

Saudi EFL Students' Attitudes Toward the Target Culture and Its Relationship with Their Linguistic Backgrounds

Wardah Saad Alshahrani¹

¹ College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: Wardah Saad Alshahrani, College of Languages and Translation, Abha, Saudi Arabia.

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Abstract

Culture and language have long been focal points of investigation, and both have been intensively discussed in the academic literature, but little attention has been paid to the influence of EFL students' linguistic backgrounds on their attitudes toward the target culture, especially in the Saudi context. This mixed-method study aimed to explore the impact of learners' linguistic backgrounds (mainly their language academic achievement levels and contexts of language learning) on their attitudes toward the target culture. The data was collected using an online questionnaire. A total of 84 students from the Faculty of Language and Translation at King Khaled University participated in this study. A Pearson correlation coefficient test and thematic analysis were used to interpret the data. The results showed a significant relationship between the participants' linguistic backgrounds and their attitudes. The results also indicated that the participants had an overall positive attitude toward the integration of the target culture into language learning. In light of the findings, EFL students' linguistic background should be taken into consideration before embedding the target culture into language learning.

Keywords: academic achievement, attitudes, culture, language learning contexts, Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

The aim of learning a foreign language is to be able to communicate in the target language, understand the traditions and customs of the target speech community, and acquire fluency (Sun, 2013). According to Hall (2011), "language acquisition is a process by which a human mind, with its innate, coherent, and abstract system, imposes order on incoming linguistic and non-linguistic data" (p. 48).

Language is not merely a combination of grammatical forms, but also a combination of beliefs, behaviors, and norms. Hall (2011) stated that language is a social phenomenon representing people's social, political, and cultural contexts. One of the basic components of any language is its culture. Indeed, language is a cultural tool, and any study of language implies a study of its culture. Hammers (1985) defined *culture* as a combination of values, beliefs, and behaviors that develop throughout a country's history. Yin (2009) stated that language and culture constitute a reciprocal process: when a learner learns a language, they should learn the culture relating to that language. Understanding the culture of the target language is an essential part of language learning. Notably, a language and its associated culture cannot be separated without losing the significance of the language or the culture (Brown, 2000).

Learning a foreign language involves learning new grammatical, linguistic, and cultural norms. According to Sun (2013), "the most difficult thing for the language learners to deal with in their study of the foreign language is not the linguistic forms or grammar, but the cultural difference" (p. 372). Language learners need to learn and understand the features of the target culture. *Target culture*, here, means "the culture of the second language being learned" (Tseng, 2002, p. 14), an understanding of which is essential for learning a foreign language.

Learners' attitudes toward the target culture should be taken into consideration while they learn the language. Attitudes constitute "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (Allport, 1935, p. 6). Rafieyan et al. (2013) asserted that learners' attitudes toward the target culture influence their attitudes toward the language itself.

Many factors could affect EFL students' attitudes toward the English language. Most studies that have been conducted in the Saudi context examined students' attitudes toward either the English language in general or

English and its associated culture in particular (Abdulaziz & Almeshari, 2019; Alharbi, 2022; Al samadani & Ibnian, 2015; Alsamani, 2014; Hagler, 2014). Researchers investigated the students' attitudes from different angles: the factors that affect their attitudes (Alharbi, 2022) its relationship with their motivation (Hagler, 2014), and its relation with their level of education (Alsamani, 2014). This study is an attempt to contribute to the literature and to identify the influence of academic achievement levels and contexts of language learning on the attitudes toward English language culture of EFL students at King Khaled University.

Language learning can be divided into three contexts: formal language learning, informal language learning, and mixed language learning (Saville-Troike, 2006). Formal language learning takes place in classrooms where students are formally instructed by a language teacher, whereas informal language learning takes place in natural contexts that favor engaging in casual conversation with native speakers and acquiring the language unconsciously. A combination of formal and informal language learning takes place when the learner attends formal language classes and uses the language outside the classroom in casual settings (Saville-Troike, 2006).

Students' English language achievement levels are reflected in their grade point average (GPA). In Saudi Arabia, a five-point scale is adopted at most universities (Al-Saud, 2013), and King Khalid University is no exception. Students are divided according to their GPAs into five categories: excellent (4.5 and above), very good (3.75 to less than 4.50), good (2.75 to less than 3.75), satisfactory (2 to less than 2.75), and failing (less than 2.75). In this study, student GPAs were used as a tool to reflect the participants' academic achievement levels. Many researchers have used participants' GPAs to measure participants' academic achievement levels (Alqarni, 2022; Al samadani & Ibnian, 2015; Sahrsgard et al., 2011).

