out of seven expressed frustration with this process because, to show a video or play a song, they must either trim the content or avoid using it altogether due to time constraints. Teacher C further explained the downsides of trimming videos, arguing that this practice of avoiding certain scenes hinders English comprehension and diminishes students' enthusiasm. As a result, Teachers E and Teacher D started to feel discouraged by these challenges and began relying primarily on their own accents rather than using media to expose students to authentic English.

Beyond the elements within the video, teachers are also attentive to the beliefs and values of the video or song's creators (Teacher G). Even if a song is culturally appropriate, mentioning a singer in class can prompt students to research them, potentially exposing them to inappropriate lifestyles, which may be criticized by parents (Teacher G). All teachers expressed a fear of being criticized by parents and the principal if a shown video or song contained something culturally inappropriate, holding themselves accountable for such instances. In the context of the significant role of religion in Arab culture, Teacher E shared an incident where a student does not listen to music for religious reasons. This experience made Teacher E consider the students' values preventing her from using music even for educational purposes. Additionally, teachers often download the videos to avoid random, uncontrolled advertisements. In an attempt to overcome this obstacle, Teacher B and Teacher D considered using animated movies. Yet, they observed that animated movies are not as engaging for junior high

school students. Therefore, all EFL teachers stressed the decision not to send students home with random videos, songs, or websites.

Another layer of complexity has emerged concerning the media supplied by the Israeli Ministry of Education to EFL teachers, as not all materials correspond with the varied cultural contexts within the classroom (Teacher B). The Ministry has created a website with movies believed suitable for school use and included videos with the textbooks for teachers to use (Teacher G). However, this initiative faced criticism from Arab EFL teachers who argue that what is considered "appropriate for the Jewish sector may not be suitable for Arabs" (Teacher A). The cultural differences are also apparent in the pictures found in textbooks, such as images with boys and girls touching each other, which raised concerns for at least one teacher (Teachers A; Teacher B; Teacher D).

Despite the challenges and careful selection, Arab EFL teachers remain committed to fostering cultural understanding and respect. All interviewed teachers utilize appropriate videos, songs, and textbook discussions to engage in cross-cultural comparisons and explore diverse lifestyles. This balance between teaching cultural awareness and preserving their own heritage is critical for EFL teachers, as Western culture remains an integral part of language acquisition (Teacher D). Additionally, to navigate limited resources, teachers have adapted different EFL pedagogies. All teachers suggested to incorporate shorter videos, typically under three minutes, or utilize snippets of longer videos as a transition between activities. While acknowledging that this approach might not be ideal, the interviewed teachers recognized the positive impact of technology and media on language acquisition, specifically in English, and on overall learning to break the lesson routine and not to cause the students feel boredom.



As a result, the interviewed Arab EFL teachers advocate EFL curriculum designers for culturally sensitive English language learning materials, including media and texts, designed for the Arab context equally. They emphasized that when students encounter content that resonates with their own experiences, the learning process becomes more effective. Furthermore, because Arab students, who learn English as their third language compared to Jewish students' second language, they need for additional resources (Teacher D). Hence, having a unified EFL curriculum, without accounting for diverse learning needs, could unintentionally create obstacles for some students (Teacher F).

## Chapter 4

### Discussions and Implications

This research was driven by a central question: How do Arab English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Israel teach authentic English using media and navigate the potential cultural differences that may arise from this exposure? This inquiry aimed to investigate the impacts of culture on EFL teachers' pedagogy in media selection. In the lens of cultural determinism and technological determinism frameworks, the study intended to explore the interplay between EFL pedagogy, media, and culture. Also, it sought to provide insights into effective educational practices in EFL education and media literacy.

The results of this study demonstrated a significant correlation between media usage and culture. Through the lens of cultural determinism, the interviews revealed that Arab EFL teachers in Israel, with their Middle Eastern background, view media as a complementary tool to support students' acquisition of English from native speakers across all educational domains, including speaking, listening, and cultural appreciation. This finding aligns with Lestari's (2019) study, which highlighted the positive influence of media on enriching EFL students' vocabulary, cultural background, pronunciation, and accent. Additionally, one of the teachers stated that media and internet accessibility enhance “students' creativity, because they start looking at what others do.” Consequently, exposure to media and technology is perceived as a catalyst for fostering innovation (Bardakci & Kocadağ Ünver, 2020).