The purpose of this research was to explore Saudi female students' attitudes toward the integration of the target culture into language learning. It also aimed to discover whether the participants' GPAs and contexts of language learning had any impact on their attitudes. In this context, we aimed to provide language curriculum planners, language teachers, and curriculum designers with an overview of students' attitudes and the factors that influence their attitudes. The following research questions were formulated to achieve the aims of this study:

- 1) What are Saudi female students' attitudes toward the integration of the target culture into language learning?
- 2) Is there any relationship between the learners' attitudes and their linguistic backgrounds; in particular, their GPA levels and contexts of language learning?

2. Literature Review

Tseng (2002) emphasized that successful language learners are those who develop a good understanding of the culture underlying the language they are learning. The goal of learning the target culture is to help learners recognize that their views about the world are not shared by all people worldwide. Teaching students about the target culture "involves uncovering and understanding one's own culturally conditioned behavior and thinking, as well as the patterns of others" (Damen, 1987, p. 81). Furthermore, teaching students about culture and developing their cultural knowledge have a great impact on their linguistic and cultural comprehension. The aim of learning a foreign language is to develop proficiency and communicate effectively; thus, students will not be able to communicate to "the fullest extent" without incorporating culture into language learning (Hendon, 1980, p. 198).

2.1 Language Communicative Competence and Culture Learning

The notion of *communicative competence* was first introduced by Dell Hymes in 1972 (Moore, 2020). Communicative competence is an integral part of language learning. Learners should acquire communicative competence, which means "the ability to achieve certain communicative aims by various possible linguistic or non-linguistic means" (Sun, 2013, p. 372). To enhance and facilitate the learners' communicative competence, culture should be involved when teaching and learning the target language (Kerr, 2004; Savignon & Sysoyev, 2002). Thus, Peterson and Coltrane (2003) insisted that "for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behavior" (p. 2).

The notion of communicative competence has expanded to include intercultural communicative competence (Hall, 2011). *Intercultural communicative competence* is defined as "the knowledge, skills, and abilities to participate in activities where the target language is the primary communicative code and in situations where it is the common code for those with different preferred languages" (Byram, 1997, p. 61).

2.2 Cultural Competence and Bicultural Identity

Cultural competence and bicultural identity are also associated with the integration of culture into language learning. Cultural competence refers to the individual ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds (LaFromboise et al., 1993). According to Chen et al. (2008), "bicultural identity refers to a

local identity that is rooted in the culture of origin as well as a global identity that emerges as individuals adapt to the demands of an emerging culture of multiculturalism” (p. 806).

To develop good cultural competence, learners should have strong personal identities, possess knowledge of the beliefs and values of the target culture, be able to communicate effectively with the target community, and form good relationships with target community members (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Five models (i.e., the assimilation model, acculturation model, alternation model, multicultural model, and fusion model) have been used to explain the processes that might result from the integration of two or more cultures. Alternation refers to a state in which an individual learns and accepts two cultures without losing their own cultural identity (LaFromboise et al., 1993). The authors asserted that the alteration model gives learners the chance to maintain a positive relationship between two cultures without fearing the loss of one or having to choose between the two.

2.3 Cultural Neutrality

Nevertheless, Modiano (2001) claimed that if the goal of learning the English language is to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds, learners do not need to learn the specific cultural aspects of the English-speaking culture. He argued that “any culture-specific variety forces the EFL speaker to assume more pronounced multiple identities, and that such behavior impacts negatively upon the individual’s sense of cultural identity” (p. 169). He also asserted that cultures are complex, and learners come into classrooms with different cultures and different views of the world, so there is no need to impose specific cultures on them. Scovel (1994) argued that the cultural content of English language learning needs to be broadened to include more topics relating to the EFL learners’ own cultures. He believed that topics such as ecology, sexual equality, and drugs are important topics for American and British textbooks writers, but are not relevant to learners in different countries, because they lack the cultural background of such topics. According to Scovel (1994), most EFL curriculum designers and teachers have humanities backgrounds, which means that depictions of the target culture in classrooms involve humanist topics, although most learners do not learn English for humanist reasons. He stated that “it is almost amusing to see ESL students in Californian universities who are largely business, engineering, science, and computer science majors struggling with topics in their ESL classes like, “What are the best ways to learn a foreign language?” or “Should California support ‘English only’ legislation?”” (p. 210). According to Modiano (2001), language learners should be socially, politically, and culturally neutral, which can only be achieved by giving them space without any inclusion of specific cultural information.

2.4 Target Culture in Saudi Curricula

Regarding the position of culture in the Saudi curricula, Elyas and Badawood (2016) analyzed the goals of the Saudi Ministry of Education before and during the 21st century. They analyzed a pre-21st century document and found that Islamic religion, law, and national identity had a massive impact on all the educational goals, including the teaching of the English language. The teaching of English was aimed at contributing to the spread of Islam and helping the students build a solid background in science and technology (Elyas & Badawood, 2016). The authors argued that neither English culture, nor international communicative mores, were mentioned in the document, suggesting that ELT in that period focused only on teaching vocabulary and grammar to help the EFL students to acquire the linguistic aspects of science and technology. According to Elyas and Badawood (2016), language policy in the twenty-first century has adopted a “weaker Islamisation position” compared to the earlier period, and English is described as a global language of communication. Additionally, ELT was linked to the aim of increasing the cultural understanding and communicative competence of the learners and teachers (Elyas & Badawood, 2016).

A more recent study conducted by Almesaar (2024) analyzed the position of English in the Human Capability Development Program (HCDP) of Saudi Vision 2030. The researcher found out that the aim of Saudi Vision 2030 was to increase and preserve the Saudi culture and Arabic language while welcoming foreign cultures. In comparison to previous perspectives toward foreign languages and cultures, in which they were seen as a threat to the country's native language and its Islamic heritage (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017), Saudi Vision 2030 asserts that if the country takes sufficient steps to preserve its culture and identity, foreign languages and cultures will not pose a threat to Saudi culture. Furthermore, the researcher noticed the Arabic language was not linked to the preservation of religion in the country, but was seen as a tool to preserve national identity. Also, language learning was perceived as a means of enhancing Saudi citizens’ overall capacities and competitiveness “in the context of a more tolerant and moderate Islam” (Almesaar, 2024, p. 9).

2.5 Second Language Learners’ Attitudes Toward L2 Culture

To identify the influence of incorporating English-culture learning into English language learning, Aldawood and Almeshari, (2019) conducted a quantitative study to measure the attitudes of 70 undergraduate female students aged 20–22 years at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. The researchers found out that the students have an

overall positive attitude toward incorporating the English culture into language learning. The results indicated that Saudi EFL students were aware of the inseparable relationship between language and culture. Furthermore, the results showed that the main difficulty Saudi students face when learning about the target culture is the difference between Arabic culture and English culture.

Furthermore, Alharbi (2022) conducted a study to investigate the attitudes of Saudi health track students toward studying English and its culture, along with the factors that influence their attitudes. The researcher used a mixed-methods approach, combining a survey with subsequent follow-up interviews, to collect the data from 57 Saudi health-care students in their first year at Qassim University. The results indicated that the participants had moderately positive attitudes toward learning English and its associated culture. The factors that influenced the participants' attitudes were teaching quality, the classroom environment, and the students' needs to participate in more enjoyable and dynamic classroom activities.

A similar study was carried out by Hagler (2014) at King Saud University to investigate male and female students' attitudes toward Western culture and its relationship with their motivation. The data was collected from 210 humanities and science track students during their pre-session year. The results indicated that most of the participants had a positive attitude toward the West and its culture. Hagler (2014) found that more than half the participants (66%) had an integrative motivation to learn the language, and the rest of them developed an instrumental motivation to learn English and its culture. Interestingly, the data showed that male science track students had a higher instrumental motivation to learn Western culture than their counterparts in the humanities track. Conversely, female humanities students were more instrumentally motivated than their colleagues in the science track.

Alsamani, (2014) investigated the cultural awareness level among three categories: students, teachers, and experts in the EFL field. The researcher aimed to identify the level of cultural awareness among the students and evaluate their need to learn the target culture. A total of 70 students, nine teachers, and seven experts participated in the study. Students participated in this paper from two different levels (levels two and four), and the results of the cultural awareness test revealed that both groups had similar cultural awareness levels. The researcher argued that this result proved that EFL classrooms in Saudi universities lack cultural content, which explains why students who had spent 2 years at the university had the same level as their counterparts in their first year. Furthermore, the results indicated that students rely heavily on audio-visual online resources to learn about the target culture.