Yet, society can utilize technology to serve specific social or political agendas revealing an additional layer of cultural determinism. Palestinian Arabs in the Middle

East, particularly in Israel, trace their origins to the Levant, and their traditions are profoundly influenced by the Islamic religion with collective mission as one nation to defend Islamic properties (Dwiastuti, 2021). Although Arabs in Israel have sub-groups like Druze and Muslim, they share a commonality of language and customs that portray collectivist and homogeneous identity (Florian et al., 1993). In contrast, the Israeli culture is described as modern and individualistic similarly to the Western countries (Florian et al., 1993). After the occupation of Palestine in 1948, Arab Palestinians became a minority, making up 20% of the population, with Israelis being the majority. Within the educational sector, all interviewed teachers agreed that the EFL curriculum is controlled and structured by the majority, and it is they who “determine what to include using education as a way to put all ideas out there.” Hence, there is a significant absence of representation for the Arab sector and other minorities in Israel within the published textbooks. These observations align with Awayed-Bishara's (2021) study, which indicated that textbooks often avoid incorporating Arab figures, names, or places, portraying them as passive or even inferior. Culturally and politically, Palestinian Arabs with Israeli citizenship experience discrimination, a lack of accommodation, and unwillingness to give equal treatment by the Israeli authorities (Smootha, 1987).

The lack of resemblance is not limited to textbooks; it also extends to the media posted and published by the Ministry of Education. It was noticed by the Arab EFL teachers that these media are “appropriate for the Jewish sector but not for Arabs, even there is a website from the ministry that are approved for school use that has movies but still they are not appropriate and we do not have the freedom to say what we want in political or historical matter.” The cultural, historical, and political conflicts between

Arabs and Israelis limit the flexibility in choosing culturally relevant media in EFL classrooms. Moreover, they further restrict teachers from freely discussing several topics related to history and politics in the classroom due to fears of negative consequences on their jobs and lives. Dwiastuti (2021) explained the findings and the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians by pointing out the concept of *political culture* that was coined by Almond and Verba in 1963. Political culture concept helps in clarifying political orientations, encompassing attitudes towards both, the political system, and the role of the self (Stein & Swedenburg, 2004). Based on the Israeli narrative, there is an emphasis of the myth of the Promised Land in Judaism and the notion of racial purity and the belief that Jews are chosen by God. This narrative explains how Palestinians experience racial dehumanization due to Israeli policies impacting both social and political interactions and participation (Dwiastuti, 2021). These clashes have made education a tool to advance political agendas, particularly in shaping specific beliefs. Consequently, these findings support the argument made by Othman (2014), who posited that technology is not the contributing factor to societal changes. Instead, Othman (2014), suggests that humans are deteriorating in terms of values, morality, and humanitarian identity, which leads to discriminatory societal relationships.

Due to the noticeable underrepresentation, in many instances, Arab EFL students express their dissatisfaction with education by arguing that the content is not relevant and questioning why they should learn it. Consequently, as a form of advocacy, they cross out the word Israel in the textbook and replace it with Palestine to represent their own culture and background. Zirkel's (2002) claim explained students' actions by emphasizing the significance of having role models from the same race or ethnicity. Having relatable role

models foster values and cultural awareness, ultimately contributing to students' success (Zirkel, 2002). Consequently, cultural determinism in relation to technology use can have two sides that were not discussed in the literature review: utopia when society develops technology for positive benefits and dystopia when technology is used to harm other groups of people.

Although technology is developed and used to serve societal needs, technology in return impacts societal dynamics. With the rapid progress of globalization and innovation, technology has become an inseparable part of daily life (Hatch, 2011). Through the lens of technological determinism, this study identified both the promising "utopia" and the concerning "dystopia" perspectives. On the utopian side, technology empowers teachers to connect with students through personalized resources. As one of the teachers stated, they “refer students to some videos and channels that talk about whatever they like. And ask them to watch one video each week that talks about their hobbies or their interests which they try to talk without fear because they are simply talking about something that they like.”

Yet, apart from human driven political agendas that were mentioned earlier, technology may have hidden biases that can influence the perception of one's own culture and identity highlighting a potential dystopia scenario. In this scenario, technology contributes to cultural shifts in the Arab community, resulting in different behaviors and values than what it used to be. In English classes, teaching language is intricately linked with teaching culture, particularly the Western culture. Language contains various integral components, including grammar, vocabulary, and most importantly narrative styles that are often intertwined with cultural perspectives, values, and societal thoughts

(Imai et al., 2016). In education, students' achievements and social competence are deeply affected by cultural awareness (Walker, 2005). Yet, the structure of the unified EFL curriculum has raised concerns among its teachers, who have observed a notable emphasis on Western and Israeli cultures in EFL textbooks and media, without adequate representation of the backgrounds of Arab learners or any other minority group. Additionally, the predominant language utilized in digital environments that foster communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity skills is English language (Jose, 2021). When students lack a sense of connection with the content or their peers, they are more likely to drop out or experience negative impacts on their progress (Simpkins & Riggs, 2014). Hence, the heavy emphasis and integration of English and Western culture in both schools and daily life of technology usage have led Arab students perceive their culture and background differently. Western culture has become associated with creativity, wealth, and intelligence. Whereas the Islamic religion and Arab Palestinian culture are viewed as old, primitive, and closed minded. The social and human interactions with the media create a space for constructing users' identities and showcasing oneself to the public domain through the subjective act of narrating and publishing daily lives (Radwan, 2022). The convergence of personal and external public spheres reshapes cultural norms that define individual identity (Radwan, 2022). These findings were mirrored by another example shared by one of the teachers, where a guest speaker brought up only successful disabled individuals from the Western culture, despite the existence of many in the Arab world. The study by Miladi et al. (2022), which examined the interplay between digital social networks in Qatar through 27 semi-structured interviews, corroborates the findings of this research. It described the clash of