3. Method

A survey research design was used for this study. According to Check and Schutt (2012), "survey research is the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (p. 160). Surveys allow researchers to use various methods of obtaining data, including quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods, which are usually used to explore human behavior and attitudes (Ponto, 2015). Because the goal of this study was to examine Saudi female participants' attitudes toward the incorporation of the target culture into language learning, a mixed methods approach was appropriate. This survey was designed to obtain quantitative and qualitative data from the participants regarding their attitudes and to gain a greater understanding of their opinions.

3.1 Participants

The participants were Saudi female EFL learners from the College of Language and Translation, King Khaled University in Abha, Saudi Arabia. The participants were in their sixth, seventh, and eighth levels at the university.

A total of 84 students participated in the study. All the participants were female and aged between 20 and 25. A convenience sampling technique was used to collect the data from the participants, meaning a "process in which a sample is drawn from conveniently available subjects" (Panacek & Thompson, 2007, p. 76). The rationale for including a sample of this kind was that the sixth, seventh, and eighth level students were expected to have had considerable exposure to language learning and familiarity with the target language and its associated culture. Convenience and access were other reasons for choosing this sample, because it was difficult to collect data from all branches of the College of Language and Translation at King Khalid University.

The frequency and percentages of the participants' linguistic background (i.e., academic achievement levels and contexts of language learning) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

GPA	Number	Percentages
Excellent	40	47.6
Very Good	30	35.7
Good	12	14.3
Satisfactory	2	2.4
Contexts of Language Learning	Number	Percentages
Formal Language Learning	33	39.3
Informal Language Learning	7	8.3
Both Formal and Informal	44	48.9

3.2 Instrument

Because this study focused on the students' perspectives, a mixed method approach was adopted. An online questionnaire consisting of three main sections was used. The first part focused on the participants' personal information, including their nationality, academic level, and age; it also included questions about the participants' contexts of language learning and their GPAs, which represented the variables of the study. The second part consisted of 10 items with five-point Likert scales adopted from Abdulaziz and Almeshari (2019), for which the participants could choose one statement, depending on their level of agreement, ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree."

The qualitative section of the questionnaire followed the Likert-scale section. It consisted of two open-ended questions to give the participants an opportunity to express their opinions regarding the given questions and to explain their perspectives more fully.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The online questionnaire was written in the Arabic language to ensure that the participants understood every statement perfectly before responding. The link to the online questionnaire was sent to the participants' WhatsApp groups, and the researcher asked them all to participate. The researcher told the participants that the results of the questionnaire would be used for academic purposes only and, to ensure anonymity, that there was no need for them to mention their names or academic numbers.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 29, was used to analyze the quantitative data. The internal consistency of the five-point Likert scale was measured using Cronbach's alpha, which was 0.828, indicating good internal consistency and reliability. Furthermore, a thematic analysis method was used to analyze the qualitative data from the open-ended questions and identify common ideas and beliefs from the participants' written answers.

4. Results

4.1 An Analysis of the Participants' Responses to Linear Scale Items

The participants were asked to rate 10 items from 1 ("Strongly agree") to 5 ("Strongly disagree"). The 10 statements were designed to measure four aspects related to the integration of the target culture into language learning: the effect of learning culture on English language competence (statements one and two), the importance of integrating English language culture (statements three, four, five and six), the difficulties of incorporating English language culture into English language learning (statements seven and eight) and the pedagogical implications of incorporating the target culture into language learning (statements nine and ten).

These 10 statements were then tested to find any relationship among students' perspectives, their GPAs, and their contexts of language learning.