cultures and media as a battlefield, where tensions arise between media, culture, identity formation, and opinion expression, all of which impact traditional values. To discourage the adoption of harmful practices, the Qatari state actively promotes its home culture and values during national events and heritage days (Miladi et al., 2022). Although the Qatari case exhibited similarities to the findings of this research, the Palestinian and Israeli case is unique because the educational ministry and governmental laws are controlled by Israel, while Palestinian culture remains overlooked.

Navigating the dynamic interplay between traditional and evolving cultures, alongside the impact of technology, made the role of Arab schools, especially EFL teachers in Israel crucial in preserving values yet teaching cultural awareness and show respect of the difference. The findings of this study share some common ground with Lestari's (2019) research, which highlighted the positive impact of media and videos on students' speaking skills, often allowing them to choose materials relevant to their interests and based on their needs. However, the present study showed a different reality by illustrating that the choice of teaching materials and media is significantly influenced by cultural and religious considerations.

Arab EFL teachers actively seek videos that align with their cultural and religious values, exercising caution to avoid any content that may be considered unacceptable. This cautious approach involves editing or omitting certain scenes from videos to ensure they conform to cultural and religious norms, even if they may be beneficial for language acquisition. Additionally, teachers investigate the values held by singers to minimize the risk of students exploring other songs that may conflict with cultural or religious sensitivities.

The pedagogical strategies and practices employed demonstrate a commitment to preserving cultural and religious values. Despite formal institutions and educational policies advocating for the adaptation to new technological advancements to ensure effective language learning, the education of minorities or groups under occupation often centers around preserving cultural identity. In their classrooms, teachers select relevant materials and supplement them with additional content aimed at protecting their identity. For minorities, learning and teaching revolve around passing knowledge, culture, and values across generations to ensure their continued existence.

For these minorities, identity encompasses religion, which shapes day-to-day behaviors and decisions, as well as history and language. Maintaining cultural roots is essential for their existence in the face of occupation or majority dominance, regardless of the majority's control over the environment. Although the emphasis on cultural preservation limits the integration of innovative educational technologies, potentially hindering the effectiveness of language learning and other educational outcomes, cultural determinism remains the predominant force influencing technology use.

### **Limitations**

Despite the complex and uniqueness of the study, the study acknowledges several limitations. There is a lack of research and background knowledge concerning the relationship between technology and EFL culture, particularly among Middle East Palestinian Arabs and Israelis. This gap had implications on the depth of the theoretical foundations upon which the study's results and conclusions were built upon. Addressing this research gap calls for future development and further investigation regarding the complex dynamics of technology and EFL culture in the specified context.



Additionally, the snowball sampling method of this study limited data diversity. In Israel, Arab cities and communities vary in terms of openness and progressive attitudes. Because the participants were selected using the snowballing method without specific criteria, it impacted the diversity of participants. During recruitment, each participant recommended another teacher who share similar cultural background and gender, reside in the same city, and teach a similar age group (in this research, all teachers were females teaching in middle school except one participant from elementary school). Although the snowballing method facilitated great access to participants, it homogenized the sample, eliminating broader perspectives from other Arab communities in Israel. Hence, for future research, alternative sampling methods should be considered, such as adopting a more selective approach to encourage inclusivity and diversity of cultures, genders, and experiences, leading to a holistic understanding of the complex social dynamics in the digital era. Furthermore, due to the capstone's nature and its tight timeline, the researcher recruited seven participants. Although research and literature have indicated that a sample size ranging from three to ten is suitable for a phenomenological study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), considering the novel scope of this study, additional participants may be recommended to enhance its robustness and capture the diverse backgrounds in Israel.

## **Conclusions**

Seven interviews with Arab EFL teachers in Israel explored the impact of culture on their pedagogical choices regarding media integration. The data revealed a noteworthy influence of cultural considerations on how Arab EFL teachers utilize media in their classrooms. Drawing from both cultural determinism as educational

catalysts and technological utopian perspectives, educators recognize the potential of technology and media in enhancing language learning. Specifically, they emphasize the role of media in contextualized acquisition of pronunciation, accent, grammar, and personalized learning content. By integrating media effectively, these pedagogical practices contribute to students' engagement and motivation.

While cultural determinism suggests that society develops technology in response to its needs and demands, this influential force can also be harnessed for detrimental purposes. Specifically, it may perpetuate biases and discriminatory practices that disproportionately impact marginalized communities through technology. In the context of Israel's EFL curriculum, complexity arises. The curriculum is meticulously controlled and designed to be uniform across all ethnic groups by Jewish educators. This uniformity results in a lack of representation for diverse minorities, including Arab communities. Textbooks and media provided by the Ministry of Education often fail to recognize cultural nuances, leading students to form potentially inaccurate perceptions about their own culture. It has become viewed that Western culture is superior in terms of intelligence, creativity, success, and wealth, while the Arab culture and Islam are perceived as old-fashioned and primitive. Consequently, students began to adopt alternative cultural identities. This process and views intersect with Israel's political agendas, particularly concerning Palestinian Arabs who are regarded as second-class citizens since the occupation. In this context, technology is used to reinforce specific values and beliefs in the perspective of negative use of cultural determinism, and the heavy technology exposure reflects the dystopian manifestation of technological determinism.

Arab EFL teachers face a complex challenge. To reconcile these competing demands, teachers often resort to strategies such as avoiding media, relying on their accents, or editing content. Through these tactics, minorities prioritize cultural awareness. For minorities, preserving culture is about protecting their identity that encompasses both language and religion. To maintain these aspects across generations, schools that serve as educational institutions and cultural messengers prioritize cultural preservation over technological advancement to keep existing. Yet, the question remains: how and until when can they maintain this delicate balance while ensuring students develop a keen sense of identity and a positive understanding of their own heritage in the face of external influences?

### **Implications and Recommendations for Future Research**

Arab EFL teachers consider technology and media essential tools for exposing students to native English speakers. However, they face a cultural challenge because English language is predominantly used in the Western countries who do not share similar values, beliefs, and traditions of the Middle East. Navigating these cultural differences becomes complex, especially when they conflict with prevalent religious norms in the Middle Eastern culture. Consequently, application and website developers should mindfully consider the diverse audience cultures. It is crucial to create digital spaces that are inclusive, catering to everyone without excluding any group. The materials should be adaptable to diverse cultures and religions, maintaining relevance and ensuring high design quality. All cultures should be exposed to the same quality of material, ensuring that their voices are heard equally in terms of design quality and high-end content worldwide. In terms of policy, EFL curriculum design should include

members from various cultures and minorities to create textbooks and media that are inclusive for everyone.

To deepen the understanding of the interplay between culture, technology, and their impacts on various minority groups in Israel, further research is needed at different school levels. Additionally, examining the cultural values among various cities within Israel could provide valuable insights, given the amount of exposure to Israeli culture may not be similar. Ultimately, expanding the research scope to encompass comparisons between multiple cultures in different countries would allow a more comprehensive analysis of the complex intersection between technology and cultural dynamics.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

### Work Related Questions:

1. How many years of EFL teaching experience do you have?
2. What is your EFL teaching philosophy?

### Pedagogies and Cultural Related Questions:

3. What tools do you use to help you teach English effectively? Can you share an experience from your classroom?

Follow up: Can you rank the tools in terms of usefulness? Why?

4. What skills should EFL teachers have to teach and help students acquire English language effectively? Why?

5. What concepts do you highlight in your English lessons? May you provide examples?

6. Can you provide examples of how media has been an effective tool to teach English?

7. Can you describe any instances where cultural differences were apparent?

Follow up: What were the differences?

Follow up: How did you address them?

8. While choosing media to incorporate in your English class, what elements do you look for?

9. In the case that a piece of media had an element that was not acceptable for the students' culture, how would you address it?

10. Have you had or heard of an incident where EFL students respond differently if the EFL material portrays their culture or a different one?

Follow up: How technology can be effective to preserve the local cultures?

11. How do you balance teaching EFL and address the cultural differences and identities in classroom?
12. What strategies do you hope to include in the English curriculum design to be more inclusive when it comes to media and technology?
13. Thank you so much for the insightful information. Is there anything else that you would like to share that we have not covered that you think it is important to consider?

## Appendix B: IRB Consent Form Approval

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Wj1XH7KgoLWX0YHCl3P0wJ\\_nWF9clG5/view?usp=sha  
ring](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Wj1XH7KgoLWX0YHCl3P0wJ_nWF9clG5/view?usp=sharing)

### **Appendix C: Consent to Participate in a Research Study Link**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf3zPfcvr3\\_pMZgxvJ8K0my2j3tJANOrauSvkEqq47-CQuk7A/viewform?usp=sf link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf3zPfcvr3_pMZgxvJ8K0my2j3tJANOrauSvkEqq47-CQuk7A/viewform?usp=sf_link)