Table 2. Participants' perspectives on english-language culture

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I prefer to learn English culture while learning English.	41.7%	41.7%	9.5%	4.8%	2.4%
2	I have learned English culture while learning the English language.	38.1%	34.5%	15.5%	10.7%	1.2%
3	Learning the culture of a specific language is important.	41.7%	25%	16.7%	13.1%	3.6%
4	Learning English culture makes the learning process more enjoyable.	44%	36.9%	11.9%	4.8%	2.4%
5	Learning English culture helps me to learn English quickly.	36.9%	31%	17.9%	10.7%	3.6%
6	Learning English culture helps me to learn the English language effectively.	35.7%	38.1%	14.3%	9.5%	2.45
7	Learning English culture is difficult for me.	9.5%	17.9%	21.4%	38.1%	13.1%
8	The differences between Arabic and English culture make it difficult to learn.	10.7%	23.8%	17.9%	36.9%	10.7%
9	Using cultural items such as films, websites, and magazines are good ways for learning culture.	53.6%	35.7%	7.1%	2.4%	1.2%
10	Teaching culture should become an integral part of foreign language instruction.	29.8%	26.2%	19%	19%	6%

As seen in Table 2, the participants generally agreed with the statements that represented positive perspectives, including “I prefer to study English culture while learning the English language,” which represented the highest level of agreement ($M = 1.85$, $SD = 0.951$) on the five-point Linear scale. This showed the participants' tendency to study the target culture while learning the structure of the English language. In addition, the 10th statement, which stated that “using cultural items such as films, websites, and magazines is a good way to learn about a culture,” had an extremely high average score ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.265$). It indicated that the participants supported the idea of learning about a new culture by using educational tools rather than textbooks.

In general, more than half the participants agreed that it is important to learn the target culture, and almost 80% of them believed that learning about English language culture makes the learning process more enjoyable.

4.2 The Relationship Between the Participants' GPA, Context of Language Learning, and Their Attitudes toward the Target Culture

To identify any significant relationships between each of the linguistic background variables and the participants' attitudes as obtained from the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a Spearman correlational coefficient analysis. There was a significant negative correlation between the participants' perspectives on the difficulty of learning English language culture (“studying English culture is difficult for me”) and their GPAs: $r = -0.247$, $p < 0.05$. This negative correlation suggests that students with higher GPAs tend to have a less negative perception of the difficulty of studying English language culture, compared to students with lower GPAs. In other words, higher-achieving students may find the process of learning about English culture less challenging.

Furthermore, there was a significant correlation between the EFL students' language learning method (whether formal, informal, or mixed method) and their level of agreement with the statement “the differences between Arabic and English culture make it difficult to study”: $r = 0.235$, $p < 0.05$. This indicates that as the students' language learning approach became more informal or mixed (rather than formal), their agreement with the statement tended to increase.

4.3 Qualitative Data

The participants were asked to specify whether there were any advantages or disadvantages to learning cultural information to understand their attitudes deeply. If they answered “yes”, they were asked to state two advantages or disadvantages.

4.3.1 Advantages of Learning Cultural Information

Regarding the advantages, 17.85% of the participants reported that there were no advantages to learning cultural information, whereas 82.14% stated that there were advantages to learning culture. The most common themes are detailed in the following subsections.

1) Facilitating communication

A total of 19 students, representing 27.54% of the participants who agreed that there are some advantages of learning English culture, reported that one advantage of including cultural information is to facilitate

communication with people from the target culture. One participant stated, “It will facilitate communication with the native speakers and help them understand the language in its cultural context” (female, 25 years). Another participant said, “It will make it easier to communicate with native speakers when traveling to an English-speaking country, which will prevent any falling into trouble that might occur due to misunderstandings” (female, 21 years). Such answers indicated that the participants believed the integration of cultural information could increase the participants’ communication abilities.

2) Facilitating the learning process

Thirty students, representing 43.48% of the participants, stated that one advantage of learning about the target culture is that it makes the learning process more enjoyable and facilitates learning the language; for example, one participant asserted that “when you know the culture of the language you are learning, the language learning journey becomes easier and more enjoyable, and you also have more confidence in your language because you know its culture” (female, 21 years).

3) Expanding cultural perspectives

Fourteen students (20.29%) believed that learning about the target culture enabled them to develop a more open, flexible, and comprehensive worldview. For example, one student stated that learning about the target culture “helps the learner to be open to other cultures and different world perspectives” (female, 21 years) whereas another student believed that one advantage of learning about the target culture is “acquiring a different perspective on life, ways of living, and values” (female, 21 years).

4.3.2 Disadvantages of Learning Cultural Information

Regarding the disadvantages of learning the target language culture while learning the language itself, 35.71% of the participants thought that there were some disadvantages, whereas 64.29% said that there were no disadvantages to learning about culture. The most common themes were as explained in the following subsections.

1) Negative impact on the students’ cultural identity

Of the 30 participants who believed that there were some disadvantages to learning about the target culture, 17 of them asserted that learning about the target culture could result in a negative impact on their own cultural identity. One participant reported that “unfortunately, blind imitation of Western culture has recently become widespread among the nation's youth; therefore, caution must be exercised, and we have to differentiate between learning the language and its associated culture for educational purposes and blind imitation” (female, 21 years). Another student stated that “learning a foreign culture may negatively affect the learner's cultural identity because some beliefs are not compatible with Islamic law” (female, 21 years).

2) The linguistic difficulties of learning about the target culture

A total of nine out of the 30 students who believed that there are some disadvantages of learning about the target culture thought that a negative aspect of learning about the target culture is due to language-related problems; for example, one participant said that “it is difficult to differentiate between slang and formal language, which might result in making some mistakes” (female, 23 years), whereas another participant stated that “there might be a negative impact if the teaching methods were not suitable for teaching cultural content” (female, 22 years).

5. Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that the majority of the participants had an overall positive attitude toward the incorporation of the target culture into language learning. This finding supported the findings of several studies on the same issue (i.e., Aldawood & Almeshari, 2019; Alharbi, 2022; Alsamani, 2014; Hagler, 2014). The overall positive attitudes of the participants might be related to their age group, which was 20–25 years old, and the fact that they were all undergraduate students. The young Saudi generation has developed a moderate and open mindset toward the West (Zidi et al., 2021), which might explain the positive attitudes the participants had toward the target culture. In addition, this generation uses social media and watches American and British movies, which contain references to many aspects of both cultures, perhaps increasing the participants’ desire to learn about the target culture while they are studying the English language.

In addition, most of the participants supported the idea of introducing cultural information using new media tools like films and magazines. This supports the idea that the impact of movies may have contributed to their positive attitudes. Presenting and introducing cultural information in the form of movies and documentaries might not only have increased their positive attitudes toward the target culture but might also have sped up their learning process, because half the participants agreed that studying English culture had helped them learn the language quickly and effectively. This is in line with the results of Belli (2018), supporting the conclusion that presenting cultural

information in a visual format enables students to enjoy the learning process.

Positive attitudes toward the target culture were reflected in the participants' answers to the open-ended question about the advantages of learning about the target culture. There was an observable tendency among the participants to study the target culture for the purpose of appreciating the communicative aspects of the target culture, perhaps because of the bicultural identity that they had developed over their years of study (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Learning cultural information might have helped the learners understand others and find common norms and similarities between two different cultures, thus making the communication process easier.

Interestingly, there was a significant relationship between the statements that measured the difficulties of incorporating English language culture into English language learning (statements seven and eight) and the participants' linguistic background variables that this study aimed to investigate. The significant relationship between the participants' GPAs and their beliefs about the difficulty of learning about the target culture is in line with the findings of Al samadani and Ibnian (2015). According to Schulz (2007), students' language levels should be taken into consideration before introducing them to the target culture; this suggestion might explain why participants with low GPAs believed that learning about the target culture is difficult for them.

Furthermore, the significant relationship between the formal language learning approach and the difficulties caused by the differences between Arabic and English cultures might indicate that learners who learn the language using an informal or mixed-method approach would be more encouraged to learn about the target culture. Informal language learning plays a very significant role in developing language proficiency among foreign language students at the university level (Bruen & Erdocia, 2024), so it seems reasonable to assume that informal language would enhance and ease learning about the target culture.

6. Conclusion

The findings indicated that the Saudi female students tended to have positive attitudes toward the integration of the target culture into language learning. In addition, the study indicated a relationship between the learners' attitudes and their linguistic backgrounds, especially with regard to their academic achievement levels and their contexts of language learning.

This study might constitute the first step toward thinking seriously about investigating learners' language levels and contexts of language learning before introducing them to cultural content.

There is a need to conduct further studies to investigate, not only students' attitudes, but also other linguistic and extralinguistic factors like the age at which the students acquired the language. In addition, gender should be included as a variable in other studies, because the decision to integrate cultural information into language learning should include male students. Other studies concerning the impact of learners' first language culture on their attitudes toward the culture of a second or foreign language are recommended, as is the inclusion of target cultural content in the form of films or documentaries, rather than course books. We believe that our results may lead to deep insight into aspects of the target culture and students' attitudes toward it.

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